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Digital Surveillance and Everyday Resistance in the Global South

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ABSTRACT

Digital surveillance has become an increasingly significant feature of governance and everyday life across the Global South. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, mobile connectivity, and data-driven governance has enabled states, corporations, and transnational actors to collect, process, and deploy vast amounts of personal data. While these practices are often justified in terms of development, security, and service delivery, they simultaneously raise critical concerns regarding privacy, rights, and power asymmetries. This paper examines how digital surveillance operates within the distinctive political, economic, and technological contexts of the Global South and how individuals and communities respond through forms of everyday resistance. Drawing on insights from Surveillance Studies and Everyday Resistance Theory, the study highlights how ordinary actors employ subtle, informal, and networked strategies, such as privacy framing, data localization initiatives, digital rights advocacy, and collective action to challenge pervasive monitoring. Through a comparative discussion of regional dynamics in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, the paper demonstrates that resistance is shaped by local governance structures, digital infrastructures, and social inequalities. Despite structural constraints such as limited digital literacy, infrastructural gaps, and regulatory weaknesses, citizens continue to adapt and mobilize to defend autonomy and rights in digitally mediated environments. The analysis ultimately underscores that digital surveillance in the Global South is not merely a top-down process of control but also a site of ongoing negotiation, contestation, and agency. Understanding these everyday forms of resistance contributes to broader debates on digital governance, citizenship, and the future of democratic rights in increasingly datafied societies.

Keywords: Digital Surveillance, Everyday Resistance, Global South, Data Governance, and Digital Rights.

INTRODUCTION

The global proliferation of digital surveillance deeply influences everyday existence, stimulating engagements that counter its omnipresence [1]. Digital surveillance encompasses the mechanised collection of personal information via networked infrastructures and devices, irrespective of whether data is subsequently scrutinized [1]. Ordinarily linked to socially significant entities, digital surveillance promulgates population governments across diverse scales. States, firms, platforms, civil society groups, and individual actors remain embroiled in multifaceted struggles over how digital information is curated, circulated, safeguarded, and mobilised. These power contestations emerge in myriad forms, from high politics to everyday practices predicated on autonomy, citizenship, and rights. Acquiring increased prominence within studies of authority, the non-elite, and the everyday, such engagements are framed as everyday resistance, ordinary activities through which individuals and communities seek to limit power, influence others, and grapple with inequalities [1]. The Global South, characterised by unevenness in state capacity, digital technology, governance, and transnational influences, exhibits distinctive manifestations of digital surveillance. Everyday resistance thus assumes particular significance: This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

dominant global regimes fail to capture numerous local predicaments, while elevated everyday stakes correspond to intense digitization [2]. The rapid adoption of digital devices and services across the Global South in the twenty-first century has generated large-scale data collections by states and firms. Stakeholders employ governance modalities that employ information concerning populations to provide services, exert influence, and compel compliance; these modalities are variously framed as data-driven governance, datalogy, or datafication. Datafication connects contemporary societal transformations to sprawling flows of data across territories [2]. Everyday resistance to digital surveillance in the Global South thus materialises in remarkably diverse forms; the present surveys a selection of these tactics, evidence indicative of broader dynamics of everyday struggle [3].

Theoretical Foundations

Surveillance Studies examines the structures, techniques, and practices that safeguard and reproduce social orders [2]. Actions performed to oversee, track, acquire information, or observe others qualify as practices of surveillance. Though closely associated with authoritarian regimes, surveillance is not limited to state authorities; corporations, non-public entities, and civil society instruments can likewise adopt such actions [3]. Today, the expansion of internet architecture alters traditional mechanisms of observation, monitoring, and control. As societies adopt and adapt to these transformations, methods of oversight and/or discipline acquire new connotations and modalities, providing fresh dimensions for surveillance inquiry [3]. Meanwhile, a range of subjects continues to contest these everyday efforts to monitor, govern, and control. Everyday Resistance Theory addresses the counter-practices by which members of underprivileged and dominated groups resist oppression. Building on Michels' Micro-Politics of Resistance, Scott's Everyday Forms of Resistance studies a repertoire of practical actions toward oppressed subjects, such as evasion, delay, feigned ignorance, trickery, sabotage, and false compliance. Networked forms of organization, assembly, and discourse further facilitate institutionally unrecognized resistance actions [4]. The theory gains traction in regions exhibiting powerful state structures despite persistent governance incapacity, and the Global South offers a relevant context for exploration [4]. The states associated with the Global South encompass a multitude of forms, manifestations, and capabilities that coalesce toward modernity. Artificial boundaries fraying the states, thus raising new scholarly sensitivity for circulation, diversion, and forking in Global South trajectories [5]. The idea of a distinctive Global South has mitigated scholarship dependent on the premise of a shared trajectory taken by all states, thus yielding attention for parallelisms, orthogonalities, oppositions, and topological relations among states along different dimensions.

