Unseeing Surveillance

On Making Efforts to Wilfully Ignore Surveillance in Everyday Life

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Abstract

During the last decade, an increasing number of technological developments have occurred that utilise surveillance for functionality. Much of modern means of communication and socialising now firmly rest on surveillance technology. Whereas most scholarly work aims to interpret the effects of surveillance on individuals through an aggregated perspective, this thesis explores a more grounded approach. Concretely, this anthropological study investigates how Lund University students between the ages of 20–28 imagine surveillance and its impacts on their daily lives. For this purpose, ethnographic fieldwork between November 2021 and February 2022 was conducted. Through the use of participant observations, unstructured interviews, and qualitative diaries, this study argues that individuals engage in a process of "unseeing" surveillance in everyday life. Specifically, people make efforts to wilfully ignore surveillance and its impacts to allow for a proper functioning of daily routines. The study concludes by arguing that in order to better understand the consequences of endemic surveillance, more attention must be given to empowering approaches in studying surveillance and its impacts on everyday life.

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1   Introduction

> Today was a bit different than yesterday, as I was kind of aware of the surveillance around me. Or maybe I was just looking for it to see where I could find it. Spot a camera here, spot a camera there. It's also interesting to me, how much of the surveillance around me that I have been ignoring prior to writing the diary. It's not like I wasn't aware that it was there, but that there was almost like a perception filter blocking something which I saw on a daily basis. (Rory's diary notes)

This diary entry encapsulates the everyday experiences with surveillance as a Lund University student. Much of the surveillance we encounter or engage in ourselves is ignored. Only when we are forced to *reflect* on our everyday lives and the way we go about our day, do we start re-learning what we chose to forget. The diary method provides such an external trigger that it forces people to question and reflect on mundane everyday experiences. The diary method together with two rounds of unstructured interviews enabled me to not only gaze into people's everyday lives, their experiences, thoughts, routines but additionally, into how they make sense of living in what David Lyon (2018) calls 'the culture of surveillance'. Namely, surveillance is no longer solely the prerogative of government institutions and powerful corporations but has become the very fabric of how we live and interact with others (ibid.). In other words, surveillance has become "a whole way of life" (ibid.).

I initially set out to explore how such a culture would manifest in the daily lives of Lund University students. On the way, I encountered a puzzling phenomenon. All of the individuals that I have spoken to, either in interviews or during informal conversations, are aware that surveillance exists. Even more so, and somewhat contrary to the main tenets of many surveillance studies that tend to argue people are largely oblivious, they are aware that surveillance is ubiquitous and touches each and every aspect of their lives. It forms an inherent part of modern technology as well as security policies.

However, despite this awareness, the individuals I encountered in my ethnographic study seem to make a somewhat conscious effort to unsee what they know to be there. In other words, people sort of know, but nevertheless try to forget

about surveillance and its consequences in order to properly function in their everyday lives. Specifically, in this thesis, I theorise this process of "unseeing" as a form of *wilful ignorance*. As we will see throughout this thesis, wilful ignorance occurs mainly in two different spheres. First, people ignore *organisational surveillance*. That is, the types of surveillance we would normally classify as "traditional" such as Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV). Additionally, other hierarchical forms of surveillance, such as data mining and predictive analytics in which corporate entities engage, form part of what I term "organisational surveillance". Second, the people I have spoken to wilfully ignore the forms and occurrences of their own surveillance. As a result, *social surveillance* is ignored in order to avoid feelings of guilt as well as feelings of anxiety that peers or strangers might be watching them too.

1.1   Purpose

The wider purpose of this study is to inform discussions on surveillance by offering insights into how individuals experience surveillance in their everyday life.

The emergence of disruptive technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and predictive analytics, has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of surveillance applications (Brousseau, 2020; Andrejevic, 2019). Surveillance has become a new economic logic that transformed modern capitalism into surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019); it is used to segregate and discriminate against people of colour (Ferguson, 2017; Brown, 2015); it enables new forms of colonialism (Mann and Daly, 2018; Couldry and Mejias, 2019); it is an inherent part of modern digital technology (Noble, 2018), and a fundamental threat to modern Western democracies (O'Neil, 2017). Further, devices that monitor their user's activity, such as smartwatches and smart rings, have been argued to transform the very idea of what it means to be "human" in this age of AI and Big Data (Lupton, 2015; Jasanoff and Kim, 2015). More specifically, the increase of such devices and their application allow for a quantification of the self by means of surveillance (Lupton, 2015).

Accordingly, surveillance is no longer just the prerogative of powerful corporate and government actors. Instead, it has spread into the spheres of everyday

life. We constantly interact with various forms of surveillance every day. Lyon (2018) encapsulates this circumstance by arguing that surveillance has become a way of life. In other words, what we are experiencing in today's world can best be described as a 'culture of surveillance' (ibid.). There has been a growing body of anthropological work that focuses on the everyday interactions with surveillance. Attention has been given to the development of 'sousveillance' (Borradaile and Reeves, 2020; Ceccato, 2019), which describes 'the many watching the few'. Through the development of modern technology, and especially the smartphone, ordinary people are now capable of 'speaking truth to power' by recording instances of injustice (ibid.). In addition to sousveillance, some anthropological work has paid attention to the individual use of 'social' surveillance (Partin, 2019; Duffy and Chan, 2019; Trottier, 2016; Staples, 2014). Peer-to-peer surveillance, or social surveillance, describes the process of people watching each other through various digital platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Twitch.

Much of the research concerning the everyday experiences of surveillance has, to date, not included ethnographic approaches, or only partially while still adhering to *a priori* conceptualisations of what may be called surveillance (Green and Zurawski, 2015). Therefore, the specific purpose of this study is to contribute to this growing field by offering an anthropological and, ultimately, empowering interpretation of surveillance in everyday life. Individuals are not just "affected" by surveillance but *act through* it. Additionally, people make efforts to avoid dissonance and inconvenience in their daily lives by *choosing to wilfully ignore* surveillance.

1.2   Research Question

This study aims to anthropologically investigate how surveillance is experienced in everyday life. For this reason, I conducted fieldwork between November 2021 and February 2022. More specifically, I have engaged in unstructured interviews with ten individuals, followed by a diary period of three weeks, and finally the second round of interviews with the same individuals. During the entire fieldwork, I also engaged in (participant-) observations in and around Lund University, trying to gauge how students relate to and make use of various surveillance technologies, be

it CCTV cameras or apps on their phones. The interlocutors were selected from Lund University and are all enrolled in either Bachelor's or Master's programmes. I have chosen to select university students between the age of 20–28 since it can be argued that they are emblematic of a culture of surveillance (Lyon, 2018; Trottier, 2016; Staples, 2014). Consequently, the research question that I seek to answer in the course of this thesis is:

> *How do Lund University students between the ages of 20–28 imagine surveillance and its impacts on their daily lives?*

Briefly, *surveillance imaginaries* describe how individuals think and feel about surveillance in their daily lives (Lyon, 2018). It entails a fundamental realisation that modern life is lived under surveillance. As the anthropologists Duffy and Chan (2019) make clear, imaginaries fundamentally entail *awareness* of surveillance forming part of individuals' lives. Focusing on these imaginaries, therefore, allows investigating how they inform thoughts, reflections, sentiments, as well as behaviour in general (ibid.).

I am well aware that the material I present – the surveillance imaginaries of my interlocutors – cannot be used to fully explain how other people around the world relate to surveillance culture. Surveillance culture is not a monolithic phenomenon and can be experienced and lived in many different ways (Lyon, 2018). However, having selected my interlocutors because they, as a specific generation and demography, can be argued to be emblematic of such an emerging surveillance culture (Lyon, 2018; Trottier, 2016; Staples, 2014), I do hope to present a compelling narrative of surveillance imaginaries able to inspire larger debates. Nevertheless, a study focusing on, say a different age group or in a different context, might find different answers to the same question. I welcome and encourage such approaches as they will ultimately offer us a more holistic understanding of how surveillance is experienced in everyday life by many different people.

1.3   Thesis Outline

The introductory chapter should have familiarised the reader with my overall objective as well as my research question. In the next chapter, I will discuss

dominant theories on how individuals are affected by and through surveillance. Hence, I try to identify gaps in current literature as well as position my own work. In chapter three, I discuss my chosen methodology as well as the ethical considerations I had during my fieldwork. I further introduce my interlocutors as well as the field of my study. In chapter four, I present my empirical material comprised of my interlocutor's diaries, unstructured interviews, and observations. I will tell two stories about how my interlocutors made sense of *organisational-* and *social-surveillance* in their everyday lives. In chapter five, I turn my attention to how my interlocutors deal with the awareness of surveillance in everyday life – that is, wilful ignorance. Finally, in chapter eight, I summarise my findings and offer some concluding words.

2 Theoretical Background

In the following chapter, I aim to provide the theoretical background for my thesis. As such, I embed a state-of-the-art concerning surveillance-related theory, which specifically focuses on and conceptualises individual experience, or how the individual is affected by surveillance. Generally, there are two observable tendencies here. First, individuals suffer from *false consciousness* that is externally induced by powerful state and corporate actors. Second, people have been convinced that surveillance is a necessity for the functioning of modern society and thus seem not to care about incursions of their privacy and, in some cases, embrace it. In other words, individuals display a *calmed consciousness* in relation to surveillance. Both of these tendencies seem to portray "the individual" as a mere canvas upon which external forces act. As a result, the individual is rendered a pawn that can be moved around freely by external actors. In other words, these two conceptualisations of how surveillance interacts with individuals strip them of their *agency*.

In order to offer a more "grounded" way of understanding individual experiences, the last section of this chapter will therefore introduce theory that aims to restore or relocate agency *within the* individual. Specifically, by adopting a view of *surveillance culture*, the intersection of surveillance and individual experience can be studied anthropologically. It allows us to focus on the meanings, negotiations, and consequences of surveillance for people in their everyday lives – on *their terms*. Simply put, such an anthropological perspective on surveillance enables us to study how individuals *see* and *unsee* surveillance in their daily lives.

2.1 False Consciousness

If awareness is only raised, people would realise their subjugation and revolt against the forces that subdue them. This seems to be a consistent narrative in many surveillance-oriented studies. We can also see this narrative in popular mainstream

media productions such as the Netflix show *Black Mirror* (2011), which plays heavily with dystopian surveillance-inspired themes. Similarly, recent documentaries, such as *The Social Dilemma* (2020), aim at making people (at least consumers of Netflix) aware of how their personal information, as well as the data they produce online, are continuously tracked, mined, and used for predictive analytics.

In academia, a similar school of thought can be discerned. Scholars such as Zuboff (2019) show poignantly how the individual has become a mere commodity or a raw resource that must be extracted in order to generate profit. All the while, the individual in question is habituated to these processes and perceives them as "normal". In most cases, these individuals even celebrate and endorse such practices. In essence, contemporary capitalism, for Zuboff (2019), has undergone its fourth great transformation – from industrial/ informational capitalism to what she terms 'Surveillance Capitalism'. What has emerged from this transformation is what Zuboff (2019:1) defines as:

> 'A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales; A parasitic economic logic in which the production of goods and services is subordinated to a new global architecture of behavioural modification; A rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of wealth, knowledge, and power unprecedented in human history; The foundational framework of a surveillance economy; As significant a threat to human nature in the twenty-first century as industrial capitalism was to the natural world in the nineteenth and twentieth; The origin of a new instrumentarian power that asserts dominance over society and presents startling challenges to market democracy; A movement that aims to impose a new collective order based on total certainty; An expropriation of critical human rights that is best understood as a coup from above.'

The definition strikes the core of how economics functions in contemporary Western society. Additionally, the definition itself can be understood as a call to action. In a sense, it is time to "wake up" and realise what is going on. We who have so readily endorsed and consumed under surveillance capitalism have to realise that we are being commodified. Essentially, humans are being exploited without them knowing what is going on.

This point is further emphasised when paying attention to the process of habituation. According to Zuboff (2019:138), surveillance capitalists pursue habituation strategies such as "implement[ing] new technologies and ask[ing] questions later" in order for people to accept new incursions. In this light, new

technological developments that rely on increasing surveillance of the individual for their proper functioning seem either inevitable, desirable, or just the "logical progression" of things. In other words, 'people habituate to the incursion with some combination of agreement, helplessness, and resignation. […] The incursion itself, once unthinkable, slowly worms its way into the ordinary.' (Zuboff, 2019:138).

The driving force behind the logic of surveillance capitalism must be seen in the operation of *instrumentarian power*. This power 'cultivates an unusual "way of knowing" that combines the "formal indifference" of the neoliberal worldview with the observational perspective of radical behaviourism' and further 'reduces human experience to measurable observable behaviour while remaining steadfastly indifferent to the meaning of that experience.' (Zuboff, 2019:352–352). The consequences of instrumentarian power produce unlimited accruable knowledge for surveillance capitalists, while simultaneously diminishing the freedoms of humans by the renewable domination of surveillance capitalists over the division of learning in society (Zuboff, 2019:356). Thus:

> False Consciousness is no longer produced by the hidden facts of class and their relation to production but rather by the hidden facts of instrumentarian power's command over the division of learning in society as it usurps the rights to answer the essential questions: *Who knows? Who decides? Who decides who decides?*

Zuboff is determined to show us that we have been habituated and suffer from a false consciousness that explains why and how we still accept our continuous exploitation and alienation. In other words, we are just not aware of the extent of surveillance capitalism's operations, logic, and its inherent exploitative nature. As argued above, the sense of normalcy and inevitability leads to the "false" recognition of these new technologies as being something entirely different from *surveillance*. That is just how things are. The fact that the data I produce by existing in this world is mined and used for predictive analytics is thus seen as a necessity for the proper functioning of our standard of living and not, as Zuboff argues, as processes of surveillance and exploitation.

Similarly to Zuboff, in discussing the rise of the 'selfie culture', Henry Giroux (2015) argues that surveillance has become the new normality, which characterises Western neoliberal societies:

> Surveillance has become a growing feature of daily life wielded by both the state and the larger corporate sphere. This merger registers both the transformation of the

political state into the corporate state and the transformation of a market economy into a criminal economy. (Giroux, 2015:156)

Consequently, one facet of surveillance becoming a growing feature, a reality of daily life, must be seen in the 'increasing view of privacy […] as something to escape from rather than preserve as a precious political right' (ibid.). To Giroux (2015), the reasons for this notion are intertwined with the market logic of neoliberalism and growing celebrity culture, which emphasises individuality and visibility above all else. He goes so far as to claim a sort of "collective narcissism" that emerges because of neoliberal consumerism (ibid.).

Although not directly referring to a "false consciousness" as the case with Zuboff, he nevertheless views the reasons for the willingness of forgoing the right to privacy, especially amongst younger people, as a consequence of a process of acculturation (Giroux, 2015:156). More specifically, the intrusion of surveillance technologies, either corporate or as part of "national security", is accepted and celebrated as opposed to challenged, precisely because of targeted normalisation and acculturation processes in which corporate and state actors engage. Thus, the individual is almost manipulated – a mere canvas upon which marketing strategies and political campaigns can be exerted. We are not aware that this acculturation is happening to us and that is why we are willing to surrender our right to privacy.

Not only are we consistently being acculturated, but additionally, the political and corporate surveillance state attempts to use its 'power to canvass every aspect of people's lives in order to supress dissent, instil fear in the populace and repress the possibilities of mass resistance against unchecked power' (Giroux, 2015:160). We can see a double functioning of surveillance here. On the one hand, it serves to promote the "good life" through corporate marketing strategies and neoliberal logics, while on the other hand, surveillance technologies also serve as means of repression. Ideally, and in line with the logic of surveillance capitalism, acts of repression become redundant when, as a result of ubiquitous corporate and political surveillance, a state of certainty by means of behavioural modification has been achieved. In other words, because everything is "known" all the time, there will be no more need for repression. Instead, what becomes the guiding principle is nudging and pre-emption. All the while, we blissfully keep posting selfies on Instagram without being aware of what is going on.

In line with the notion of ubiquitous surveillance, Andrejevic (2019:7) argues that interactivity in today's world becomes 'functionally synonymous with surveillance'. Considering some of the issues and threats we have to face in our times, 'the prospect of total surveillance offers to relieve us of the burden of having to trust one another at a time when it is becoming harder than ever to do so […]' (Andrejevic, 2019:9). Correspondingly, Andrejevic (2019) sees the promise of total surveillance as a consequence of the increasing automation of surveillance. In contrast to disciplinary forms of surveillance, which rely on the internalisation of the gaze – in other words, they require *awareness* of surveillance, automated surveillance seeks to 'capture the undisciplined activity of those being monitored so as to more accurately categorise, sort, and anticipate these activities' (Andrejevic, 2019:10). Thus, in contemporary automated surveillance systems, or in surveillance capitalism, there seems to be no requirement for *awareness* on behalf of the individual. In contrast then to the idea of false consciousness, as brought forward by Zuboff and implied by Giroux, in Andrejevic, we can discern a sense of externally cultivated ignorance or, simply, lack of knowledge. That is, people are made to not know and to not care about what is going on around them. In other words, people are made to be compliant.