Regimes of surveillance, as both contestation and institutionalized data governance, emerge as meaningful factors in the analysis of societal organization [6]. States, civil societies, digital cultures, and cross-border circulations coalesce within the Global South, where the scholarship commentary resides. Establishing contemporary regimes of surveillance information remains a matter of concern across configurations of state formation; though circularity of surveillance in infrastructural circulation of data remained unexplored [6]. State data circulation, circulating data, and mobilizing (administrative, financial, security) urban infrastructures represent an entry point since data, surveillance, and technological enactments share coexistence and interdependence in monitoring, controlling, and diffusing a specific substrate [7]. Sovereignty, territory, self-determination, and agency coalesce, enacting relations that establish gradient trajectories and oscillations. Conceptualizing such relations helps to existing Analogies of Dead-Ends, Circulation, and Topologies [8].

Surveillance Studies and Global South Contexts

Surveillance Studies analyzes the impact of pervasive monitoring on multiple societies, yet Global South contexts remain under-explored [6]. Most studies concentrate either on Western modes of surveillance or the specific experiences of countries operating on different infrastructures and regulatory approaches that differ radically from Western patterns and modes of surveillance. Conceptually, everyday resistance is framed within the political capacity literature, which elucidates the nature of the contestation taking place there [13]. The forms of resistance available in these environments differ from those of the Global North, yet digital surveillance and control remain interwoven with the larger social dynamics that shape contemporary life. Furthermore, public life is framed as "everyday," emphasizing the interactions and negotiations between societal actors in everyday life within state-corporate-society dynamics; the terminology underscores the adequacy of examining everyday resistance in the Global South under such analytical frameworks, where contestations at the level of rights, entitlements, and access are often dominant [1]. Core conceptual concerns on surveillance, everyday resistance, the Global South, data, governance, rights, and power asymmetries were addressed and informed the overall orientation and central thesis; terms like "monitoring" and "surveillance" may warrant consideration [13]. Although the digital revolution has ushered in a new regime for the Global South, appreciable reconfigurations have yet to occur. Instead of attending to the varied surveillance practices emerging, the material traces provided by time-space compression literature carry greater salience [14]. Surveillant assemblage literature moves past a limited focus on design, and the priority given to the Global South reorients the spatial dimension of assemblage studies [11]. The

examination of the lives of everyday people prepares the ground for an overarching analysis of everyday resistance to surveillance [3].

Everyday Resistance Theory

Digital surveillance has become increasingly prevalent throughout the Global South, yet the specific conditions surrounding it must be borne in mind. Surveillance remains a critical tool for governing populations across the Global South, managing poverty and inequality, building legitimacy, and bolstering state capacity [14]. Certain forms of data collection have gained new prominence since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with governments across the Global South rapidly implementing health-related surveillance measures. The apparatus has not been easily dismantled, even where public health rhetoric has shifted [11]. Furthermore, governments have embraced various surveillance measures that were previously unheard of in a wide range of substantive domains, including policing, border control, and regulation of informal economies and economic recovery [3]. Average access to digital technology and the internet has accelerated in the Global South, yet significant digital divides remain. In 2021, around 66 percent of individuals in high-income countries were using the internet, compared with only 18 percent in low-income countries [12]. Moreover, the adeptness, levels of demand, and adaptability of devices can hinder people's capacity to exercise their rights over their data. The adoption of new technologies in the Global South rarely follows the same trajectory as that of the Global North. Instead, investment tends to occur in end-of-lifecycle devices that are inexpensive yet complicated [11].