This point is reinforced by Andrejevic when he argues that whereas the logic of the panopticon[1] was industrial in the sense that it secured the productivity of the target by ensuring its docility, then:

> '[T]hat of automated surveillance is not directed toward maximising the productivity of the workforce with an eye to displacing it, but simply taming it. Since docility is increasingly called into question (reliant as it is on disciplinable subjects), ongoing external intervention becomes the constant accompaniment of automated surveillance. This is the logic of the drone strike, of predictive policing, and, suggestively, of the libertarian paternalism of "nudge" economics, which relies on experiment and observation to pre-empt undesirable behaviour.' (Andrejevic, 2019:10)

However, despite the automation of surveillance, more disciplinary forms of surveillance still prevail. Symbols of such forms can be seen in CCTV cameras. These symbolic apparatuses serve to remind the population that surveillance is a

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[1] The Panopticon describes a physical infrastructure which allows for maximum surveillance of its inhabitants. It has been mostly associated and implemented in relation to prisons. Additionally, the Panopticon has a long tradition in surveillance related discussions. For this reason and because it has been covered extensively, I chose to not discuss it in detail. For an extensive discussion see Foucault (1977); Koskela (2003); Manokha (2018).

necessity, and that submission is required for the purposes of security, efficiency, and convenience (Andrejevic, 2019:11). Thus, whereas disciplinary surveillance relies on awareness and knowledge of and about the systems and actions of surveillance for the purposes of *deterrence*, automated surveillance requires ambiguity and a lack of awareness for the purpose of pre-emption.

At this point, I would like to argue that this is only one part of what is going on. Of course, processes of normalisation, habituation, and manipulation occur. However, my point is that something else too goes on. Ignorance, or lack of knowledge, can be externally induced, as the above scholars argue. Nevertheless, it can, as we will see later, also be individually cultivated.

2.2   Calmed Consciousness

Already having published his *Postscript on the Societies of Control* in 1992, Gilles Deleuze has cautioned against many of the issues brought forward by contemporary scholars such as Zuboff and Giroux. Deleuze (1992:2) argues that 'the *disciplinary societies* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries […] reach[ed] their height at the outset of the twentieth' century and were characterised by individuals never ceasing to pass from one enclosed environment to the next. In other words, Western society was marked by fixed, rigid, and clearly defined institutions such as the prison, hospital, the family, and the school. Deleuze agrees with Foucault when he argued that the primary function of these environments of enclosure was 'to concentrate; to distribute in space; to order in time; to compose a productive force within the dimension of space-time whose effects will be greater than the sum of its component parts' (ibid.). Critical to this function was the process of surveillance and its gaze in order to induce self-disciplining amongst the enclosed populace and the individual.

Further, Deleuze (1992:2–3) observes that similarly to how societies of sovereignty have given way to disciplinary societies, what seems to have emerged are *societies of control*. These, in turn, are not marked by strict environments of enclosure, but rather operate through fluidity, free-flowing control, and surveillance. Additionally, in a society of control, one is never truly 'finished with anything' (Deleuze, 1992:5). Instead, individuals are constantly fulfilling their roles

and living their lives in 'the corporation, the educational system, the armed services' at the same time. Accordingly, the individual in their existence finds themselves constantly in a 'metastable state coexisting in one and the same modulation' (ibid.). Simply put, an individual is no longer *just* in prison, *just* in school, or *just* a student, but all of these things at the same time. Consequently, disciplining such an individual becomes an impossibility and, instead, *control* through surveillance becomes the characteristic mechanism. The point is not to discipline, not to enclose, but instead to constantly monitor and *pre-empt*.

Capitalism, as Deleuze (1992:6) argues, has diverted its attention from the production of goods to a 'higher-order production'. In societies of control, capitalism seeks to sell services and is, in general, a capitalism for the product that ought to be sold or *marketed* (ibid.). This echoes with the conceptualisation of surveillance capitalism, which is not concerned with production but instead focuses on targeted advertising, predictive analytics, and behavioural modification for the purposes of monetisation. Finally, Deleuze (1992:7) voices his irritation when he states that 'many young people strangely boast of being "motivated"; they re-request apprenticeships and permanent training. It is up to them to discover what they're being made to serve [...]'. Deleuze is not arguing here that people suffer from false consciousness but rather that they seem to miss the point of how they are being controlled in such a society. He does not elaborate what exactly this "what" constitutes that people are being made to serve. Nevertheless, there still seems to be a dichotomy between the powerless/powerful or controller/controlled. This then prompts Deleuze to a call of arms. Quite literally as he claims: 'There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons' (Deleuze, 1992:4). There is an idea that some sort of injustice – a crime against the individual by sinister controllers is committed, which has to be recognised as such and, consequently, it must be rectified. As we will see below, this idea has not aged well in conjunction with societies of control.

In reflecting on Deleuze's argument thirty years later, Brosseau (2020) uses the ideas brought forward by Deleuze to look at how they play out in the age of big data, artificial intelligence, social media – in short, digital surveillance. He claims that what Deleuze plead for – the agony and necessary struggle against the agents of social control is outdated (Brousseau, 2020:6). Accordingly, the 'providers of

social order are no longer grim oppressors', rather they are entrepreneurs, motivators, and 'colourful social media platforms' (ibid.). They are:

> '[…] energetic professionals, sharply dressed, backed by spreadsheets, supported by software coders, and dedicated to accommodating our wants. They don't stand *against* the people, but in *favour* of consumers and users.' (Brousseau, 2020:6)

Consequently, the social anxiety that Deleuze stressed, or the agony of existing in a society of control has given way to entertainment and competition. Instead of "looking for new weapons", we now feel excitement for 'marketplace innovation and the constant introduction of new digital applications' (Brousseau, 2020:6-7). We constantly yearn for "the next big thing", which makes our lives more interesting, connected, and ultimately, more convenient. This is not to say that people are not subjected to surveillance at all. They still are, as the Snowden leaks and Zuboff's (2019) work on surveillance capitalism show. However, surveillance nowadays works through tracking, predicting, and nudging or *directing*. This resonates with Andrejevic's claim above that through automated surveillance, certainty about individuals' behaviour, desires, and location can be achieved. When people are tracked and subjected to directing or nudging, that becomes *control* (Brousseau, 2020:10).

How do individuals perceive the ubiquity of surveillance? If, as we have seen so far, surveillance and consequently control, are still prevalent, granted, in different forms and functioning, then what about the "watched"? According to Brousseau (2020:8), the reactions to personal information gathering are neither marked by extensive anxiety or angry paranoia, but rather ones of excitement or indifference (Galič, Timan and Koops, 2015). Similarly, the Media Insight Project (2015) found that the social media youth either does not notice or does not *care* about extensive personal information gathering by corporate entities, especially if it is connected to a perceived benefit such as discounts. This notion is echoed by Fulton and Kibby (2017), who in their focus group and survey study of Australian Millennials' experiences with surveillance on Facebook have found that this generation seems concerned more about traditional (read: organisational) forms of surveillance as opposed to either pee-to-peer or corporate surveillance. Further, they found that Millennials perceive that giving up personal information constitutes a necessity for active participation in today's communication and media environment (ibid.). More specifically, Fulton and Kibby (2017:197) argue that

Millennials seem to be *broadly* unaware of what kind of surveillance is going on or what strategies can be pursued to safeguard one's privacy online. At the same time, however, this generation blindly accepts "terms and conditions" without reading them (ibid.). When asked about their experiences, these Millennials seemed to portray feelings of anxiety while, at the same time, stressing the necessity of social media interaction and participation (ibid.). It appears then that the perceived benefits of being subjected to digital surveillance outweigh the concerns for privacy.

A similar point can be observed in Taylor's (2011) research on CCTV awareness in Northern English schools. Taylor conducted focus groups and unstructured interviews in three different schools. Her participants included both teachers and pupils. She found that:

> [P]upils and teachers stated that although they initially might have been aware, wary or worried about the presence of the cameras this heightened sensitivity soon dissipated as the cameras were appropriated into everyday life. In the words of the Site Manager at Single Sex Comprehensive, the CCTV soon became 'part of the wallpaper'. Even those teachers that described the CCTV as initially making them feel 'paranoid' explained that after time they didn't 'worry', 'notice' or 'take heed' of them after they had been installed. (Taylor, 2011:316)

Contrary to perceiving an "added value" of surveillance, as in the case of digital surveillance on social media, here "not caring" results from what Taylor calls normalisation through habituation (ibid.). It seems then, all it takes for not caring is time and continued exposure to surveillance. Over time, all things become like "wallpaper". Normalisation and habituation thus seem to be processes that occur outside of the individual's sphere of influence. In a way, it is *just something that happens*. It is portrayed as either a natural process of getting used to things or it is an active endeavour undertaken by corporations to sell us things – to get us excited for products and services. In any case, the individual themself is not involved in this process. Rather, they are a canvas upon which external forces are expressed.

2.3   Self-Cultivated (un-)Consciousness

As a premise, the culture of surveillance does not replace other forms and functions of surveillance, such as disciplinary or control-oriented surveillance. A culture of

surveillance co-exists alongside and even consumes these other forms of surveillance. It can, in turn, motivate new forms of surveillance but also be motivated by already existing ones. Therefore, a culture of surveillance engages in a reciprocal process with multiple pre-existing and developing forms of surveillance.

Before I delve too deep into the discussion on the culture of surveillance, I would like to echo Lyon's (2018:25) sentiment that surveillance is neither "bad nor good" but it is also never neutral. Surveillance can be and is used in many forms and for many purposes. It can create social categorisation, which can lead to discrimination, such as in the case of algorithmic biases or predictive policing of people of colour (Brown, 2015; Ferguson, 2017; Noble, 2018). It can be appropriated to exclude certain populations to enter Europe (Mathiesen, 2013). On the other hand, it is argued that it can provide a sense of security and thus prevent violence (Hong, 2017). Consequently, as Lyon (2018:25; 2003) argues, it is ever amenable to ethical assessment and power relations are always present.

Most of today's surveillance is 'made possible by our own clicks on websites, our text messages, and exchanging photos' (Lyon, 2018:12). Individuals participate in and enable government and corporate surveillance, or organisational surveillance, as never before (ibid.). Our online and offline behaviour mediated through various sensors creates the very data that is being monitored. Existing in today's modern world means being under surveillance.

This is precisely where the concept of surveillance culture can help us understand *how* individuals are affected by it. How do individuals make sense of and experience surveillance? But also, how do individuals themselves engage in surveillance activities or practices? In today's modern world:

> [E]veryone has more of a stake in surveillance than when it was thought of as the "surveillance state" or even the "surveillance society". Those words describe how surveillance is done to individuals and groups. The surveillance culture goes beyond these. While acknowledging what goes on in organizational surveillance, it turns the spotlight on all our very varied roles in relation to surveillance. (Lyon, 2018:17)

The culture of surveillance entails the realisation that modern life is lived *under* surveillance but also *through* surveillance. We are not only being watched, by governments, corporations, teachers, parents, and our peers, but we too, watch others. In other words, watching and being watched – in essence, surveillance – has

become a 'whole way of life' (Lyon, 2018:15). Crucially, surveillance is not simply applied, it is, above all, 'experienced by subjects, agents, and audiences who define, judge, and have feelings about being watched or a watcher' (Marx, 2016:173). We can add to this the experiences, feelings, and rationales *for* watching others. To view surveillance as a cultural practice then is to study it anthropologically by paying attention to customs, habits, and ways of interpreting the world (Lyon, 2018:12).

Specifically, Lyon (2018:16) argues that:

> Surveillance culture has appeared as people engage more and more with the means of monitoring. Many check on others' lives using social media, for instance. At the same time, the 'others' make this possible by allowing themselves to be exposed to public view in texts and tweets, posts and pics. Some people also engage with surveillance when they worry about how much others, especially large, opaque organisations such as airlines or security agencies, know about them.

We can see the embeddedness of surveillance in everyday life. On the one hand, mundane daily activities, such as posting a picture on social media or "checking up" on someone by following their Instagram feed, constitute acts of social surveillance. On the other hand, our daily lives are enmeshed with organisational surveillance, such as CCTV in public transport, airports, public places, but also digital surveillance of our smartphone use and Internet browsing preferences. We encounter daily "targeted" advertisements that are enabled by the surveillance of our online as well as "offline" behaviour. The places we visit, spend time, and where we meet people in the "real", physical world are tracked and used for advertising. On Instagram, we literally *follow* people we know and, more often than not, do not know. This is the essence of surveillance culture.

For Lyon (2018:17), this phenomenon is not a random occurrence, rather, visibility and surveillance as an ancient human practice have been amplified by commercial and technological systems, which 'permit and enable such cultural developments'. We only have to look at the iPhone as an example. Over the last decade, the iPhone has gradually increased not only the size of its cameras but also its numbers. One of the greatest innovations for smartphones was the "selfie camera" which allowed users to take photos of themselves without having to awkwardly turn and twist their phones. Another example includes the expansion of social media platforms. Additionally, we now wear smartwatches that allow us to track our own fitness and health and monitor our progressions. Of course, this data is compelling for the user, as it provides instant feedback and also entails aspects

of gamification (Cohen, 2016). My point here is that these new devices and technologies not only serve to watch ourselves and others but, at the same time, constitute the very sensors, which are used to watch us.

Therefore, surveillance is no longer merely something that is *done* to us. It is no longer 'something external that impinges on our lives' (Lyon, 2018:19). It is something that 'everyday citizens comply with – willingly and wittingly – negotiate, resist, engage with and, in novel ways, even initiate and desire' and thus it 'informs everyday reflections on how things are, and the repertoire of everyday practices' (Lyon, 2018:20). Hence, in order to understand how surveillance is experienced by individuals – or, how surveillance constitutes a cultural phenomenon – we can look at how surveillance is *imagined* and how it is *practised*.

Surveillance imaginaries are constructed through our daily involvement with surveillance, as well as its depictions in mass and popular media (Lyon, 2017:829), and shape our perceptions of, attitudes towards, and understandings of surveillance. Essentially, they entail individuals' conceptualisations and negotiations of surveillance, its necessity, boundaries, reaches, intrusions, and occurrences. Consequently, imaginaries shape individuals' understandings of being watched while also watching others as well as how to respond appropriately.

Imaginaries are therefore reciprocal to surveillance *practices*; that is, how we act upon our understanding in relation to surveillance. We can distinguish between *responsive* and *initiatory* practices (Lyon, 2017). Responsive practices describe actions and behaviour in response to surveillance such as installing a Virtual Private Network (VPN) in order to safeguard one's privacy online. Initiatory practices, on the other hand, constitute measures of individuals to engage in surveillance, such as "stalking someone" on Facebook (ibid.). As such, specific imaginaries can enforce practices and practices, in turn, can reinforce imaginaries. When social surveillance through social media is perceived as a "normal" way of communicating in today's world, then engaging in such practices is similarly perceived as a normal activity. By looking at surveillance culture as the composition of surveillance imaginaries and practices, we have to keep in mind that these are *individual experiences*.

This has implications for what I have discussed earlier. If surveillance has become a normalised practice today – or, in other words, if state agencies and corporations have successfully habituated individuals into accepting the incursion

in their privacy, then we should be able to simply observe a single strand of imaginaries and practices. This, however, is not the case. Instead, individuals have various different interpretations, feelings, and attitudes towards surveillance and engage in even as many different practices. In this sense, conceptualisations of habituation and normalisation that seem to stress a solely, or at least overwhelmingly, external working on the individual are not sufficient when we try to understand what is going on. Broad and ambiguous concepts such as "normalisation" and "habituation" run the risk of reducing complex individual experiences and motivations. Similarly, in attributing the apparent lack of resistance towards surveillance (capitalism), or the exploitation of individuals by powerful corporations, then too, we would not be able to observe various different imaginaries and practices. Again, explanations relying on "false consciousness" seem too reductionist when trying to make sense of individual experiences. My aim here is not to discredit previous work that has been done on surveillance (capitalism). My point is that these conceptualisations of surveillance work on an aggregated scale, that is on a societal level, and can help to identify power relations, economic structures, and political struggles. They do, however, reduce or even neglect individual agency. In trying to understand how individuals *actually* make sense of and experience surveillance in everyday life, we have to approach it from a cultural perspective. That is, investigate it anthropologically.