Historical and Technological Trajectories of Surveillance

Digital surveillance intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupting everyday life globally [3]. The Global South experienced rapid digital transformation alongside novel surveillance practices [7]. The state, aware of its limited capacity to enact large-scale digital surveillance, has strategically embedded surveillance into data-driven development agendas. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the urgency of data and widespread state and corporate-led surveillance throughout the South [5]. Surveillance continues to be state-centric in the Global South. The Global South is well acquainted with the centrality of state oversight in surveillance, ranging from policing and border control to bureaucratic and regulatory surveillance [5]. For example, South Africa expanded mass surveillance acts through the Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act and the Cybersecurity Bill. Surveillance is not limited to the state. Several corporations and transnational bodies also play key roles in the South [9]. The main impediments to mitigating surveillance in the Global South concern infrastructure and inequality. Digital access remains limited, and affordability concerns are widespread. Inadequate digital literacy further constrains citizens' awareness of state and corporate surveillance. Thus, the infrastructure gap secures exposure to surveillance while significantly curtailing opportunities to resist, highlighting the centrality of inclusion and equity in digital governance [12].

State Surveillance Practices in the Global South

Surveillance practices are a staple feature of state-led governance in the Global South and have only intensified since the 1990s [6]. Communities regularly encounter state surveillance measures; indeed, policing, border control, bureaucratic supervision, and regulatory frameworks constitute the core of state surveillance practice. Three broad features bring these practices to the foreground [5]. First, the institutional landscape displays a mixture of continuity and change in terms of both actors involved and surveillance policies adopted; a plethora of different institutions and agencies conduct surveillance despite major changes in surveillance laws or tracking technology. Second, although the formal constitutional-legal framework implicitly acknowledges a range of rights and imposes bounds on state activity, formalization frequently coexists with legally circumstantial, extra-legislative, and informal instability in practice; even in the absence of constitutional or legal transgression, significant freedom-loving practices remain subject to extensive oversight and surveillance that violate the spirit of democratic principles and human rights [8]. Third, a wide gap persists in both data acquisition and monitoring across different actors, sectors, and communities; even if extensive engagement occurs within certain locales and networks, multiple regions and territories remain on the sidelines of contemporary developments, reproducing rights-violating state surveillance without substantial transnational counterflow of rights-promoting practices [3].

Corporate and Transnational Surveillance

Over the past few decades, transnational companies in the Global North have penetrated the Global South through a variety of digital infrastructures [6]. Within an extractive, platform-dominant economy, they harness digital information and personal data for the furtherance of power and profit on a global scale. At the same time, national security policies and techno-strategies maintained by a few Global North states reinforce globally interconnected data capitalism throughout the Global South [8]. Digital surveillance practices derived from these transnational stakeholders shape and constitute many people's everyday life experiences, simultaneously encroaching upon, undermining, and contradicting aspects of agency and rights [13]. Since the advent of ecologically extractive

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global capitalism in the mid-1970s, the Global South has been the second-largest economic region of the world. The severe weakening and retreat of the welfare-state mechanism in the Global North, intensified by a series of economic crises and the consolidation of neoliberalism in the 1980s, inundated the Global South [12]. Despite the varied constitution of capitalist relations and the compatibility of multiple and heterogeneous forms of capitalism, such as socialist-market economy, social-market economy, and informality, the constitution of rights and the exercise of agency throughout everyday life are profoundly monitored and regulated [12]. Even long-established regimes of political economy have turned into key sites for the extraction of personal data [11].

Digital Infrastructure and Access Inequality

Growth in digital surveillance in the Global South is intimately connected with the architecture of digital infrastructure and patterns of access inequality [6]. Despite ambitious national rollouts, many countries remain under-networked or poorly serviced, limiting the capacity to use, share, or safeguard data and exposing individuals to greater surveillance. Those with only intermittent or unreliable access frequently cannot secure data, thus defaulting to surveillance servitude [8]. Affordability further constrains the capacity to resist. Compounding these structural limitations, the scope and depth of inequalities filter the effects of available options. For the majority, digital literacy remains rudimentary, and strategies to resist illusions are illusory. Even among better-resourced communities, such options often provoke concerns about aggravating surveillance [8]. At the level of governance, pressing socio-economic challenges render prioritization of digital rights improbable, consigning formal protection to the realm of rhetoric [4].