Some of the central questions regarding surveillance involve discussions on its legitimacy, scope, and targeting. As I have argued before, scholars such as Zuboff or Andrejevic aim to create awareness of the misuse of surveillance by either corporations or government agencies. In other words, they aim to rid the individual of their false consciousness so they can realise that they are being exploited. Another strand of surveillance studies argues that individuals just do not care. Surveillance has already been normalised to such an extent that it is either blindly accepted or even desired. In any case, there seems to be an emphasis on aspects of *ignorance* that are induced by external forces. By ignorance, I do not mean anything negative or connected to "stupidity". Instead, in my understanding, ignorance is a necessity in navigating today's world. We simply cannot know everything all the time and similarly pay attention to everything. It would be too much to handle.

Scholars such as Tuana (2006), Spelman (2007), and Salecl (2018) have paid attention to 'epistemologies of ignorance'. More specifically, instead of reducing

"not knowing" to instances of external will or manipulation, they seek out explanations grounded in individual choices. People have the capacity to *unlearn* what was once a realm of knowledge (Tuana, 2006:2). As opposed to an externally induced lack of knowledge or unawareness, which, as we have seen throughout this chapter, seems to be a dominant strand in trying to understand how surveillance affects individuals, people make efforts to not know something, or to forget something. Consequently, "not knowing" can be characterised as a process of *wilful ignorance*, which is individually cultivated. We will see how this process plays out in daily life later in my analytical chapters.

3   Methodology

How does one study the everyday experiences, imaginaries, and reflections of surveillance? Essentially, this is the main methodological question I had to answer while designing and carrying out this study. In seeking to answer this question, I was heavily influenced by the anthropological study of Herron et. al. (2019) who used a combination of interviews and diary methods to study the experiences of family carers. In their study, Herron et. al. (2019:1005) argue that diaries enabled them to collect concrete details and rich descriptions of the everyday lives of their participants. In combining interview methods with diaries, an anthropologist can therefore gain access to 'one-off' retrospective narratives concerning a phenomenon through the interview as well as deeper reflections and changes of interpretations over time through the diary (Keleher and Verrinder, 2003).

Hence, through unstructured interviews, I am able to capture the initial and retrospective interpretations, negotiations, and imaginaries of Lund University students. In addition, the diary then allows me to gauge into how imaginaries change over time and as a result of paying active attention to surveillance in everyday life. It is precisely here, where my most significant finding emerged: wilful ignorance. Without the combination of these two methods and without me "forcing" them to focus on surveillance in their daily lives, such a finding would not have been possible to emerge.

In the following chapter, I will discuss my methodological choices in studying the experiences of surveillance in everyday life. I have decided to engage in an anthropological approach to the topic and as such, I followed an inherently social constructivist and explorative design. In other words, I did not set out to "proof" or "disproof" any theory. Rather, by appreciating the ideas of surveillance culture as a given stage upon which modern life is lived, I set out to explore *how* and *why* it is lived.

My fieldwork can be divided into three stages during which I have constantly pursued (participant-) observations. The first stage included selecting my participants and conducting unstructured interviews. After the interviews, I asked

my interlocutors to keep a diary for a period of three weeks. After the diary period, I reconvened with my interlocutors for a follow-up interview in which we discussed their diaries as well as any additional experiences, sentiments, and thoughts. The fieldwork took place between November 2021 and February 2022.

My material is comprised of the field notes I have taken during my observation, casual and informal conversations, as well as notes I took after the unstructured interviews. Additionally, I have transcribed the unstructured interviews ad verbatim. The diaries themselves are left unaltered and are used in a similar manner as the interview transcripts. In other words, I perceive them as responses and/or reflections of everyday life.

I am involved in *constructing* material. As such, the construction of material as well as my engagement with the interlocutors involves acts of interpretation which, in turn, can generate knowledge about the social world (Mason, 2018:21–22). This knowledge is inherently subjective and a result of my own interpretations and positionality.

3.1   Facing a Conundrum

At multiple points during my fieldwork, I had to face the question: *what is the difference between ethnography and surveillance?* (Verdery, 2012). On the surface, the answer is clear, I do not use the information I have gathered through my observations, interviews, and diaries to exert power or control upon the people involved. Additionally, my interlocutors are aware of my intentions and have provided informed consent. The reasoning makes sense when we accept traditional conceptualisations of surveillance, which highlight that power, domination, and subversion always come hand in hand with the act of surveillance itself. But – and this is a big "but" – what happens when we accept that surveillance is now a cultural practice, a way of life, something that each of us does on a daily basis? Anthropology and surveillance seem to always have had a rather ambiguous relationship:

> '[Securitate] officers thought they recognized in my ethnographic practices their
> own norms of professional conduct. They too used pseudonyms for "informers",

coded notes, tape recorders, and a comprehensive data-gathering strategy that went beyond the confines of a single project statement. Like me, they generated a wealth of typed data, producing from their observations an enormous body of field notes' (Verdery, 2012:17)

The anthropologist Katherine Verdery reflects here on the similarities between fieldwork and surveillance practices, which the secret police in Romania engaged in. She confesses that there are many similarities. Because of her fieldwork, she was put under surveillance, precisely because of her methods, she was perceived as a foreign spy. This brings me to a vital point: the diary method. I will, in more detail, explain further below how and why I used the diary method. However, it is worth paying attention to it already here. In a way, the diary as a collection of intimate thoughts and experiences ought to remain in the realm of privacy. That is why we are told as children not to read our siblings' diaries. Yet here I am doing precisely that. I am able to gain insights into the thoughts, feelings, and reflections of my interlocutors. Of course, their participation in the research rests on informed consent. Still, the very act of reading a stranger's diary can be seen as reinforcing a culture of surveillance. It is a *normal part of research practices* that we read someone's diaries. In the case of my particular fieldwork – my interest in the process of wilful ignorance – the diary method and its interventionist character were one of the few means to even be able to observe how wilful ignorance works. In order to study wilful ignorance, people must first realise that they had been ignoring or unlearning specific aspects of their daily lives. In this sense, and in a paradoxical way, I am engaging in surveillance, through ethnography, to be able to see how my interlocutors (do not) relate to surveillance in their daily lives. By doing so, I am hindering them from engaging in wilful ignorance and making them see what they chose to unsee.

Another aspect of "ethnography as surveillance" can be seen in how I, as an anthropologist, encourage my interlocutors to engage in surveillance of themselves. This, in turn, can also normalise general practices of self-monitoring through various devices, such as the smartwatch. In a nutshell, if *even academic research* uses surveillance as a means, then what exactly is the "problem" with it? To me, it highlights how surveillance culture works. Surveillance, in its many forms, is *something we do*. We can name specific practices differently. We can secure

informed consent. We can establish trust between the anthropologist and their participants. In the end, it still remains surveillance at its core. Throughout this thesis, I am talking a lot about *wilful ignorance* of surveillance in everyday life. If I would not have presented these reflections on the relationship between anthropological research and surveillance, then I would have also chosen to unlearn what I once knew – research can be surveillance when we live in a culture of surveillance. The argument that I, as an anthropologist, do not engage in surveillance, because on a fundamental level, I am not personally benefiting from the information I gather, does not really hold up when we examine it closer. Of course, I benefit. I will (hopefully) graduate from my Master's programme as a direct result of writing this thesis. In this sense, I use surveillance to achieve my own goals.

3.2   The Field is Everywhere

As I have discussed previously, surveillance culture is the stage on which modern life plays out. Consequently, how does one study this culture or more specifically, *where* does one study this phenomenon? In short, precisely because surveillance culture occurs everywhere and all the time, there is no "one field" or site. In other words, one can study the culture of surveillance *everywhere and all the time*. However, as Lyon (2018) stresses, surveillance culture must not be seen as monolithic or universal. Rather, it morphs and reshapes constantly and appears differently from society to society. In other words, surveillance culture 'is marked by fluidity rather than fixity' (Lyon, 2018:82).

The emergence of new technologies, especially the Internet, and generally the liquidity of modern life, makes it more and more difficult to study "everyday life" in just one field. Modern Western societies can no longer just be described by their proposedly fixed institutions, rather, life itself has become liquid insofar as it travels faster, takes on multiple shapes, and is coined by flows (Bauman, 2000). In discussing 'non-local ethnography', Gregory Feldman argues that contemporary ethnography and, by extension, anthropology, does not simply go beyond "the local" but instead 'shows how place is composed of processes that link a multitude of locals' (Feldman, 2011:376). To give you an example, some of my interlocutors

have part-time jobs while studying. So, at Lund University when they are supposed to be a "student", they are simultaneously an employee because they are constantly reachable as a result of modern technology. They are only an email away from "being at work". This works both ways, say, if they are at home with their significant others, they are not just a "partner" but additionally a student. Similarly, thanks to applications such as LinkedIn, Tinder, and Instagram, we are constantly one push notification away from being someone who is looking for employment, a date, or an influencer/ social person. In other words, we are always all of these things/roles all the time and never only one at once. Consequently, in liquid modernity, where we ourselves are never just one fixed persona, the notion of a rigidly delimited field becomes complicated. Of course, this depends on what one aims to study. In my case, since I am interested in the experiences of surveillance as opposed to how surveillance operates in any given institution or a rigidly defined setting, my "field" extends quite a bit.

As anthropologists, Green and Zurawski (2015:34) argue '[…] the field itself is constantly reconstituted – both through ethnographic knowledge construction, but also through the framings, understandings and actions of those in "the field" itself' and, in studies of surveillance, 'the fields of surveillant relations are not particular places, nor are they necessarily fixed in actions and technologies'. In order then to grasp the experiences of individuals, I adopt an 'open, and yet more basic approach [to] ethnography, one that is paying attention specifically to everyday life' (ibid.). Consequently, the "field of surveillance" becomes the narrations of individuals, their social relations, their views on technology, as well as their constructed imaginaries and practices (Green and Zurawski, 2015:35). In a similar vein, Koskela (2003:306) argues that space and, more specifically, urban environments and the city, are spaces of endless encounters. They are 'emotional, experienced, social, represented, and simulated' (ibid.). Hence, space is not about any architectural or infrastructural configuration, but it is 'fluid, mutable, unmappable, and difficult to grasp – like sparkling water' (ibid.).

For the purposes of this thesis then, my "field" can be seen as the construction of experiences, stories, thoughts, and narrations of my interlocutors combined with the (participant-) observations I have engaged in at Lund University. The field of my research extends from Lund University to each and every one of my interlocuters' homes, their commutes, their online engagements, their text

messages, their encounters, relationships, thoughts – I could go on and extend this list into infinity. In addition to the everyday lives of my participants, I include my own experiences and situatedness in this field. I do this because I am inherently part of a culture of surveillance – I mean, I am literally writing this thesis on a computer while being connected to a public WIFI that is able to gather data about me. Whereas traditionally fieldwork is done "somewhere else", a site that is foreign to the researcher (Burgess, 1984; Mason, 2018), the nature of surveillance culture does not allow for such a configuration. Instead, I am in a way already a native of this culture. Having this open mind and a curiosity to explore how *others* make sense of their realities can function as a mechanism to avoid projecting my own biases onto the constructed material. As with any interpretational work, there will still be some form of bias or influence from my side, I will, however, further discuss this later.

Because I delimit (or not) my field in this manner, I have chosen a specific set of methods, which allow me to gain insights into the everyday lives of my interlocutors. I will discuss these in detail below. First, however, I would like to introduce the people I have worked with.

3.3   Introducing the Interlocutors

I had the pleasure to work with a total of ten Lund University students between the ages of 20–28. In addition to this, I have had informal conversations with countless people during my (participant-) observations. The individuals I have worked with more closely, however, are comprised of six women and four men[2]. They are all enrolled in either Bachelor's or Master's programmes at Lund University. Initially, I was not necessarily interested in the experiences of any particular "group" or "social class". However, I have decided to select university students in this age group for multiple reasons.

First, the younger interlocuters have "grown up" with many of the devices and technologies that are central to my thesis. These include social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Discord, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. Additionally,

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[2] My interlocutors identify on a binary spectrum in regard to gender.

tracking oneself through the means of smartwatches or other wearable devices is seen as a normal part of life. Consequently, they have a different perception of these platforms and technologies than, say, someone who grew up during the "early days" of the Internet and digital technologies. Second, given the international nature of Lund University, I was able to select students with various national backgrounds, and thus, perspectives and experiences. This was not meant to be a study on a purely "Swedish" perspective, if such a thing is possible at all. Third, in times of a global pandemic, access to interlocutors, especially in other countries, can be challenging. For this reason, and to still be able to engage in *fieldwork*, I have decided to select students from Lund University. Fourth, as students at Lund University, I could be certain that each and every one of my interlocuters had experienced surveillance in one form or another. Either by using public transportation to get to the university, using a computer for their studies[3], and by living in an urban area that is subject to CCTV. Fifth, this generation not only "grew up" with the Internet, but they have also experienced the first scandals in relation to data mining and surveillance. Such scandals include the Snowden leaks as well as the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Finally, by choosing a university as the site to select interlocuters, I was able to get access to individuals with various different backgrounds, values, and personal interests. My interlocuters study subjects such as economics, global studies, psychology, sociology, engineering, digital humanities, and law. Consequently, the insights into different views on surveillance were invaluable.

The selection process for my interlocuters can best be described as "informal". I have started the process by asking friends and fellow students if they knew anyone who could potentially be interested in participating in my research. Since I already had "access" to the field by being a student myself, this was not particularly difficult. I did, however, experience some difficulties in obtaining interlocutors who were willing to meet face-to-face. Many students have returned to their family homes during the pandemic since university courses were taught online. Another complication arose from my research design itself. Initially, not many of the selected interlocutors were willing or had the time for the entire research process. That is, having a first interview session, followed by a diary period, and finally, a

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[3] During the COVID-19 pandemic, lectures were held online through the Zoom application. Additionally, university courses and resources are accessible through the Canvas application.

follow-up interview. In addition to snowballing and the help of gatekeepers, I was able to secure two interlocutors as a result of informal conversations during my (participant-) observations.

3.4 (Participant-) Observations

There is a reason why I have chosen to write "(participant-) observations" as opposed to "participant observation" until this point. Traditionally, participant observation allows the researcher to build relationships with the people who are being observed. In other words, 'it involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives' (Bernard, 2006:342). Additionally, participant observation refers to the practice of a researcher immersing themselves in a specific field or site where they can experience and observe 'a range of dimensions in and of that setting' (Mason, 2018:139). As I have tried to show above, that is not entirely possible when it comes to surveillance culture. I am inherently part of and already immersed in this culture, yet as a researcher interested in the subjective experiences of others not necessarily *participating*. Yet, at the same time, my presence in the lives of my interlocutors, our conversations, constructs me as part of their *imaginaries* and *practices*. So, in a way, I am participating, nonetheless. Green and Zurawski (2015) argue for an anthropological approach to studying surveillance in everyday life, which should include observations as a method. Paradoxically then, in order to study surveillance in everyday life, I have to use means of surveillance to do so. In an even different way, one could argue that the fact that I am *observing* individuals in their everyday lives embedded in a culture of surveillance, I am actually contributing to this culture. In other words, research-based observations can be seen as surveillance and thus become inherently participatory.

Observations formed the initial stage of my fieldwork. I dedicated the entire first month to just immersing myself in the everyday buzzing of life in and around Lund University. After this initial month, my focus switched to unstructured interviews and the diaries; however, I have continued to observe behaviour and objects of surveillance in these stages, because I was able to interpret certain behaviour in a different way as a result of the initial rounds of interviews.

I engaged in observations in and around Lund University. More specifically, I observed the behaviour of students in cafes that are used for studying, in various lecture buildings, libraries, cafeterias, as well as the outdoor areas close to university infrastructure. During my observations, I usually tried to find a place where I could sit down with a good view of the scenery. From there, equipped with a notebook and a pen, I would simply start observing how life played out on campus or in a café. The notes I took and will refer to in the following chapters are not meant as objective observations. Rather, they are observations of behaviour or objects that I have encountered coupled with my interpretations.