Methods of Everyday Resistance

State and corporate actors harness digital technologies to compile vast amounts of data on individuals and groups that inform and shape decision-making affecting their lives across the globe [11]. However, communities and individuals also avail themselves of digital technologies in varied but concerted ways to resist being surveilled and subjected to the governance practices that such power entails [10]. Strategies vary depending on characteristics like available technology, social organization, and state-corporate power relations. In the Global South, data localization initiatives seek to address the extractive nature of transnational data flows and their adverse consequences [13]. In places like India, the framing of privacy as a collective rather than individual right challenges data extractivism and platforms that enable it [9]. The online orientation of everyday resistance in societies where an informal digital rights infrastructure exists has fostered support for shared state-society contestations that cross borders, such as those between citizens and platform enforcers [3].

Data Localization and Portal Tactics

Urban informality, including unregulated internet access through pre- or postpaid data, characterizes Latin American digital landscapes [12]. In 2019, a Facebook-associated app provided 100 gigabytes of free data for accessing devices without initial payment; the only requirements were an active phone or SIM card and access to Facebook, reaching mostly marginal communities and large numbers of users each month [13]. Data localization strategies and carefully designed urban-space-based CMS whitelist access allowed local expressions to be public, conserving respect for public policies. Alternative digital portals complemented this. Two distinct modes characterize the commons-based digital emancipation movement in Mexico. “Software free cultural community” promotes the alternative-consumption-based “generator culture” with unrestricted sharing; the creator has to reclaim a piece of content to disseminate it free from country-protectionist constraints [14]. “Decolonizing datification” engages digital rights, alternative and feminist-practices improvement, visibility of practices shaping the societal ecosystem on a global scale, and the positioning of gender in the datification debate. In these alternative portals, innovation and cultural creativity transpire to break the surveillance-aware parallelism and state-oriented governance [5].

Privacy Framing and Informal Norms

Digital surveillance, defined as the systematic and pervasive collection, processing, and analysis of data about an individual or collective with a view to influencing future behaviour [6], interacts deeply with everyday life in the Global South. Middle-range surveillance is increasingly determined by data extracted from non-obvious sources that enter a circuit of repurposed uses. Within this context, everyday resistance is understood as politically motivated micro-practices, subtle, ordinary, and evasive social actions that protect privacy in the face of data collection [5]. These practices are coordinated by loose networks of like-minded citizens. The study of everyday resistance builds on Foucault’s emphasis on the interconnectedness of power and resistance and progresses Deleuze’s recognition that society has shifted from a disciplinary to a control state. Grounded in historical and technological trajectories, the analysis examines cases from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia and considers how surveillance and resistance influence citizenship, rights, and governance [8]. Surveillance has become a topic of widespread concern since the Snowden revelations. Yet existing efforts to understand and theorize citizen responses largely overlook the Global South. Surveillance practices in these

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geographies contrast starkly with those in the Global North, and the same holds for the corresponding modes of resistance [10].

Networked Solidarity and Collective Action

Digital communication spaces become a site of resistance that transcends the local to organize and establish links with struggles elsewhere [8]. Social movements frequently employ digital media to coordinate action and information sharing in a decentralised, networked manner. This approach has been evident across resistance movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Mali, Algeria, Spain, Brazil, Sudan, the United States, Ukraine, and Hong Kong, as well as for the anti-caste and anti-lynching movements [6]. Collective action on a pan-Indian scale against repressive laws, proprietary platforms, and internet interruptions has also materialised through platforms such as “Save the Internet” and “DataIsaHumanRight.” Networked resistance has generated materials on digital rights and surveillance in multiple Indian languages, reaching non-English speaking communities, exclusive of the dominant language [7]. Participation in public translations, multilingual resources, and cross-border collaborative efforts in the Global South manifests collective oversight [3]. The creation of anti-surveillance promotional materials in their native tongues enables those conversant only in indigenous languages to remain informed, contributing to contacts across regions where mass surveillance is escalating. Resistance coalesces around distinct forms of documentation: the production of materials documenting practices and the encoding and sharing of knowledge on those modalities [11].

Regional Variations and Case Studies

Digital surveillance in the Global South combines everyday practices with sensitive issues around citizenry, rights, and governance [4]. Everyday resistance remains a dominant orientation in its examination. Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia are explored to demonstrate regional variations and a common understanding [4]. Latin America focuses on the ways data governance is defined, who owns personal information, and the demand that the Internet be viewed as a common good. Civil society campaigns on platform power, surveillance capitalism, and data protection inform debates around privacy laws. Community-led initiatives accompany regulation discourse to enhance data agency within local concerns [6]. Sub-Saharan Africa exemplifies mobile-generated surveillance, an emerging governance agenda, and citizen participation in marshalling the State against the surveillance crisis. Micro-level community-led initiatives are common in governance environments. Moreover, youth-led resistance embraces the heightened surveillance of platforms and messaging applications, tapping connectors between State and corporate interests [8]. In South Asia, contestations between the State and society continue to define the digital space despite ubiquitous State-driven digital solutions. The political economy of platform practices alongside user-generated content amplifies privacy and communications rights concerns. Informal rights movements enrich regulatory measures beyond compliance. Cross-border organizing addresses diverse histories around surveillance and interruptions [5]. Southeast Asia adapts approaches to legalistic discourse that accompany State-led surveillance without infringing on sovereignty. Corporate permits are sought to facilitate surveillance addresses. Grassroots initiatives develop data protection regulations, platform privacy standards, and digital security capacities enabling collective engagement [9].

Latin America

Digital surveillance permeates everyday life across the Global South, giving rise to diverse configurations and modes of resistance [7]. For example, scholars classify surveillance in Latin America as a state-centered surveillance assemblage entrenched in the legacies of authoritarianism and geopolitical discrepancies, whereby acts of citizenship challenge sovereign territoriality and temporalities; one case commemorates the surveillance of migrants by employing colonial legal codes in contemporary policies [6]. By contrast, transnational surveillance regimes dominate Sub-Saharan Africa, with the enhancement of policing and biometric digital tracking subsuming established insurgencies, alongside suppressive regulations curbing citizen-led action; nevertheless, youth-led networks cultivating transnational solidarity strive to cleanse public discourses and amplify subjugated knowledge [5]. Delegated governance and platform surveillance characterize South Asia, where the state artificially constrains capacities in favor of platforms; platform manipulation fosters alternative subjectivities and expression, while activist operators scrutinize corporate power and circulate the notion of digital rights apart from citizenship [4]. Lastly, the hybridization of corporate and state surveillance typifies Southeast Asia, where regimes enact montages of control utilizing commercial infrastructures; bottom-up interventions thus target specific technologies and agents, with grassroots digital security campaigns promoting tool usage and organizing unattended digital gatherings, which strive to prevent the enactment of surveillance and interrogation [7].

Sub-Saharan Africa

Surveillance practices taking root in the Global South reflect both regional governance capacities and transnational flows. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, surveillance techniques originating in Europe and North America have widely impacted domestic governance [6]. Mobile and internet services have rapidly expanded, but access

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still depends on socioeconomic factors that enable monitoring. Surveillance of daily activities, be it through border policing, bureaucratic regulation, or equipment tracking, has started in tandem with the rise of state capacity, economic growth, and the emergence of formal data economies [7]. Alongside public authorities, private actors have long played key roles in national data infrastructures. Corporations, international organizations, and transnational actors have amplified calls for regulatory frameworks focused on addressing tracking, iris recognition, SIM card registration, or content filtering. Concerns centre on the accumulation of mountain-sized datasets and invasive data extractivism, whereby local and foreign firms harvest information on a massive scale and without consent. Consequently, platforms such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, or Huawei exert disproportionate power over sub-national privacy and surveillance debates [7]. Even as governance frameworks tighten, controlling the digital domain remains acutely difficult. The population has swiftly adopted new tools and techniques to reclaim and contest autonomy. Districts often deploy alternative devices and platforms that operate beyond the crumbling surveillance enclave [6]. Networks have emerged around community-led data localizations, alternative governance models, and public undertakings aimed at enabling decentralized information exchanges. Although extra-legal, these fixtures enable institutionally unsupported exchanges beyond the purview of authorities. Other modalities have evolved to reinsert privacy notions into enshrined regulatory prescriptions. Promoters conduct sensitizations, lobby for alternative proposals, and circulate meme-based communications that explain such modes. Such discourses proffer non-intervention and an explicit exogenization marker, entertaining public reflection without criminalization. Emerging as new actors during the disruption of established governance, movements around data sovereignty, privacy, or information freedom have started mobilizing rapidly, leveraging pre-existing infrastructures to forge transnational coalitions among like-minded constituencies.