During these observational periods, I would specifically pay attention to how people interacted with various devices such as laptops, computers, tablets, smartphones, and smartwatches. Additionally, I paid attention to instances where people would talk to each other about social media or actually show each other things on their phones. In many cases where I observed something for the first time or something that seemed out of the ordinary, I would try to approach that person and inquire about the reasons for such behaviour. This, in turn, led to informal conversations lasting between a few seconds and several minutes. These conversations were not recorded; however, I informed my conversation partners about the nature of my inquiry, namely that I was conducting research and consequently asked them whether they agreed to me using the conversation as part of my material. In all but one case, these people agreed to our conversations being used for my research. After such conversations, I noted them down and tried to make sense of it. The observations and conversations not only served to construct material, but they additionally helped me understand my own research problem better. In other words, they helped me refine and focus my approach. The unstructured interviews that followed soon after were, for instance, heavily influenced by my initial "findings" resulting from observations and informal conversations.

Other than paying attention to how individuals interacted with specific devices, I also paid attention to whether individuals would interact with organisational surveillance, that is, public surveillance such as CCTV. Granted, I cannot speak to thoughts or feelings or whether people had actually registered that they were in an area that was under surveillance, except for instances where I approached a person

and had a short conversation with them. Nevertheless, I tried to observe if people were paying attention to CCTV in public transport or public parks.

Generally, these observations allowed me to get some sense of how the "everyday life" of a Lund University student played out on and around the campus. After the first month of purely conducting observations and informal conversations, I spent a week writing up my notes and deciding on what exactly it was that I wanted to discuss with my interlocutors during the unstructured interviews.

3.5 Unstructured Interviews

According to Minichiello et al. (1990), unstructured interviews are characterised by neither predetermined questions nor answer-categories and instead rely on *social interactions* between the anthropologist and interlocutors. Similarly, Punch (1998) argues that unstructured interviews, or "in-depth" interviews, provide a valuable approach to understanding complex individual behaviour without imposing "a priori" categorisation. This allows for greater freedom since the anthropologist does not extensively limit the field of inquiry (ibid.). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009:2) argue that the purpose of unstructured interviews is to 'expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and to help them develop a better understanding of the interviewees' social realities.' However, as Patton (2002) discusses, despite the "open" nature of unstructured interviews, an anthropologist must still possess detailed knowledge and prepare themselves if they wish to gain deep insights into their interlocutors' lives.

The unstructured interviews I conducted lasted an hour on average. This was the case for both the initial round of interviews and the follow-up interviews after the diary period. I have met my interlocutors in different locations. I always made sure that the interview setting was as informal or casual as possible. I did this since I was interested in the everyday lives of individuals and not on a "truth-finding mission" that would require some sort of formal, sterilised, and scientific setup. Hence, I met them in cafes, bars, libraries, and parks. Two interviews were held in group study rooms at Lund University due to the preference of my interlocutors. All of my interviews were voice-recorded with the explicit consent of the interlocutors. Before I started the recording, I spent a couple of minutes engaging

in small talk to loosen them and myself up. Mason (2018) recommends to "ease the tension" prior to recording through casual conversations. Small talk can therefore not only establish rapport, but additionally balance the relationship between researcher and researched (ibid.). Or, in an even simpler way, small talk can help alleviate some of the nervousness at the beginning of an interview (ibid.). I was nervous on more than one occasion. The small talk helped. I received similar feedback from my interlocutors.

I decided to conduct unstructured interviews for multiple reasons. First, since I was interested in *their lived experiences* with or through surveillance, I decided against creating an interview guide. Instead, I had "bubbles of interest" or topics, which I wanted to cover during the interviews. These topics were comprised of *everyday routine/life*, *social media/technology interaction*, and *opinions of surveillance*. Unstructured interviews are not informal since 'you sit down with another person and hold an interview. Period.' (Bernard, 2006:211). My interviews were based on a clear plan about what I wanted my interlocutors to talk about (Mason, 2018:109–112). Specifically, issues related to surveillance, their everyday routines, social media engagement, and their use of smart devices and computers. However, despite this clear plan, my aim was to exert 'a minimum of control over the people's responses' (ibid.). I wanted my interlocutors to express their opinions and experiences on *their terms*. This also meant that certain behaviour, which scholarly literature would describe as surveillance, was not characterised as such by my interlocutors.

Second, by choosing unstructured interviews, I was able to remain flexible during the interviews. I did, however, include one initial question: *How does your typical day look like?* According to anthropologist James Spradley (2003), such wide and open questions can be characterised as 'Grand Tour' questions. These questions allow for an initial "introduction" to participants' lives (ibid.). More specifically, the result of Grand Tour questions can be seen in a 'verbal description of significant features of a cultural scene' and they 'encourage informants to ramble on and on' (Spradley, 2003:50).

I always started every interview with this question. From here, I tried to listen for cues that would open a discussion on how they interacted with various devices, platforms, as well as traditional surveillance. For the most part, this worked well as most of my interlocutors answered in detail and in their words 'Oh I'm sorry. I'm

just rambling away here' (Lydia). There were, however, two interviews during which I had to "probe" more. Generally, I used different probing strategies. The ones I used the most were 'the silent probe' where I just remained silent and waited for my interlocutors to continue and the 'tell me more probe' (Bernard, 2006:218–219). On the one hand, I wanted to signal that we were not in a hurry at all, and that they could take as much time to answer a question as they wanted. On the other hand, I wanted my interlocutors to 'define the relevant information' (ibid.).

During the interviews where I had to probe more, the interlocutors were particularly focused on giving me "the right answer". As Bernard (2006) argues, this can be the result of power imbalances, a desire to "do well" in the interview, or a lack of confidence. Mason (2018) suggests that in such occurrences, the interviewer should strive to change the dynamic. Specifically, a strategy that can be deployed is to switch from more "formal" or "topic-related" questions to casual topics (ibid.). In these situations, because I had chosen unstructured interviews, I was able to "halt" the interview, and instead focus on other things, which were not necessarily related to the topic I was interested in. Consequently, by diverting the discussion to a less research-focused one, my interlocutors relaxed and started speaking freely. After a couple of minutes, we would return to the original topic of discussion, which now seemed easier for these two interlocutors. They were not focused on giving the right answer anymore, and instead, started "rambling".

Third, I had time. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009:2–5) stress the importance of time considerations when conducting unstructured interviews. In order to use the potential of unstructured interviews, they should not be limited by a fixed timeframe but, instead, should last for as long as the participants "have something to say" (ibid.). This, in turn, allows for the greatest amount of freedom and flexibility during the interview itself (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009:2).

The research process was designed to last for several weeks. Accordingly, I had time to talk to my interlocutors on their terms. I did not have to cover all aspects of what I was interested in during the first interview. As such, my interviews did not have to be "efficient". Similar to Herron et al. (2019), I have chosen to conduct a second round of interviews. As they argue, this not only allowed for a debriefing of participants but additionally, provided a space to ask clarifying questions by both researcher and researched as well as to bring up topics of interest, which were not covered in the initial interview or the diaries (ibid.).

Of course, this would not have been possible without my interlocutors giving me their time. I made sure to respect and appreciate their time and communicate this to them as well. The interviews were arranged on their terms and at times they preferred. Additionally, the diaries were used by my interlocutors to mention anything that they had forgotten to mention during the first interview.

Finally, by choosing to conduct unstructured interviews and recording them, I was able to not take notes during the interview. Instead, I was completely focused on the conversation and the person who was sitting next to or opposite of me. I was able to observe when intonation changed during certain statements or when someone seemed to struggle when telling me a story. In other words, I was able to pay attention to the micro-processes and small movements in conversations, which I would have missed if I were taking notes (Mason, 2018; Bernard, 2006). Similarly, and mentioned by my interlocutors, because I did not take notes during the interviews, they felt more comfortable and relaxed. It had less of a 'psychoanalytical flair' as one of my interlocutors described it. Of course, after the interview, I would immediately note down anything that I had observed during the interview, which would not be captured by the voice recorder.

3.6   The Diaries

I am interested in surveillance in the everyday lives of my interlocutors. That means: every second, every minute, every hour, every day. Now, it would be rather awkward if I were to, say, tuck my interlocutors to bed at night and ask them a final question about how they thought about surveillance today. Or what they were thinking when they posted a specific story on Instagram. To avoid this awkwardness, or for 'those situations where the problems of direct observation resist solution' (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977:481), an anthropologist can resort to the diary method. I have decided to include a diary method because it allowed me to explore the everyday thinking and reflecting of my interlocutors (Herron et. al., 2019; Hyers, 2018:62–63). More specifically, the diary method provides complementary information to my observations and unstructured interviews (Herron et. al., 2019: 1005–1007). Another benefit of the diary method can be seen in 'minimising the amount of time elapsed between an experience and the account

of this experience' (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli, 2003:580). In other words, while someone experiences or feels about a surveillance-related issue, through the diary, they have an immediate medium to report this. In this manner, the experience and the associated thoughts, reflections, and emotions are still "fresh" and "raw" as opposed to already mediated or relativised.

Additionally, I did not specify what form the diary was supposed to be. According to Herron et. al. (2019:1012), using such a 'flexible diary method' has multiple benefits. On the one hand, it enhances the quality of material due to its empowering nature (ibid.). In other words, the diary and its form are determined by the participants, which allows for a balancing of 'power relations between researcher and researched' (Herron et. al., 2019:1012). Further, diaries can also be used as an outlet for participants – to discuss sensitive thoughts, offer a space for reflection, and crucially, *include* participants in the research process, which allows them to advocate for their own interpretations (ibid.).

Even though the diary can be a powerful method to gauge into a person's everyday life, there are nonetheless some caveats. Other than giving instructions about the form, focus, and interval of diary entries (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli, 2003), I am giving up control of the process itself. In other words, I am entirely dependent on the dedication, effort, and willingness of my interlocutors to pursue the diary (Hyers, 2018). That being said, my experience with the diaries I have received during my research has been phenomenal. Either I was extremely lucky to have had very dedicated interlocutors or the topic itself seemed to be of interest to them. A reason that might explain the quality of the diaries I have received could be seen in the instructions I gave. They were not many. Instead of asking for detailed chronological "day-to-day" entries, I instructed my interlocutors to pursue a more "event-based" strategy. This means, that each time a specific event occurred, I asked them to self-report it in the diary, along with their reflections (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli, 2003). The events I described to them could include moments when they realised that they were under any form of surveillance. This could, for instance, include noticing CCTV on public transportation, border crossings between Copenhagen and Hyllie, or gaining new "followers" on Instagram. I purposefully left it to their own devices what they deemed to be surveillance in their everyday lives. In addition to these events, the interlocutors also noted some more general

thoughts on surveillance and social media. They reflected on issues they had previously not thought about and now seemed interested to learn more about.

My interlocutors could either have it in paper and pen format, in a text document on a computer, in a notes application on their phones or voice memos. I explained that I did not want the diary to be a burden for them, but rather something fun and exciting. Every person had their own method of keeping the diary. Some took notes during the day on their phone or in a notebook and then wrote up full entries in a text document on their computer. Others just used their memories from the day and wrote them up in the evening. Some used a notes application for the diary and sent a screenshot to me at the end of the diary period. On multiple occasions, I received emails or text messages where they asked me if they could include certain things, which they thought might not be directly related to the research itself. My answer was always the same: 'it is your diary – you decide what goes in there and what not. You decide what is relevant'.

Finally, apart from the individual diaries themselves, I have, in a way, created my own diary of interactions with my interlocutors. In many cases, they have sent me images or reflections when they observed or realised something. These usually took the form of: 'Hey Yannick, have you ever noticed how many CAMERAS there are at the Central Station?!' (Shane). Yes. Yes, I have. So, in a way, the diary method and the relationship I cultivated with my interlocutors as a result of the research process in general, created an accidental method of everyday interaction – sharing reflections through text messages.

The diaries varied in length. I have received minutely kept diaries that were 45 pages long as well as shorter three-page diaries. However, even if the quantity varied, all diaries were rich in their descriptions and reflections. The diary period itself lasted for three weeks. Before I met with my interlocutors for the follow-up interview, I asked them to send me the diaries. That way, I was able to screen them and ask clarifying questions during the interviews.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Anthropological research always entails ethical considerations. In this section, I will discuss issues related to *ethical principles in research*, *informed consent*, *power relations*, and *positionality/reflexivity*.

Ethical Principles

Any research must be guided by a set of underlying principles. These principles are intended to safeguard the integrity, safety, and truthful representation of the participants in research. Above all, according to the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the leading principle of research is to 'do no harm' (AAA, 2022). This has been a concern of mine from the early stages of conceptualising my research. Consequently, I have ensured not to cause harm to the dignity, and bodily and material well-being of my participants. I have done so by discussing my research approach with others who could help me understand potential unintended consequences. What I have encountered during my research is a certain level of experienced stress and uneasy feelings on behalf of my participants. This was due to the nature of, as one of my participants explained, 'feeling paranoid because of all these cameras everywhere' (Justin). This brings me to a vital point. I have asked my participants to pay attention to processes and phenomena they would otherwise *wilfully ignore* to avoid *cognitive dissonance*. To be clear, this cognitive dissonance was not perceived as overwhelming and hindering in their daily lives. Instead, it was best described as 'occasionally uncomfortable but easy to handle'. Overall, and according to my participants, no harm was caused during this research. Additionally, and part of the next subsection, as part of obtaining informed consent, I have consistently explained and reminded my participants that they are free to terminate their participation at any time – if they so wished.

Another guiding principle in research concerns transparency (AAA, 2022). This not only includes transparency in the presentation of my findings, the methods I have used, as well as my own positionality but additionally, transparency towards my *interlocutors*. By this, I mean that I do not mislead them about the nature of my research. Consequently, before obtaining informed consent, I have explained to them in detail what my research entails. This included a brief contextualisation of what it is that I am actually interested in as well as an outline of their involvement

in the research. Transparency also entails aspects of honesty. I have at all times been honest with my participants. And I am honest with you now as well. I am transparent and honest about the sources I have used for this thesis, and I am honest in the representations of my participants. If, for instance, a certain phrasing or response of interlocutors was unclear, I have contacted them to ensure that I would not "read into it" or misrepresent it in this thesis.

The material I have collected is only for research purposes and has not been disclosed to anyone else. Additionally, because of the nature of the methods I have used as well as the sensitivity of the topic I am investigating, I have coded my participants. In other words, I ensure the anonymity of my interlocutors. For this purpose, I have altered names, places where we have met, as well as detailed information that could be used to reconstruct the identity of my participants. While doing so, I ensured that I do not alter the intended meaning of diary entries, statements, or responses of my participants.

Informed Consent

A crucial aspect of my research involving individuals must be seen in informed consent. Generally, informed consent can be achieved in either *written* or *oral* form (AAA, 2022; Mason, 2018; Israel, 2015:80–81). Further, informed consent should not be viewed as a point on a "to-do list" that one checks at the beginning of the research. Rather, it is a process that should be considered prior to conducting fieldwork, at the beginning of the fieldwork, as well as during the fieldwork itself (Mason, 2018:96–97; Israel, 2015:100–101). To me, this meant that I have at all stages been in contact with my participants about this issue. I have routinely asked them about their consent as well as informed them about the next steps in the research. Generally, informed consent is to be seen as the *voluntary* participation of interlocutors on the basis of an explicit *understanding* of their involvement and the overall research (AAA, 2022). Consequently, I have not only explained the methods and context of my research but additionally, elaborated on potential consequences of their involvement, such as experiencing discomfort or unease while paying attention to surveillance occurrences in their everyday lives.

Power

Power always plays a role in research. Since I am in the position of a "researcher", I am perceived as knowledgeable in the field, as probing for answers and, in some

cases, as someone capable of giving diagnostics. In order to mitigate a potential one-sided relationship of power, I have chosen the format of unstructured interviews. Their more conversational and casual format allows establishing a more balanced relationship. It also reflects the "everydayness" of what I am interested in. I did, in some instances, witness and experience the imbalance of power first-hand. One of my interlocutors was clearly very nervous during the interview, up to the point of not being able to talk. After diverting the conversation to more casual topics and engaging in small talk, they managed to relax. I later asked them why they seemed so tense. They replied that they wanted to do a good job and give me the answers I was looking for – essentially, as they said: 'I don't want to waste your time'. I found that in situations like these, the best way to deal with it is to halt the interview. The casual chats that we engaged in during this situation created a relationship between us that could best be described as two peers sitting in a café. In a way, we both became humans again instead of being "researcher versus subject".

Another aspect of power that forms an inherent part of any research must be seen in representation. Ultimately, I am the one who chooses what goes into this thesis and what I leave out. I construct a narrative and tell my interlocutors' stories. Bearing this in mind, I strive for transparency and honesty. It is neither my aim to diagnose my participants nor to paint them in any "bad light". In order to ensure this, I was in constant dialogue with my participants and asked them for clarifications where necessary.