South Asia

Digital surveillance and the use of surveillance data are often viewed as social control mechanisms whereby the state and corporations seek to monitor and influence citizens' behavior [10]. In the Global South, where state institutions may have limited capacity and regulatory frameworks may be weak, digital surveillance tactics can be viewed as forms of governmentality utilized by ruling elites in pursuit of accumulation and rent-seeking at the expense of broader citizenship rights and freedoms. Mobilization against digital surveillance in countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan is often framed primarily in terms of freedom of expression, with a focus on the corruption of public services, limited citizen agency, and entrenched contestations between state and society at the nexus of platform practice and governance [8]. In India, however, anti-surveillance mobilization is taking shape around the framing of the right to privacy, a legally recognized right that enjoys broader currency outside freedom-of-expression debates. The framing of the right to privacy also allows for a broader interpretation of state-driven data exploitation beyond governmentality to include, for example, regimes driven by the logic of surveillance capitalism [9]. Emerging digital rights movements are imbued with an understanding of the normative operation of the right to privacy that offers bottom-up social contract-oriented models of citizenship. In South Asia, surveillance and contestation often take place within frameworks focusing on broader state-society contestations regarding democracy, governance, and institutionalized corruption [3]. Surveillance is also undertaken by corporate entities situated beyond national jurisdiction with influence over cross-border data flow, complicating the logic of localized bottom-up movements. Grassroots organizing around alternative, locally administered digital rights and resource-sharing platforms capable of storing national datasets locally also appears in the region [4].

Southeast Asia

Wireless mobile telephony and the internet have had a profound impact on Southeast Asia, being adopted much faster than conventional fixed-line phone and television infrastructures [6]. Even though the overwhelming majority of Southeast Asian citizens have no access to basic infrastructures of formal communication, the region is the fastest-growing mobile phone market in the world, and the fastest adopter of Internet Protocol (IP), enabling new paths for public communication and political action [8]. Increasingly innovative and widely available mobile and web technologies have opened up new avenues for public discourse among citizens previously excluded from political, social, and economic dialogue. In neighbouring societies, limits on freedom of expression, suppression of exposure to alternative views, and curbs on decentralised information-generating platforms are key hindrances to the use of social media and digital surveillance in Southeast Asia. Despite the uneven use of new media in Southeast Asia, which is met with various censorship instruments, it still mobilises public participation in confronting dominant power [9].

Impacts on Citizenship, Rights, and Governance

Surveillance and everyday resistance programmatically reshape not only the rules of the game for different citizenships but also the terms of political contestation and policing of rights, governance, history, and organisation among heterogeneous yet connected societies [11]. Emerging discourses and architectures of legal

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and policy reforms addressing surveillance, according to many accounts, mark the revival of a state of digital dystopia that threatens the hard-won achievements of ordinary people [8]. Such restructuring is stubbornly reframing the terms of political contestation from the perspective of citizenship and under the roof of rights. For many actors, including individuals, philanthropic circuits, and community-based initiatives, the new picture being drawn demands attention to the differential strings and resources attached to the various surveillance directives available in the Global South [7]. The isomorphism between the transnational ordinary governance, ownership, monetization, colonization, pan-opticization, contestation, appropriation, and sharing of the Global South emphasizes a path threading through universalist agenda-setting and estranged left-right policy tussles around privacy-based rights, data protection and/or localization and platform governance amongst Local Digital Rights scholars and activist networks engaged directly with surveilling citizens involved in ordinary communities and movements seeking public negotiation and deliberation on the Digital Controlled Interoperable Operator-World framing and digitization[6]. Such a path confers upon them the status of not only Digital-Right-bearing citizens in constantly articulated alt-gatherings or gatherings to which even the freest citizens of the “West” are not invited, but also pro-socentment Intermediate Digital Agents plugged into suspension-embedded modalities available in the Global South for the prior articulation of the Alt-Community-Reestablishing Interoperable Operator-World [6]