Reflexivity

In general, reflexivity can be seen as a process of self-examination regarding one's own beliefs, practices, and judgements during a research project (Finlay, 1998). For me, reflexivity was a constant process. During all the different stages of my research, I constantly reflected not only on how *my presence* has influenced my interlocutors, but additionally, on how *they have influenced* my interpretations, feelings, and judgements. In a way, reflexivity has been a certain mindset that I have employed during my research. This mindset was shaped by what Benson and O'Reilly (2020:2) call 'positioning, navigating, and interpreting'. In essence, I constantly dealt with questions on how my own position as a researcher in the field and interview settings influenced the research itself. Consequently, because of the

nature of surveillance culture and my overall research approach, I have positioned myself "inside" as opposed to having an external view. This, in turn, influenced how I navigated the interviews, for instance. My decision to rely on unstructured interviews was partly informed by my positioning on the "inside". By being on the "inside" and navigating the field and interviews correspondingly, I have been able to draw on my reflections for interpreting what my interlocutors were telling me. Because I share similar experiences and encounters, I was able to generate knowledge from this process of reflexivity.

A specific example that is worth highlighting here can be seen in my use of the diary method. As I have discussed at the outset of this chapter, one could argue that precisely because I have directed my participants' attention to surveillance in everyday life, I have manifested surveillance culture itself. In other words, without my "intervention", surveillance culture would not be possible to observe. On the other hand, this is precisely how "everyday life" plays out. As I have shown above, living in a city or an urban environment brings about countless daily interactions. These interactions are not always voluntary or following a specific "direction". We are constantly negotiating new information that might not correspond with our own worldviews and values. Nonetheless, we encounter them. Similarly, whether people notice surveillance or perceive certain activities as surveillance is not a fixed process. Instead, it is fluid, it depends on the context and the situation. In this sense, by choosing the diary method in order to direct individuals' attention to practices of surveillance, I was able to "force" them to lift the veil of wilful ignorance for a short period and, thus, observe their sentiments and experiences with surveillance. This then allowed me to find an explanation as to why wilful ignorance occurs in the first instance. This reasoning is a product of my reflexive process. If done persistently and continuously, reflexivity is not just another "to-do list" item but, instead, can become its own source of knowledge production.

3.8   Moving On

Before I move on to the more analytical part of this thesis, I want to give a brief outline of the following chapters. Up until now, I have tried to lay the groundwork, in theoretical and methodological terms, for the material I have constructed and

tried to make sense of. What follows are two chapters dedicated to that material and my interpretations thereof. I will start by discussing the material I have constructed in chapter four. I tell two stories about how my interlocutors made sense of their experiences with surveillance in their everyday life. Specifically, I will present how they characterised *organisational-* and *social-surveillance*. In chapter five, I will offer an interpretation of their sense-making by theorising the concept of *wilful ignorance*. I will discuss how wilful ignorance forms a key aspect of how my interlocutors negotiate surveillance in their daily lives.

4   Two Ways of Unseeing

In the following chapter, I will tell two stories. These stories are intended to provide the reader with insights into how my interlocutors experience surveillance in their daily lives. Specifically, based on my empirical material I will show how my interlocutors talked about and were affected by what may respectively be termed as *organisational-* and *social-surveillance*. Organisational surveillance refers to dynamics where my interlocutors have been subjected to either government or corporate surveillance (Andrejevic, 2019). For instance, this can include being exposed to CCTV or data mining. Social surveillance, on the other hand, describes dynamics in which individuals use surveillance to "watch" others or themselves (Trottier, 2016). For this purpose, I have divided the chapter into two parts. The first section will focus on organisational surveillance. I will present material where my interlocutors are "under surveillance". In the second section, I will focus on instances where my interlocutors engage in surveillance themselves, either through social media or self-monitoring. In many ways, the experiences, stories, and sentiments that are described here can be made sense of by references to what I – and previous research – have earlier discussed as "false" and "calmed consciousness". Nevertheless, as the stories here told also illustrate, and as will be further unfolded in the next chapter, something else is going on as well. Rather than just being blind(ed) to or made to accept how they are themselves being surveyed or how they engage in surveillance themselves, the manifold experiences I present here seem to indicate that my interlocutors make more or less conscious efforts to avoid thinking about surveillance issues. Or, as the final chapter of this thesis contemplates, one may argue that they engage in practices of *wilful ignorance*.

4.1   Organisational Surveillance

When I asked any of my interlocutors what they thought was and encompassed "surveillance", their answers all revolved around two things. First, governments

seemed to be responsible for most of the surveillance that we encounter daily. As Lydia said: 'surveillance is done by the massive entity of Big Brother. Governments. States. You know, the rich and powerful'. Second, my interlocutors also described how they were aware that most of the technologies they interact with daily, such as smartphones and social media, entail data tracking and monitoring by corporate entities.

Imagining

In relation to government conducted surveillance, Rory, during our first interview explained:

> Surveillance to me is like most things. A contrast of both good and bad things. I personally find safety in knowing that there are tools for making sure that you can catch someone who has done a bad thing, reassuring. It's maybe a way of making sure that you can prevent bad things from happening. (Rory, 1st interview)

I asked him what he considered the "tools", which are used in this context. His response was immediate and quick: CCTV. Cameras have indeed been mentioned by all of my interlocutors. Lydia, for instance, also mentioned CCTV in her initial reflections:

> I had lived in London for already three weeks or so, probably even a month, and my boyfriend came to visit me. And the first day in the evening he was like "holly f***k, there is a lot of CCTV" and I was just like 'really?! I haven't even noticed.' (Lydia, 1st interview)

She then went on to explain how just a few weeks later she had a class at university where they talked about the ethical aspects of surveillance, where she again emphasised that she had, in fact, not noticed cameras at all. Lydia also mentioned that she thought there must be more CCTV and surveillance in London in general compared to Malmö. However, she also admitted that she *assumed* there to be quite a bit of surveillance in Malmö as well, however 'I'm not paying attention to it at home either'. She was surprised about the number of cameras in London during her exchange. Still, she then also told me that she was aware that there were cameras in public transportation and certain public squares. Additionally, Lydia also said that she had nothing to hide:

> I'm in my bubble. And this is very naïve to think, but I don't have anything to hide in a sense. But we also live in a country where a person like me really doesn't have anything to hide. But what does that mean for being an immigrant, not heterosexual, or just not conforming to white-man-hetero norms? I think it's also something that

if I think too much about it, I'll end up in a massive rabbit hole. And just to let that thought spiral too much – I don't. (Lydia, 1ˢᵗ interview)

Awareness that CCTV occurs or is present in the lives of my interlocutors was clear. Her sentiment that she had nothing to hide was popular amongst all of the people I have spoken to. Similarly, Nelly also felt that she had nothing to hide:

I know there are cameras there. Like, in the supermarket for instance. But I don't think I care too much about it. I also don't have anything to hide either. It's just there. (Nelly, 1ˢᵗ interview)

Most of the interlocutors seemed to not care too much about organisational surveillance when I first spoke to them. In a sense, it does not necessarily occupy daily reflections of theirs. One could argue that the sense of not caring could stem from processes of habituation and normalisation, similar to how Taylor (2011) found that her participants grew accustomed and consequently indifferent to CCTV in schools. Another reason for "not caring" about organisational surveillance can be seen in its assumed "target". As Rory, for instance, explained: 'I know the cameras are not there because of me – why would they be?'. Therefore, not having anything to "hide" and not being the "target" of surveillance could explain the lack of caring about it. Nevertheless, organisational surveillance still seems to be part of some initial reflections. In other words, it is not completely absent. Brooke puts it:

Surveillance, for me, is like being watched. You know, CCTV and the like. For me [prolonged pause]. I'm aware. It's an awareness. I know there are cameras. But it's like, having a parallel thought in your head. It's not an active thought I would say. It's there but not active. (Brooke, 1ˢᵗ interview)

Other than having awareness in relation to government surveillance, especially in the form of CCTV, my interlocutors have also talked about corporate surveillance. Specifically in relation to their use of smart devices and the Internet:

[H]aving your data stored and monitored. For me, surveillance is a synonym for monitoring. I'm trying to phrase this correctly. Surveillance, for me, is someone else trying to make a "me" based on the data they have collected from me. I mean, I'm being monitored even when I'm not logged in. I'm getting monitored all the time. I'm getting monitored right now, too. I have my phone in my pocket. It's somehow unavoidable in today's society. It's the information age. You kinda have to allow some sort of surveillance in order to live in this world. Or to be able to function in this world…unfortunately. (Justin, 1ˢᵗ interview)

So, to Justin, surveillance is not necessarily tied to its more physical or what Andrejevic (2019) calls symbolic forms of surveillance. Instead, for Justin,

surveillance describes a set of processes that can also occur digitally, without "seeing the camera". He has an awareness that his interaction with certain devices and the Internet, in general, is tied to being monitored. Tied to data about him being collected for whatever reason. The way Justin talks about and imagines surveillance, its ubiquitous nature – always being monitored, resonates with Lyon's (2018) notion that modern life is lived under surveillance. Constantly. Always. As Justin explains, it is *inevitable*. However, he also expresses a certain sense of frustration or defeat by adding "unfortunately" after a brief pause. He does not like this circumstance, but he feels that he has no other choice if he wants to function and participate in modern life. Consequently, he just lives with it. Justin got particularly annoyed with the constant "Foodora" reminder emails that are sent to him. Not only would they remind him of what he ordered the last time, but also suggested new restaurants and meals based on his historical order behaviour. Justin talks about the inevitability of surveillance in modern society. To him, the very technologies that he uses on a daily basis are reliant on modes of surveillance such as data tracking. This becomes even clearer in Danielle's reflection:

> I think surveillance happens everywhere. You have your phone with you all the time. If you think about it. Your phone keeps track not only of what you are doing on it but also where you go. How close to someone you are. What you buy. It tracks everything in a way. So do the companies from which you buy a phone or an app. (Danielle, 1st interview)

Reflecting

What we can already observe through a few of the initial statements from the first round of interviews with my interlocutors is that they are aware of organisational surveillance. They know that governments and corporations are monitoring them through various sensors. Most prominently featuring CCTV and the smartphone. Unsurprisingly, as also previously discussed in the methodology chapter, this awareness increased even more during the diary period as I had actively asked them to think about issues of surveillance:

> Today was a bit different than yesterday, as I was even more aware of the surveillance around me. Or maybe I was just actively looking for it to see where I could find it. Spot a camera here, spot a camera there… It's also interesting to me how much of the surveillance around me that I have been ignoring prior to this diary. And it's not like I wasn't aware that it was there, but that there was almost like a *perception filter* blocking something, which I saw on a daily basis. (Rory, diary note)

Despite being aware of surveillance prior to him actively paying attention to it as part of his participation in the research, Rory still was surprised about the amount of surveillance in his daily life. Nelly and Lydia were equally surprised when they started paying active attention:

> Maybe I wasn't paying attention before, I mean, I knew there were cameras, but I've noticed that there are SO MANY cameras in my hometown. It's worth noting that I don't live in the city centre, but more on the outskirts. They are literally everywhere, even in my apartment building. (Nelly, diary note)

> I consciously noticed the CCTV on the bus for the first time after the interview. Sure, I have noticed them before, but I haven't really paid attention to them before. Now I actually consciously looked where they are on the bus. Like, what the f***, they are everywhere. (Lydia, diary note)

Both Nelly and Lydia seem to be distressed about realising how prevalent CCTV is in their lives despite having prior awareness of their existence. Collin had also noticed the number of cameras in his daily life. He also reflected on what his heightened awareness caused in him:

> Seeing all of the cameras all the time makes me feel guilty. As if I was the bad guy they are trying to monitor. I know I'm not. (Collin, diary note)

Collin was not the only person who was, at times, feeling overwhelmed by paying constant attention to surveillance in their daily lives. Anna, after two weeks of writing the diary, noted:

> I don't really think about this stuff at the moment. Life is just too fast and I'm too busy. Maybe that is the problem: we know the issue, but we are too busy, so it's easy to push a thought/fear/concern away. (Anna, diary note)

For Anna, it became too much to constantly pay attention. Consequently, she needed to distance herself in order to function properly in her daily routine. Here, Anna reflects on why, even during the research process, she seemed unable to pay attention to organisational surveillance around her. It seems as if surveillance in her daily life created stress and pressure. Because her daily life is stressful, or busy, she cannot afford to *think about* surveillance and reflect on it.

Paying attention to experiences of surveillance extended beyond encountering cameras in daily life. Nelly, for instance, writes:

> 'LinkedIn again! Now I got this suggestion to connect with someone with whom I have been spending a bit more time than usual and chatting with more lately. She is

taking over my role at a student organisation since I'm going away on exchange next semester. I mean, I have not been checking her out on social media or the Internet.' (Nelly, diary note)

She wonders how and why she received this suggestion. Nelly later reflects that there must have been some sort of location tracking involved on the part of LinkedIn in order to determine that both she and her colleague were in close proximity on several occasions. She does not convey any particular frustration about this instance. She does, however, feel irritated and surprised. It is something that she would normally not think about twice, but given the circumstances of participating in my fieldwork, Nelly was surprised to notice and pay attention to something that appeared so "normal". Generally, the reactions to noticing digital surveillance varied among my participants. Whereas some expressed anger, frustration, and anxiety, others have already completely accepted it and portrayed a sense of indifference:

Nothing special today. Just the usual tracking of my Internet searches by Google. Since it's Christmas soon, of course, I'm gonna get spammed by "gift ads" based on my searches. (Justin, diary note)

Justin knows that data mining and tracking are happening and he is frustrated that it seems to be a necessity in today's society. Despite his feelings of hopelessness, or maybe precisely because of this feeling, he now just accepts it without worrying about it anymore in his daily life. All of this is captured in his initial statement "Nothing special today", which is followed by a description of how he encountered surveillance.

Danielle, on the other hand, used her diary to blow off some steam:

I was logged in on Gmail while looking for directions to my dad's house: "You visited this place two weeks ago". F**k off! (Danielle, diary note)

Danielle is cautious about the traces she leaves behind on the Internet. Consequently, if she is reminded that despite her efforts to safeguard her privacy, somewhere/somehow her data is still collected by corporations; well, we get this kind of sentiment in response. Danielle, in order to limit access to her data, uses a Virtual Private Network (VPN) in order to conceal the location of her computer. Additionally, she refuses to accept certain cookie settings and makes sure to delete them after every Internet session. In other words, Danielle engages in multiple

surveillance practices, which are "defensive" in nature. Because of her awareness, she tries to resist. Interestingly, she only does so with her desktop computer:

> On my desktop, I use a VPN, have my browser delete cookies after I close the page, Javascript disabled, use HTTPS Everywhere and Privacy Badger. But on my phone, I use the default browser and I don't think I've done any special settings. And the phone is the device I connect to public Wi-Fi with. I've promised myself to fix it and like, clean up my phone, but I get tired just thinking about it. Passwords that are saved in the browser and stuff that I'd have to change because I don't remember them. (Danielle, diary note)

For some reason, Danielle does not show the same kind of diligence in protecting her privacy on her smartphone. She explained to me that, for the most part, her negligence stems from not wanting to inconvenience herself. We will discuss this further in the next chapter.

I started all of the second interviews with the same question: How did you experience the diary period? The answers to this question were more or less always the same:

> It was actually really interesting. I paid a lot of attention to things I normally don't really think about that much. I don't know, at times it was pretty crazy to see so much. (Anna, 2nd interview)

Similarly, Collin said 'it kind of skewed my viewpoint in a way that I thought about things that I don't usually think about, you know.' The diary had the intended effect. My interlocutors had to pay attention to things that are perceived as normal. Their routines or the automatic process of living the mundane everyday life was interrupted by having to pay attention to one's surroundings. Nelly, for instance, confided in me that:

> I realised that I was getting more aware of things around me. I usually don't really think about these things so much, and I just go with the flow. I mean, I'm still aware that it's there but I am not thinking about it. I'm kind of paying more attention to these kinds of things. (Nelly, 2nd interview)

It is precisely the "going with the flow" that was interrupted during the diary period. In all cases, however, there was not anything "new" that was learned by my interlocutors. On the contrary, most of them already knew that surveillance was an integral part of their lives. They knew that CCTV was installed on every bus, every train, and every store they went to. They further knew that all of their interactions online or with certain (smart-) devices were subjected to digital surveillance or data mining. What became clear as a result of the second round of interviews was that

my interlocutors did not suffer from a lack of awareness. However, as we have already seen previously, having to pay constant attention to organisational surveillance can become exhausting:

> By the end of the diary period, it became like this whole different thing, where it didn't become tiresome to do the diary, but it became tiresome to be noticing these surveillance types. And I kind of wanted to end this because it's something, at least in my opinion, which I don't want to notice. You know, as soon as I became more and more aware of the surveillance around me and the personal one, the more it started to bug me. It was, like, damn, there is another one. (Rory, 2nd interview)

In other words, all the surveillance that Rory encountered on a daily basis has caused stress and discomfort. It was not in line with some of his values, particularly values connected to privacy. Even after the diary period had ended, Rory was still noticing instances of surveillance despite not having to:

> For a couple of days after, I still noticed the cameras and personal surveillance. But then I was like: Nope, we're done. Nope, we don't do that anymore now. So, now, I'm back to routine again. (Rory, 2nd interview)

As he explained to me multiple times, he was not relieved to not have to write a diary anymore[4] but he was relieved to not *have to pay attention* anymore. Sophia similarly reflected on the difference between how she perceived aspects of her everyday life during her participation and prior to it:

> I think that before the diary and interview, I wouldn't have thought about it twice. But now, or during the diary thing, I was. When I noticed someone looking at me in the gym, or when I saw a camera, or when someone watched my Insta story, I was always like: who's watching me? Why are they watching me? There was no, like, filter that would stop me from thinking this. I was always like: Oh sh*t, I'm being watched by somebody. (Sophia, 2nd interview)

There are two ways of looking at Sophia's and Rory's experiences here. Of course, one could argue that they experienced certain aspects of their everyday lives in terms of being hyper aware and reading too much into situations and encounters. On the other hand, however, them being watched constantly is what their everyday life is about. They have been aware of this prior to the research but now they actively paid attention to it. Them paying attention to cameras in a gym or a store does not change the fact that these things occur – constantly. They are normal

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[4] Rory actually told me that he enjoyed the diary so much that he started writing a personal diary after his participation.

occurrences in their everyday lives. The only difference is that now the filter which mediated their perception and thinking of these circumstances was lifted.

For Justin, some forms of surveillance, especially digital marketing that relies on targeted advertisement based on predictive analytics, is just something that is normal now:

> You know, I'm fine with it working that way. It's marketing. It's just more directed when they use my search history or recent purchases. I'm ok with that. It's normal. But at the same time, it's just so much all the time. Like, it's even in my Facebook feed when I haven't ordered anything through Facebook but from a different website. Yeah, sometimes I just realise how much it is. (Justin, 2nd interview)

Acceptance of this normality also formed parts of Danielle's experiences with surveillance. Danielle has told me during our second interview that she has not really had to change anything in her daily routine or to increase her awareness of what is going on around her. She was already very aware of the occurrence of surveillance in its multiple forms:

> If I was living alone in this world or, I don't know, lived in a cabin in the woods, I would not need any of these things. But even though I hate the intrusiveness of smartphones and certain apps, they make life so much easier and more convenient. If I don't use them, I just miss out on other stuff. I get annoyed and I try to be conscious of my privacy but still [prolonged pause] I accept it. What else can you do? (Danielle, 2nd interview)

Danielle is someone who is constantly aware of digital surveillance around her. It is something that does occupy her mind in her daily life. Consequently, as we have seen from previous statements and diary entries from her, there is a certain level of hopelessness in Danielle's case. As she admits herself: 'it can be a bit ascetic to not have anything'. In other words, convenience forms a large part of how Danielle negotiates organisational, especially digital, surveillance in her daily life.

Convenience
Generally, convenience forms a large part of how my interlocutors and the people I have observed during my fieldwork negotiate surveillance. A common sight on the Lund University campus were the "sticky notes" that were taped over laptop cameras. I asked some of the people who had these notes about why they did so. Most replies revolved around protecting one's privacy by disabling the ability for someone to remotely activate their laptop cameras. However, all of them claimed that they started putting on the sticky notes only after having seen that many

students were doing so. In a way, having a sticky note on one's laptop camera almost became a trend – a thing to do.

Lydia also reflected on the use of the sticky note during our second interview:

> I used to have one as well. Mostly because everyone was having it. But you know, then Zoom happened and I kind of got rid of it. I haven't thought about it anymore until just now. (Lydia, 2nd interview)

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, university lectures were held online through the Zoom application. The application itself makes use of a camera to enable a video conference. Consequently, it was too inconvenient for Lydia to remove the tape for every online lecture and then put it back on. In other words, although in a minuscule manner, it made her everyday life more bothersome and less convenient. Other aspects of convenience have been mentioned by Brooke:

> I'm using SATS as my main gym and there you have to download an app, so you get access to the gym. I track how much I go to the gym and which gyms I use the most. I don't know, just having it on my phone is more convenient than having an extra card for it or something. I haven't paid attention to it that much before the diaries, but now, it's kind of insane how much the app knows about my habits. (Brooke, 2nd interview)

It is the mundane and little things in our daily lives that make it convenient. Having to carry around a credit card-sized membership card for a gym seems more inconvenient than downloading an application for one's smartphone. Despite knowing that the application is tracking, monitoring, and collecting data about one's behaviour, it is still more convenient.

Shane told me that during the diary period, he wanted to embark on a self-experiment. He tried not to buy tickets for public transportation in Malmö and Lund through the dedicated smartphone application:

> I was interested in this when doing the diary. Just seeing if I could get around Malmö and Lund without using my phone to buy a ticket. It's a huge hassle. Like, I had to either use my credit card on the bus, buy a ticket at the central station, or would have had to get a dedicated Skånetrafiken card at the central station. (Shane, 2nd interview)

I asked him why he wanted to do this experiment and he replied that he was struck by how many things in his daily life are dependent on him using his phone. He just wanted to see how it would go without using his phone for certain things. As it turns out, it was nearly impossible, or at least a "huge hassle" to refrain from using his phone for something mundane as purchasing a bus ticket. It goes to show

how accepted and normal certain applications that rely on tracking our behaviour have become in our daily lives.

A final consequence of paying attention to surveillance in everyday life can be seen in Collin's reflections when we met in a pub in Malmö:

> Sometimes, when I saw cameras in, like, ICA or on the bus, I kind of started thinking they were there because of me. As if it was only there for me. Like, it labelled me as a potential bad guy or something. I mean, I'm not, obviously. But it made me feel like it. Honestly, I don't want to feel like that. So yeah, maybe that's why I ignore them. (Collin, 2nd interview)

Here, surveillance, or the awareness of being watched, affects Collin in such a way that he starts to think that only *he* is being watched and the reason for that is that he is a "bad guy". Contrary to how my interlocutors characterised their indifference to surveillance in terms of "not having anything to hide", as a result of the diary period, most of them started to feel as if they actually did have something to hide.

If we then summarise how my interlocutors perceive organisational surveillance in their daily lives, we can see how all of them shared a sense of awareness. They know that CCTV exists. They know that their data is monitored. Nevertheless, as a result of paying attention to it constantly, they experienced a sense of bewilderment, stress, anger and, in some cases, mild anxiety. In some instances, paying attention to the occurrence of organisational surveillance became too much that they had to stop doing so and focus on their daily routines. In other words, the awareness of the ubiquity and prevalence of organisational surveillance restricted their ability to go about their everyday life.

4.2   Social Surveillance

So far, we have looked at how my interlocutors made sense of their experience in relation to what I have termed and discussed as organisational surveillance. Now, I want to turn to *social surveillance*. To reiterate, social surveillance describes the process of individuals watching each other through various means (Trottier, 2016; Staples, 2014). Accordingly, social media that relies fundamentally on individuals *watching* each other and (in-)voluntarily being watched (Trottier, 2016) can offer us insights into the process of social surveillance.

Social Media and Surveillance

All of my interlocutors are, to various degrees, active on social media. The most common platforms that have been mentioned were Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Tinder. Already during our first interview, Rory had the following to say:

> But, you know, just by this conversation with you, I start to think about [extended pause]. In a way, I do surveillance too. It's also on a personal level, I think. Just thinking about all the cameras on our phones and social media and stuff like that.' (Rory, 1st interview)

The conversation I had with Rory revolved around how he uses social media. He told me that he does not consider himself to be "active". In his understanding, being active refers to uploading pictures, commenting on posts, and posting things himself. Consequently, Rory, like many of my interlocutors, sees himself more as a "watcher" than a "poster". Watching others makes up a big part of how my interlocutors interact with social media:

> I don't post much. My main use of social media is Instagram. And I go to Twitter a bit. I don't post. I used to, like, a lot. But now I just mainly watch others, like, feminist influencers, just, to stay informed and get inspired. (Lydia, 1st interview)

I asked Lydia why she did not post much anymore and she answered that, in her opinion, it was getting more and more difficult to "put oneself out there" without having to fear repercussions in any form. Collin, for instance, also just watches others without posting much himself:

> Nah, I don't post anymore. Of course, you know, I have my profile and everything, like, the good stuff. But I just check others' stories and posts. It's fun. Often, I spend, like, two hours just going through people's stories and profiles. Kinda f****d-up if you think about it. (Collin, 1st interview)

I inquired why he thought that watching others was problematic (to use more diplomatic language) and he replied that it seemed strange to spend hours upon hours just looking into others' lives. During my fieldwork, I encountered a colloquial term for this activity: "stalking". All of my interlocutors have engaged in social media stalking. Generally, stalking in this context describes the process of systematically checking the profile and posts of another person without being discovered in the process. In certain cases, however, visibility is desired. I was surprised about the depth of "stalking" as well as how intricate of a craft it appeared to be with its own symbols, language, and strategies. However, specific features,

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such as Instagram's "stories", show how many and who has watched the story. Shane, for instance, has told me:

> You know, I have about six accounts on Instagram. One is my personal account where I just have close friends as followers. It is also set to private, so nobody can see it without my permission. Then, I have my public account where anyone who wants to can follow me. I also have four accounts that I use for stalking [chuckles]. (Shane, 1st interview)

By having such specific "stalking" accounts, Shane can watch stories of people he is interested in while still remaining anonymous. These accounts are not linked to his actual profile and usually do not include any personal information. Nelly, for instance, has referred to them as 'burner accounts' echoing the "burner phones", which are a frequent encounter in spy movies. These accounts ensure anonymity and secrecy. Although not all of my participants make use of such stalker accounts, all of them have engaged in social media stalking. The reasons for such stalking, or social surveillance, are manifold. Most of the time, there seems to be a romantic or sexual interest in the person that is being stalked. Anna has engaged in such motivated stalking as well, but she added that:

> Most of the time I stalk someone to judge them. Not always negatively, but, you know, just to see if they are real people or how they present themselves. You can tell a lot about a person by looking at their Instagram. Are they paying attention to aesthetics, photo composition, etc. Or are they just posting random sh*t? Usually, whenever I meet someone in real life, or when I have a match on Tinder, I stalk them for a bit to see how they are. (Anna, 1st interview)

During my interviews, I got the impression that this stalking – this form of surveillance – is normal. It is just something my interlocutors do in their everyday lives. They "google" people, search for someone's Instagram profile, and spend minutes and even hours going through their photos. Often, they do not know the stalked person, or maybe will never know them – complete strangers. I was intrigued by this activity and asked all of my interlocutors how they felt about engaging in such stalking. The answer was the same: 'Nothing special. Everyone does it'. I then asked them if they thought that someone might stalk them as well. Same answer. Although Lydia and Nelly pointed out that if someone was stalking

their public Instagram profiles and would "like" older photos of them[5], they would perceive that to be "creepy". As Nelly said:

> Why would you scroll all the way down to the bottom of my page to like that picture?! I mean, I have new ones, too. So, yeah, that creeps me out. Like, someone actually took the time to scroll down there and like it. What message are they sending me with this? (Nelly, 1st interview)

In the context of stalking, especially if there is a romantic interest involved, some of my interlocutors use specific "codes" or symbols to make their presence visible. Brooke, for instance, uses a strategy that involves "liking" three pictures on someone's profile. They should not be all next to each other but spread out on the page. There is careful consideration involved in choosing the pictures she wants to like. The picture of the romantic interest carries a message. By this, Brooke meant that:

> If I "like" the guy's cat picture, that doesn't really tell him that I like *him*. So, I try to choose pics that can show my interest. Like, I don't know, a pic where he's working out or dressed nicely. (Brooke, 1st interview)

Sending coded messages relies on the fact that both Brooke and her romantic interest *know* that they are being watched. There is an awareness that one is visible. In the case of Instagram, this is, of course, desirable. People want to be seen. But as we saw with Shane, that does not always have to be the case. Sometimes people want to be seen only by a certain group of people. It is an intricate balancing of different strategies, values, and interests when it comes to online visibility. To perfect this dance, some of my interlocutors go as far as researching when "content" is watched most often. Anna posts on a regular schedule that she devised as a result of research and experience. She learned the times when people are most likely to use Instagram and would consequently see her content. All in the pursuit of "likes" and "story reactions".

As we can see, "stalking" is a normal activity – everyone does it. At least this is how my interlocutors explained it to me during our first interviews. During their diary periods, this sense of "normalcy" started to dissolve:

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[5] The photos on Instagram are arranged in chronological order. Consequently, if one wants to see older photos, one has to scroll down the page.

It was the first time I really felt "stalked" on social media. Or the first time I paid attention to it. A (male) friend is visiting me right now. Although my ex-boyfriend is blocked from viewing my stories, he found a way via a website to watch them anyways, so he knew my friend was here. He acted very jealous. I feel so watched and controlled by my ex. My Instagram appearance was always a topic between the two of us, but now this channel gives him a possibility to still control me, although he's 1400 km away. I feel as if I have to justify every single story and post I upload and I expect (and know) that he judges me and feels jealous and controlling. (Anna, diary note)

Anna's ex-boyfriend found a way to gain access to her stories and watch them without her consent. She feels the need to justify what she uploads to Instagram. Although her ex-boyfriend makes use of a specific website in order to gain access to her stories and profile, similar results can be achieved by having multiple accounts on Instagram. Such as the "stalking" or "burner" accounts we have encountered. Even though social media seems to be voluntary, as in people can choose what they want to show and to whom they want to show it, there is still the possibility of unvoluntary visibility. People can and will see things that one might not want them to see. Sophia had a similar experience in relation to LinkedIn:

I never really thought about it before, but I feel pressured to be on LinkedIn. They told us today at uni how important it is to have a presence there. To be active there. There are now even seminars where we discuss how to be more engaged and interesting to future employers. It feels like I'm being forced to put myself out there so that someone can stalk me. (Sophia, diary note)

It seems to Sophia as if she does not have a real choice in whether she participates or not. To the contrary, she feels forced to do so because of a fear of not finding employment upon graduation. As she admits, without external influence, a trigger, she would not have thought about this in her daily life. As part of the fieldwork, the diary was such an external influence that forced my interlocutors to reflect on their daily lives. Lydia has, for instance, reflected on her own behaviour in relation to social media:

I use so much social media that I am sometimes even ashamed of it now. I do try to limit it. But sometimes I spend a full hour just scrolling through reels on Insta or watching stories. (Lydia, diary note)

The consistent scrolling through other people's lives every morning makes her feel ashamed. Rory experienced a similar reaction after someone slipped him a note during an event he attended:

I couldn't help but wonder who this person could have been, so, almost automatically, I looked through social media to see if maybe the girl who was sitting next to me could be the one who wrote the note. (Rory, diary note)

The key word here is "automatically". He immediately "checks" social media to identify whether the girl next to him is the one who wrote the note. It is almost an instinct to use social media as a means to confirm a suspicion. Rory becomes even more reflective later in his diary:

I feel like we're doing a lot of personal surveillance all the time. I found myself almost instinctively looking up someone on Facebook because that person approached me during an event, or because I heard about someone, or I saw someone I knew and felt curious about that individual. And most of the time, there really is no underlying reason for that check-up of another person on social media, but simply a natural curiosity. The fascinating thing is that I noticed that I almost needed to justify it to myself. I found myself looking for a justification as to why I wanted to see someone's social media. (Rory, diary note)

The intervention of the diary has led Rory to reflect on his day-to-day, normal behaviour. Something that comes so instinctively to him, namely checking or stalking someone on social media, is suddenly questioned and in need of justification. In her final diary entry, Anna also reflects on how she normally interacts with social media:

Yesterday and today, I thought a lot about the "stalk-ability" of our society. I am texting with a guy, and he is very closed, but with the pieces of what I know about him and 20 minutes on his Instagram, I found out the name of his ex-girlfriend, all photos dedicated to her, his best friends, his gym, his music taste, which of the photos he posted were his (and which weren't) and, most importantly, I judged him based on his presence. I wonder if someone else is stalking me equally and then I realise that they probably would find out a lot about me… do I even want this? (Anna, diary note)

Anna is someone who is very active on all social media platforms. She also sports a considerable number of "followers" on Instagram. Yet, she still reflects on how much she is able to find out about a person by investing 20 minutes on their profiles. It is something she normally "just does" and here reflects upon and eventually questions whether she wants this or not. Her final question is not something that she considered during our first interview. Social media and "stalking" were just normal to her – everyone does it.