Legal and Policy Implications

Recent developments in the Global South show that everyday resistance against surveillance is impacting legal, policy, and rights-bearing narratives. Legal frameworks, regulations, and the discursive environment surrounding inequality, data, and governance play important roles in determining surveillance practices and the counter-responses they trigger [10]. The Philippine Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that the non-consensual scraping of personal data from social media accounts violates the Data Privacy Act and unconstitutionally encroaches on freedoms of expression and association. Legislation reforming the Chilean Constitution, proposed in response to mass mobilizations beginning in 2019, included the right to privacy and protection of personal data [10]. Regulating data-extractive transnational online platforms was the motivation behind the first-ever privacy law in Uruguay, while the need to safeguard citizens from government surveillance drives the demand for a general data protection law in Zimbabwe [10]. The arrest of leaders of the pro-democracy movement in Thailand was challenged as a violation of the 2017 Constitution’s guarantee of freedom of expression [9]. Rights-bearing narratives emerging from everyday resistance movements further illustrate the interplay between surveillance and resistance. The rise of counter-narratives interrogating the notion of free and fair elections was documented among journalists, activists, and the political opposition in Zimbabwe following the contested 2018 national elections [8]. The announcement of Tok Gath, a festival of arts and freedom in Thailand, was framed as an occasion for like-minded citizens to exchange ideas and counter a state narrative depicting participants of earlier gatherings as violent, disruptive, and anti-monarchy. In Bangladesh, a widely circulated message presented the working definition of a digital right, formulated by a local informal rights group, in a format mimicking that of an official government notification [7].

Rights-bearing Narratives in Digital Spaces

Representation of surveillance and associated risks may be markedly absent from public spheres, and alternative agendas unsettle entrenched, narrowly defined rights and democracy frameworks [5]. Counter-narratives take varied forms, from self-situating and contextualizing state violations within dominant, hegemonic discourses. Mobilization occurs, for example, when community representatives work to articulate corresponding demands, gather and catalog corporate data-extractivist technical specifications, or enact day-labourer connections, through informal community forums and informal frameworks. One dominant counter-framing offers the transition from fundamental rights to human rights because the geographic area represents a “third space,” where rights-right parabolas remain contested [5]. Framing encompasses policies that define rights, intelligibility of democracy, and the role of religion in enacting rights-containing regimes, as well as the intrinsic personal role of elementary religious characters in those same regions. Muslim, Christian, and other religious system operators remain explicitly involved, integration mechanisms occur with communities and family through governance, still seeking to attain rights and reserve a citizen status tied closely to formally governing identity; key personal micro-political ties mould particular co-productivities[8]. Various degrees and types of distinctions appear across geographical territories [8]. Transnational actors remain involved, assisting policy formation to articulate influential digital state frameworks, or the cunning exercise of multi-actor interactions to counter state data-extraction ambitions through those same frameworks. A saturated range of actors also employs resource access for engineering supplies, antivirus programming, and wider ad-hoc uses, and at broader spatial extensions continues to act upon data-based requisition alongside formal movements. Without recourse to international transit processing, access

security and device provision prevail fewer but larger, internally retained operatives underpin a relatively speedy sequence, while intermittently and occasionally services operate formally through governing-plan agency [11].

Challenges, Ethical Considerations, and Future Prospects

Examining national development, infrastructure, and institutional capacity casts light on barriers to regulation or governance of surveillance and data practices [6]. Over one billion people lack access to the internet, a pervasive global phenomenon that restricts meaningful service participation and makes online data invisible to both the state and the market. Video surveillance systems and automated chatbots, for example, have been implemented without scrutiny [12]. The design and availability of algorithms also shape opportunities for surveillance. A growing number of governments are enforcing stringent “citizen services” laws requiring domestic data storage and monitoring, yet few laws restrict cross-border data outflows. Citizen-led movements and frameworks, and even community-created alternatives for service provision, are emerging to help reassert agency and agency within these closely intertwined systems [13]. Data types and applications, such as credit scoring and biometric identification, for instance, also affect the political economy of resistance in routine digital interactions. Marginalized users seldom enjoy agency in these accounts or have recourse to significant modes of challenge, yet tacit resistance alongside more visible contestation nonetheless occurs [3].