The importance of social media becomes clear when we listen to Danielle who, for a long time, made a conscious decision to avoid social media except for communication reasons:

I don't really use social media. Like, I have an Instagram account, but I never post anything. It's really few and far in between. And I don't look at it really. I also used to have a Facebook account, but I stopped using Facebook, like, six years ago. So, for the longest time, I couldn't communicate with my friends. I was always kinda left out of the day-to-day chats because I didn't have Facebook Messenger. So, then, probably a year ago, I created a new Facebook account only so I could use Messenger to talk to my friends. (Danielle, 1st interview)

I asked her why she had stopped using Facebook and why she had an Instagram account despite only using it seldomly. She replied:

With Facebook, it just felt like too much. I don't know if it's the same nowadays. But when I stopped using it, it was like everything was on Facebook all the time. It was so much content, and I think I just got kind of sick of it. I could see what everyone was up to all the time. It just didn't make me feel good. I know it's curated and all, but in comparison, my life wasn't that good and that kind of depressed me. Also, seeing on Facebook how everyone was always hanging out together. It kind of made me feel very lonely. It's the same with Instagram. Everything is curated and perfect. I only use it when I want to see something specific or when I am really, really bored. I used it last week to check on my ex. I knew she was in town, and I didn't want to run into her. (Danielle, 1st interview)

For Danielle, constant visibility became too much. It made her sick. She is aware that most of the content that we encounter on social media is curated. It simply is a presentation of how one would like to be. Or, as Anna says, 'you don't post the ugly stuff. You post the good and nice stuff'. Despite *knowing* this, Danielle still made comparisons between herself and what she saw online. Because it made her feel sick, she retreated from social media, only to find that she now was even more isolated. Brooke experienced similar circumstances when she underwent a "social media detox" for a couple of months. She had deleted all of the social media apps on her phone because she realised that she was just presenting a certain image of herself online, which she hoped would appeal to a select group of people. This image, however, was not who she was, but whom she wanted to be. The resulting difference between these two images turned out to be a big stressor for Brooke. Consequently, when she deleted all the social media apps:

It felt like I distanced myself from my friends. Also, because I didn't respond to text messages so quickly. It became kind of weird. It felt like I was putting distance between me and my friends and the people I knew. Also, when I wasn't using social media, I eventually started to get this physical feeling. Like when I quit taking snus. It was like, like, almost withdrawal symptoms. So eventually, I started using the apps again, not for posting that much anymore, just, more for messaging. (Brooke, 2nd interview)

Again, social media is an integral part of my interlocutors' everyday life. It allows them to communicate with each other, to make plans, to feel connected. When taken away, isolation is felt. Additionally, it appears that the excessive use of social media can cause some form of addiction as described by Brooke. Social media itself can also just make someone feel sick because of its curated nature, as is the case with Danielle. In the end, similar to how Justin has characterised surveillance as a necessity of modern life – a necessity to participate in today's society, so too can social media be seen as such a necessity. There is no real alternative. It is either accepting social media and participating or isolating oneself:

> I feel so hopeless. It feels like it's impossible to do anything about it now. Sometimes I just want to blow the whole thing up. Start from scratch. And still, I keep using it. (Danielle, 2nd interview)

The helplessness that Danielle expressed in our second interview was shared by my interlocutors. Most of them questioned their reliance and use of social media. Specifically, they questioned whether or not "stalking" was something that they wanted to do and be exposed to:

> While I wrote the diary, I don't know, it just all felt so wrong. Do you know what I mean? It's like, yeah, of course, I check him on Instagram, but why? Like, why do I have to do that? It's really creepy but also normal. It's wrong but also OK. But yeah, I'm happy I don't have to think about it anymore. (Sophia, 2nd interview)

> I thought a lot about if others stalk me the same way I do them. Gives me the chills, man [prolonged pause]. But yeah, I shouldn't think too much about it. It's just how it is, I guess. (Collin, 2nd interview)

With the exception of Rory, none of my interlocutors have referred to their own stalking and being stalked, in terms of surveillance. Throughout their diaries and the interviews, they kept referring to it as stalking or "checking" someone on social media. However, the processes, activities, and behaviours they all described can be seen as acts of surveillance. Specifically, social surveillance. In a way, my interlocutors *unsee* that they are exposed to and conduct systematic, casual, and instinctive (social-) surveillance on a daily basis.

Self-Monitoring

Now, I would like to shift attention to self-surveillance, which can be described as the process of monitoring one's own activities (Lupton, 2016). Essentially, it encompasses gathering data about oneself through various different means (ibid.).

Most commonly, smart devices such as watches, phones, and fitness trackers can be used to collect such data. My interlocutors all engage in some form of self-monitoring. A prominent use of self-monitoring can be seen in the use of a "screen-time report" on my interlocutors' smartphones. In short, this report is a weekly message that is sent to the phone user via a push notification and informs them how much time they spent on their phone during the last week. The report also details how much time was spent on which applications, what was the dominant activity, at what time which applications were used, as well as how many times the phone was picked up. Collin takes the screen-time report rather seriously. As he said:

> When I see that I am above a daily average of five hours, I know I am an idiot. So, then I really try to limit my use of the phone. You know, you can set like a time limit on the phone for how long you can use a specific app. So, yeah, then I just try to use it less the next week. (Collin, 1st interview)

Similarly, Sophia tries to stay below three hours per day from the beginning. For her, it is difficult because as she said:

> I have a job I'm doing remotely and so, I kind of check my phone every now and then even while at uni. I shouldn't but I do. Once I'm on the phone replying to emails, then Insta is just a touch away. It's difficult to resist. So, yeah, I set the limit on the app. Sometimes I cheat though. (Sophia, 1st interview)

This form of self-monitoring has a direct impact on how my interlocutors interact with their phones. It can give them a sense of accomplishment, as is the case with Collin when he manages to stay below his self-imposed limit or it can also cause feelings of anxiety, as when Sophia "cheats" and keeps using the phone despite her self-imposed limit. Similarly, Shane talked about how he views the screen-time report:

> It's like my mom when I was smaller and constantly playing video games. Like, now it's just the report that tells me I spent too much time in front of the screen. So yeah, it's useful to just not use the phone or some apps too much, I guess. (Shane, 1st interview)

In this sense, the screen-time report as a means of self-monitoring functions as a control mechanism that my interlocutors can make use of in order to regulate their phone use. They learn about themselves through these reports. In relation to smartwatches, Danielle told me:

> I use a smartwatch when I run. Like, I wear it all the time for running. I want to use it when I run because it's really convenient to get that information stored and

visualised. It's really fun. I can see how far I run, where I run, and even in what kind of shoes I run. (Danielle, 1st interview)

As we have seen previously with Danielle, she is very cautious about her interactions with smart devices and the Internet due to her frustration with digital surveillance. Nevertheless, she chooses to wear and use a smartwatch for her running because it is convenient and because it gives her instant feedback about her performance. Collin also wears a smartwatch:

I don't run. I hate it. But, you know, the watch is really awesome because it shows me how I sleep. When I sleep best and all that stuff. It's good to know. (Collin, 1st interview)

I asked Collin what he does with the data that he collects about his sleep and he responded: 'nothing'. He just likes to have information about himself that could potentially become useful in the future. During his diary period, he reflected on the use of his smartwatch:

I wear it all the time. I see my heart rate, how many steps I take every day, how long I study per day. I know so much about myself because of that thing. I'm not sure if that influences me in any way. (Collin, diary note)

Collin extensively collects information about himself without really knowing why and what to do with that information. Contrastingly, Danielle noted in her diary:

I'm always worried when it's cold and I'm wearing lots of layers that I'm going to accidentally pause the watch when I'm pulling up the sleeves, especially when I'm wearing a thermal underlayer. I realise that it's not the run but the data about the run that would be f****d, but it doesn't feel that way. (Danielle, diary note)

She is worried that the information she collects about her run will be lost and thus not visible to her. She does not *need* the data to go on a run and have that experience, however, to her, it feels as if she did not go on the run without the data confirmation. She is not an athlete; she goes running for her own fitness and because she enjoys it. Yet, she is fixated on self-monitoring in relation to her running. I asked her in our last interview what she thought about her self-monitoring:

It's really f****d up. I don't know. I guess I just do it. There shouldn't be any reason why I should do it. But I don't know, I guess it's what you do when you run. (Danielle, 2nd interview)

During my final conversation with Brooke, she shared with me an epiphany she had during her diary period:

> Like, I thought a lot about surveillance. Not just CCTV but also the personal stuff. Me watching others on social media, but also watching people on the street or on a bus or at uni. I also thought about if I do surveillance with myself, like, do I monitor myself? I thought, in a way, I do. Like, if I just look at my phone, and all the information I have there about myself, and how I control it. Or the way I control myself how I present myself on social media. But then also, the diary, you know. I was paying attention to things about myself. So, yeah, in a way the whole diary was me doing surveillance on myself [starts laughing]. (Brooke, 2nd interview)

Brooke's statement – and many of the other statements and sentiments aired throughout this chapter – strike the core of what I want to discuss in the next chapter. On the one hand, surveillance is so ubiquitous and enmeshed in daily activities – in everyday life – that it almost ceases to exist as such. It becomes yet another thing we just do – either blinded by how it has become an inevitable fact of life, or actively accepting and engaging in it as somewhat well-disciplined Foucauldian subjects. However, the people I have spoken to, like Brooke, do not just seem to be naively unaware of the causes and consequences of surveillance, be it in an organisational or social manner. Nor does it encompass the whole spectrum of stories told to simply say that they are more or less docile participants in a culture of surveillance, for better or worse. No, what this chapter has highlighted is that my interlocutors may be said to *unsee* or otherwise actively disregard many of both the quantities and qualities of surveillance in their daily lives – be this their run-of-the-mill activities and behaviours online, or aspects of organisational surveillance such as CCTV. After having to pay attention to it, only then did they really *see* the omnipresence of surveillance in their lives. In the following chapter, I will pay attention to how "unseeing", or "wilful ignorance" as I conceptualise it, functions and how the stories of my interlocutors – and perhaps all of us who are the inevitable subjects of surveillance in our workaday lives – can be (re)interpreted through this lens.

5   Wilful Ignorance

Some of the central questions regarding surveillance involve discussions on its legitimacy, scope, and targeting. As I have argued before, scholars such as Zuboff or Andrejevic essentially aim to create awareness of the misuse of surveillance by either corporations or government agencies. In other words, they aim to rid the individual of their either false or non-existing surveillance consciousness, so that they can properly realise they are being exploited. Another strand in surveillance studies argues that individuals just do not care – or that they are made not to care. Surveillance has already been normalised, ingrained into the fabric of our personal and professional lives, to such an extent that it is either blindly accepted or even desired. In any case, there seems to be an emphasis on aspects of *ignorance* as well as the importance that is induced by external forces. Importantly, by ignorance, I do not mean anything negative or connected to "stupidity". Instead, in my understanding, ignorance is a necessity in navigating today's world as Tuana (2006) also suggests. We simply cannot know everything all the time and similarly pay attention to everything. It would be too much to handle.

5.1   Making Sense of Ignorance

Looking at the examples I have provided in the previous chapter, we could argue that ignorance, or "not noticing" surveillance in everyday life, simply stems from external factors. It is an induced not-knowing, brought upon us by politicians and private corporations, governmental actors, and Google. For instance, most of my interlocutors have mentioned during our first interviews that they did "know" there must be CCTV in their daily lives, however, they were not paying attention to it. Similar to how Taylor (2011) found in her anthropological study on CCTV awareness in English schools, surveillance became and has become part of people's "wallpaper" – an unavoidable background tapestry of life, which inevitably sets the scene of our economic, social, and mental lives. In other words, surveillance is

"just" there and, as a result of discourses perpetuating notions of securitisation, my interlocutors can be said to be blindly accepting – and making use of – such incursions of privacy. The reason for not knowing or "not seeing" surveillance in its many forms is thus found in 'normalisation through habituation' as Taylor (2011) puts it.

However, I argue that there are some caveats to interpreting surveillance only through such conceptualisations. The issue I have with it – and which my anthropological study speaks to – is that these conceptualisations are quite reductionist when trying to understand what happens on an individual level. My point here is not to discard theories of surveillance that describe its acceptance and lack of resistance to it in terms of normalisation and habituation. Rather, these are processes that can help us understand how surveillance functions on an aggregated or societal level. But they are not enough to explain individual experiences. If, as Lyon (2018) argues, surveillance is no longer just an *external force* pressed upon people, but instead, becomes part and parcel – the very fabric even – of our social lives, then it is no longer enough to just interpret surveillance in terms of discipline and control. We have to look at it in terms of culture. That is, surveillance is a cultural practice; it forms a vital part of modern communication and social interaction. Again, the stories I have told in the previous chapters highlight this. My interlocutors are dependent on, for instance, social surveillance to be able to communicate with their peers and even to study – in short, to participate in modern life. Surveillance, as a cultural practice, thus ceases to be a force that causes self-disciplining, control, and domination. Of course, it is still used as such, however, in the everyday lives of my interlocutors, in the mundane and the routines, surveillance is what they do. If we accept such a view of and about surveillance, we can then move beyond a limiting focus on "domination", "discipline", and "control" and, instead, look at it 'anthropologically' as Lyon (2018) also suggests – looking at how surveillance is actually practised and perceived by humans as they go about their daily lives. Besides nuancing predominant stories of surveillance by allowing other than the all-seeing sociologist to tell the(ir) story, an anthropological-cum-ethnographic view and study of surveillance may be said to restore at least some measure of *agency* on behalf of the people who are affected by surveillance. This, I believe, is the reason we ought to focus on *their* – in this case a group of young adults attending Lund University – *experiences* as opposed to "merely" trying to

make sense of them through grand theories such as "false consciousness" and "calmed consciousness".

Nevertheless, a key component of my interlocutors' experiences has to be seen precisely in *their awareness* of organisational surveillance in their everyday life. When Rory talks about having the experience of a "perception filter" that hinders him to pay active attention to surveillance in his daily life, be it organisational or social, he still shows that he is aware. Similarly, when Brooke talks about surveillance and its incursions being part of her reflections but only in a passive or *parallel* manner. As we saw in the last chapter, my interlocutors all have an ambivalent relationship with surveillance in their daily lives. To be more precise, they recognise it around them, they feel uncomfortable about its scope and prevalence, yet still seem to be indifferent to it in their normal, daily routines. At least, this is the impression we get after the first round of interviews. If we then look at how they characterised surveillance during their diary periods, where they were "forced" to pay attention, constantly, to instances of surveillance, most of them seemed surprised about the extent, intrusiveness, and effects of surveillance in its many forms had on them. To reiterate, all of them knew that surveillance existed, yet they were still surprised. What the diary method shows and ultimately did, is the lifting of a veil of wilful ignorance. It is how Rory remarked during one of his notes: 'I was surprised how much surveillance I was ignoring prior to the diary'. In this sense, and because "ignoring" must be seen as an *active process*, we have to pay attention to how wilful ignorance works.

In discussing The Women's Health Movement, Nancy Tuana (2006:2) investigates what others have referred to as "epistemologies of ignorance" or "inverted epistemologies". In doing so, she argues that

> '[I]f we are to fully understand the complex practices of knowledge production and the variety of factors that account for why something is known, we must also understand the practices that account for *not* knowing, that is, for our *lack* of knowledge about a phenomenon or, in some cases, an account of the practices that resulted in a group *unlearning* what was once a realm of knowledge' (Tuana, 2006:2)

This highlights the point I stressed above. By simply reducing *not knowing* or *unlearning* to external factors or forces, we will not be able to understand the individual's involvement and experiences. After all, as Tuana (2004; 2006) stresses, ignorance must be seen as an active process that can be both externally induced or

individually cultivated. Consequently, Tuana (2006:4–10) arrives at a "taxonomy of ignorance" which includes:

1. Knowing that we do not know, but not caring to know
2. We do not even know that we do not know
3. They do not want us to know
4. Wilful ignorance

All of the above categories of ignorance are more or less applicable to issues concerning surveillance in any of the forms I have discussed. For instance, individuals might know that they do not know how or if they are being exposed to surveillance, but they just do not care to know whether that is the case. Now granted, if we accept the premise of surveillance culture, then we would have to exclude this category, since, according to Lyon (2018), people have some sense that modern life is lived under surveillance. This is also consistent with what my interlocutors have revealed. They all were aware of surveillance. They were aware of CCTV in public places as well as to what extent their online/offline behaviour was subjected to digital surveillance by corporations. As Tuana (2006:6) argues, the second category is difficult to identify given the inherent lack of knowledge about what cannot be known. Correspondingly, this category can only be identified in hindsight (ibid.). As such, I will exclude it from my discussion. The third category, "they do not want us to know" refers to instances where agents of authority, such as powerful corporations, research institutes, and government agencies, decide to keep certain topics or technologies secret (Tuana, 2006:9). Additionally, these agents of authority decide to render selected individuals or groups purposefully ignorant (ibid.). This is where most discussions on normalisation/habituation and lack of resistance towards surveillance take place. There is a malevolent and sinister "they" that aims to keep us in the dark. As others have extensively discussed this, I will instead focus on the last category.

Wilful ignorance as Tuana (2006:11) argues 'is a deception that we impose on ourselves, but it is not an isolated lie we consciously tell ourselves'; instead, it constitutes a 'systemic process of self-deception' as well as *active ignoring*. In this way, instead of understanding wilful ignorance as a concept of sheer or even masochistic stupidity, it may simply be seen as a widely-existing anthropological effort to "unlearn" what is known – efforts, contrary to the much more celebrated ideals of Enlightenment pushing us to know more and know what is right, that we

all engage in on a daily basis. The process of unlearning, or what may also be termed "cultivating ignorance", can, Tuana further argues, often be seen as a mechanism in cases where fear or stress of certain facts being true becomes so overwhelming that ignorance appears to be the only way to continue with a sense of normality (Tuana, 2006; Spelman, 2007). More so, wilful ignorance must be seen as neither negative nor positive, but still always productive and a *truly normal practice*. As such, wilful ignorance becomes a way that allows for the individual to carry on with their everyday lives and routines. We wilfully ignore aspects of our daily lives not only in relation to pain and suffering but, in general, in relation to things that are largely unfathomable yet still *inevitable*. In this way, wilful ignorance becomes almost a religious or ritualistic practice more than a psychological coping mechanism.

In a general discussion on big data and ignorance, specifically, why individuals seemingly do not care that corporations mine personal data, Salecl (2018) argues that individuals resort to wilful ignorance. More specifically, she claims that 'we know that data is collected, that it is sold, and that it can be abused, but we simply resort to not caring about it' (Salecl, 2018:66). Groombridge (2002:30) reaches the same conclusion when he argues that some people are able to simply ignore surveillance in their everyday lives. Instead of "not caring" being externally conditioned or induced, it emanates from the individual. In other words, individuals *make an effort* to not care. This becomes more evident when Salecl (2018:66; emphasis added) states:

> 'Ignorance has to do with the fact that *we close our eyes* to knowledge that is too traumatic for us to bear. It might very well be that the opaque world in which data is used presents something so traumatic that we would rather close our eyes and do not want to come close to traumatic knowledge. Which is why we often so blindly consent to whatever Internet and app providers require us to do.'

What is here termed as the "traumatic" can also be conceptualised in terms of *cognitive dissonance*. Generally, cognitive dissonance refers to the experienced mental discomfort that results when two or more opposing beliefs, values, or opinions collide with each other (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019). The resulting dissonance of holding conflicting beliefs or values 'motivates the person to reduce the dissonance and leads to avoidance of information likely to increase the dissonance' (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019:2). In other words, the experience of

trauma or dissonance can motivate an individual to engage in wilful ignorance, which allows them to resolve mental discomfort. In the case of everyday surveillance then, such conflicting beliefs or values can be seen in, first, maintaining a sense of privacy, and second, engaging in modern social life, which includes social media platforms, using public transport, as well as having a smartphone that is capable of installing contemporary communication means, such as WhatsApp and Messenger. In essence, the dissonance arises between the perceived *right* to privacy and the *need* for visibility and connectivity.

This is precisely what we were able to observe with my interlocutors. To give you some examples, Danielle, for instance, is cautious about the traces she leaves behind on the Internet. She is further opposed to the use of social media due to its inherently curated nature. She even engages in practices that make her life more inconvenient so that she is able to safeguard her privacy. Still, she uses a smartwatch. She becomes angry when she gets a notification from "Gmail" telling her that she had been in this location two weeks ago. Still, she does not protect her privacy on her smartphone. Danielle *chooses to unsee* certain forms, occurrences, and consequences of surveillance in order to be able to experience some sense of today's normality. To be able to be connected with her friends. To participate in modern life. Her reactions tell us that, to her, *paying attention* to the various ways that she is under surveillance and how she herself engages in surveillance bears some resemblances to experiencing a trauma. To experience dissonance between her values of privacy and being "normal".

Another example is observable in Rory's case. The diary made him feel exhausted towards the end. To him, it was overwhelming to *re-see* what he had been previously ignoring. In this sense, Rory was forced to face his dissonance for three weeks. That is, he was forced, as a result of the intervention of the diary, to pay attention to the many ways he was under surveillance and how he engaged in it himself. The result was that he started questioning certain types of behaviour that, to him, were previously just "normal things to do". He felt bad or confused about his instinctive need to "look someone up" on social media – to stalk someone on Facebook. In the end, he was happy to go back to normal. To once again *unsee* surveillance in his daily life. As Salecl (2018:66) argues: 'we close our eyes to knowledge that is too traumatic for us to bear'. Constantly paying attention to not

only how one is under surveillance but also to how we engage in "stalking" is too traumatic to bear. It is for this reason that my interlocutors *make an effort* to unlearn.

A specific example of making such an effort can be seen in the term "stalking". The way in which my interlocutors have described how they engage in stalking, what it entails, what kind of strategies they use, as well as for what purposes "stalking" is done, they make a conscious effort to avoid calling it what it is. It is (social-) surveillance. Yet it is not seen as such. The surveillant aspects and consequences are wilfully ignored because 'everyone does it' (Anna, 1st interview). It is only when they pay attention to it that we can observe how there is "a sour aftertaste". Recall Anna's reflections in her diary about today's "stalk-ability". Stalking is something she does on a daily basis. So does Shane with his four dedicated stalking accounts. However, only when they *re-learn* what stalking actually is and what it does, do they start feeling the need to justify their actions. In that moment, they are experiencing the dissonance between "everyone does it" and "I don't want this".

A final observation of how my interlocutors engage in a process of wilful ignorance must be seen in their initial assumption of 'I don't have anything to hide' (Lydia, 1st interview). As we have seen throughout the last chapter, Lydia was by far not the only person who voiced this statement. Everyone did. None of them saw themselves as someone who needed to hide anything from anyone. To be fair, Lydia even said that she was being naïve to think so. The naiveté does not stem from thinking this. Instead, the naiveté arises from the circumstance that she *knows* that she wants to keep certain aspects of her life private but *chooses to unsee and ignore* these, so she does not have to worry about them. In other words, she chooses to ignore the fact that she very well wants to hide certain things about her life in order not to experience the constant dissonance of having to worry about it. After all, constantly worrying, paying attention to something, or even constantly caring can become too much. At one point, it becomes too inconvenient. It, therefore, hinders my interlocutors from functioning normally in their daily lives. This is best encapsulated by Rory's statement during our second interview:

> I just want things to run smoothly because I don't have the energy for them to go bad. Like, if a train stops for whatever reason, I'm like: No, please don't. I can't deal with that. So, yeah, when there is a camera on the bus, I can ask myself: Will this prohibit my day from going smoothly? Probably not so much – so, yeah, f**k it and

get on the bus. Similar, not having a smartphone would ruin the smoothness of my day. (Rory, 2nd interview)

There are two aspects that concern inconvenience. First, as long as surveillance in everyday life does not impede the proper functioning, or "smoothness", of daily routines and activities, its consequences and presence can be ignored. This can explain why, initially, many of my interlocutors seemed not to care too much about surveillance and how it affects them. Simply because it did not inconvenience them. Second, having to care, paying attention to, or simply *seeing* surveillance constantly can become an inconvenience itself. Thus, the people I have spoken to rather choose to wilfully ignore processes and instances of surveillance in their daily lives instead of experiencing the inconvenience of feeling guilty, responsible, and anxious. As a result of the diary, my interlocutors lost this choice. They could no longer choose to ignore surveillance. Consequently, it became inconvenient, bothersome, and worrying. In some cases, they even felt hopeless in the face of ubiquitous surveillance. As such, the wilful ignorance of surveillance, or its denial, is what allows my interlocutors to lead a normal life.

In conclusion then, because we now live in what Lyon (2018) calls a 'culture of surveillance' in which surveillance itself has become a way of life, it is no longer fruitful to view surveillance as an *episodic* occurrence. In other words, because surveillance is no longer a process or an activity that is done to us, but instead, it is something that *we* do every day as well, it ceases to be episodic. For this reason, meta-narratives such as "false consciousness" and "calmed consciousness", although very insightful and often explanatory, are not fully capable of providing us with insights into what happens when surveillance is no longer episodic. Instead, we have to see it as what it is: *endemic*. There is no "going back". There is no avoiding it. The only thing there is, is the realisation that surveillance is life. If we are to understand how it affects the individuals who navigate and negotiate their everyday lives, then we have to focus on their experiences with and through surveillance. One such way, as I have proposed in this thesis, is to consider the many processes of wilful ignorance that allow people to not just negotiate certain aspects of their lives that can cause trauma or dissonance, but also to conceptualise and deal with surveillance in a meaningful way. As I have tried to show, surveillance has the potential to cause such trauma, dissonance, and inconvenience. In any case, wilful ignorance is inherently "empowering" as it redistributes agency

amongst individual people. It is empowering because it acknowledges that individuals make *choices* and are not just empty canvases upon which external forces exert their power, will, influence, and marketing strategies. Ultimately, what it *means* to live under and through surveillance is determined by the individuals who do so – not by grand theories.

5.2   Inevitable Facts of Life

It has been the focus and the main argument of this thesis to point to the existence and expediencies of people's various means of unseeing, ignoring, or simply not dealing with questions of surveillance and its endemic nature. We could even argue that surveillance culture can be seen as epidemic – there is no "cure" nor need for there to necessarily be one.

As a final thought, this thesis' exploration of surveillance culture, imaginaries, and practices among Lund University students has the potential to open up a door to a whole new way of thinking about what surveillance is, how it is imagined, and how it is practised – every day. As previously mentioned, surveillance is no longer an external and episodic matter that, every now and then, creeps into our lives, but instead, it is endemic to our very navigating in everyday life. Could this realisation prompt us to reconsider and switch both our empirical and theoretical views on surveillance? In other words, is it not fair to say that surveillance – if we can even call it that anymore (Lyon, 2018:187) – now increasingly needs to be treated by scholars, indeed by all individuals, along the lines of how we treat and see other inevitable facts of life? Looking at wilful ignorance as a matter of *choice*, we are able to look at how and why people choose to *unsee* aspects of their lives. Wilful ignorance, or denial for that matter, is nothing new. It is something all of us do all the time:

> The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man. (Becker, 1973:ix)

Death is, of course, the most extreme example of denial that each and every one of us does. We simply cannot go through our lives, constantly thinking about death

and the finitude of everything. In order to live, we must forget that we die. A less dramatic and poetic example of how people choose to ignore the consequences of certain behaviour can be seen in smoking a cigarette. I know that smoking is unhealthy. I know that smoking can cause lung cancer. Yet here I am having a smoke. I choose to ignore. I *unlearn* what was once in my realm of knowledge in order to enjoy a cigarette. In this sense – to experience normality, to talk to friends, and to just get by in this modern world – the people I have spoken to choose to ignore surveillance in their daily lives. For better or worse.

6 Summary and Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have presented my empirical material and offered an analysis thereof. We have seen how my interlocutors made sense of surveillance in its many forms prior to having paid active attention to it. Generally, surveillance was perceived as a given fact in today's world. All of my interlocutors had an idea of what surveillance entailed and where it occurred. Most responses revolved around surveillance being conducted by government agencies as well as corporate entities such as Google, Facebook (Meta), and other digital platforms. There was already a sense of awareness that most of their interactions in online and offline life were subjected to some form of surveillance. Whereas some used specific means to safeguard their privacy, the majority of my interlocutors seemed to have accepted incursions of privacy. Already here, we were able to identify instances of wilful ignorance for the purposes of a convenient day-to-day routine. Devices that fundamentally rely on mining personal and behavioural data were omnipresent in my interlocutors' daily lives. In some cases, where these devices had been removed out of concerns for privacy, we were able to observe how isolation and inconvenience occurred as a result.

Although not specifically referring to individual surveillance practices, my interlocutors have described processes where they themselves engaged in surveillance, such as "stalking". It becomes clear that although already having a preconceived awareness of the occurrence of surveillance in daily life, by actively paying attention to it, the scope and influence of surveillance is accentuated. The most intriguing have been reflections of my interlocutors that revolved around perception filters and ignoring surveillance prior to the diary. We can see how when external influences "force" active attention to surveillance the veil of wilful ignorance is lifted. Wilful ignorance allows my interlocutors to function in their daily lives. Standing out are reflections on convenience and a "smooth running" of daily routines. In short, my interlocutors simply have too much going on in their daily lives to be bothered to think about and reflect on surveillance constantly.

Therefore, instances of surveillance are either perceived as normal or are wilfully ignored to the extent that they do not impede fundamental core values.

In addressing the question I posed at the beginning of this thesis:

How do Lund University students between the ages of 20–28 imagine surveillance and its impacts on their daily lives?

We can see that Lund University students between the ages of 20–28 imagine surveillance as a given fact in their daily lives. It is, in some way, a necessary "evil" that must be accepted for the proper functioning of daily routines. Further, surveillance is still perceived as mainly the prerogative of powerful government and corporate actors despite the circumstance that my interlocutors themselves engage in surveillance practices. It further forms a source of stress, anxiety, and worry and, simultaneously, enables participation in modern communication and social relationships. It is only when their attention is directed towards how they live their daily lives and how they interact with various devices, platforms, and CCTV that they start negotiating. These external influences, however, can occur all the time. They can include watching a documentary series on data mining or fictional television shows such as *Black Mirror*. During this study, the external influence was provoked through the diary method. When individuals direct their attention to surveillance in their daily lives, most of them experience a sense of discomfort by either being subjected to surveillance practices or by they themselves engaging in them. As a result, in order to function properly, to live conveniently, and to experience normality, the people I have spoken to *make efforts to wilfully ignore* surveillance in their everyday lives.

In relating my findings to the wider literature on surveillance, I want to stress that although fruitful and intriguing, grand theories that might explain how surveillance functions on an aggregated scale; they are simply not enough to understand what happens in everyday life. If we accept that surveillance is no longer an *episodic* occurrence but is instead *endemic* in today's world, then we have to approach it accordingly. Arguing whether or not surveillance must be resisted or whether it forms part of a "disciplining mechanism" runs the risk of perpetuating the notion of individuals as empty canvases. If we are to understand how surveillance plays out on the individual level, how it is lived and experienced, and how it is practised as an integral part of modern communication; then we ought to

study it anthropologically. That is, *on terms of the people who live it*. In turn, we are able to re-empower individuals by paying respect to how they live their daily lives with, under, and through surveillance.

I hope that this study can inform future research into the everydayness of surveillance not only through the findings I have presented but additionally, in its methodological approach. I have experienced the combination of unstructured interviews and diaries as fruitful for the study of everyday life. Future studies could thus adopt the overall design while paying attention to different contexts and people. Specifically, this would allow investigations into how different age groups in different cultural settings experience surveillance in their daily lives. Finally, I hope that this anthropological study shows that surveillance must not be tied to theoretical or armchair research but can instead be explored and experienced in our everyday lives.

Wilful ignorance as a vital process that enables the proper functioning of everyday lives deserves more scholarly attention. We ignore things around and about us, so we may just get by. I want to echo Nancy Tuana's (2006:2) call that if we want to better understand the complex practices of knowledge production, we have to pay attention to 'the practices that resulted in a group *unlearning* what was once a realm of knowledge.' Anthropology can offer us such an opportunity through its empowering approach. If we remember the vignette I have presented at the beginning, we see how *we*, on a daily basis, ignore aspects of our lives. Surveillance is just one of many things that we choose to ignore in order just to get by – to get up in the morning and go to bed in the evening.

7 Bibliography

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