Surveillance Capitalism and Resistance

Surveillance capitalism, characterised by the commodification of information and the incorporation of socio-political aspects into economic systems, has emerged in various forms since the 1980s [3]. Market logics adopted by digital actors shape everyday life, challenging established norms and influencing government and life itself. Citizens expose their digital activities while corporations collect, share, and use information affecting individual and social lives. Zuboff contends that a new form of capital emerges based on increasingly invasive observation, evaluation, and algorithmic prediction of individuals’ activities and behaviours [4]. Data constitute new forms of capture that extend reach, deepen influence, and facilitate social control. Surveillance capitalism operates through diverse media, such as social network sites, instant messaging applications, and music and app-sharing platforms, on personal computers, tablets, and smartphones [5]. Simplistic inquiries into the habit-moulding, persuasive opportunism genes of advertising merely scratch the surface. Zuboff cautions that without robust counters, societies risk losing freedom, democracy, and life opportunities. Surveillance capitalism generates detailed know-how concerning free-ranging individuals, pushing capitalism far beyond the territory of livelihood [7]. Political regimes commodify and regiment the lives of individuals and groups through unyielding market criteria, negating fundamental freedoms and rights. Surveillance capitalism threatens both the public and private spheres, fuelling perverse choices deeply detrimental to societal life. Preventive and custodial mechanisms designed to preclude such excess promote silencing approaches that curtail fundamental rights to life, liberty, and privacy. Silencing safeguards constitute immediate and extended forms of parrying violence, occasional informal strategies against severe social, communal, or institutional oppression and excessive controlling measures. Enforced silence disrupts ethical modes of existence in contemporary settings [8]. Interactional strategies employed within the frame of everyday resistance reconfigure the direction, flow, and pace of hegemonic capitalism through counter-operations within everyday life, remaining behind the state’s radar and regime’s cognizance [4].

Digital Inclusion and Contestation

The global digital divide complicates the dynamics of surveillance and everyday resistance in the Global South. Although surveillance practices have become more pervasive, limited access to the Internet and inadequate literacy skills restrict the capacity of many communities to engage with the digital sphere meaningfully [11]. Where digital platforms exist, however, citizens often find themselves in a surveillance-rich environment. As surveillance intensifies, the demand for alternatives rises. Resistance strategies can build on any surplus of digital infrastructure and skills, and actors seek to reclaim agency in ways consistent with local histories, cultures, and power asymmetries [12]. Localised initiatives and citizen empowerment feature prominently in public discourse, and much attention centres on informal modalities and popular undercurrents often overlooked by institutions and activism [5].

Policy Recommendations and Areas for Further Research

The Global South faces unique conditions influencing digital surveillance and everyday resistance. These contexts involve the capacity of states to control and intervene in daily life, development levels governing the implementation and scope of surveillance, regimes of governance underpinning power relations, disparities in access, affordability, and digital literacy shaping exposure to surveillance, and international circulation of technologies, policies, regulatory frameworks, and corporate initiatives determining the configuration of the digital sphere [11]. Concepts and modes of resistance against everyday surveillance practices also vary according to intra-, inter-, and trans-national influences [10, 12].

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CONCLUSION

Digital surveillance has become deeply embedded in the political, economic, and social structures of the Global South. Governments, corporations, and transnational actors increasingly rely on digital infrastructures to collect and analyze data for governance, security, and economic purposes. While such practices can enhance service delivery and administrative efficiency, they also introduce new forms of power concentration and inequality, raising important questions about privacy, accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights. The expansion of surveillance technologies during periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic further illustrates how emergency conditions can accelerate the normalization of pervasive monitoring. Despite these challenges, individuals and communities across the Global South are not passive subjects of surveillance. Instead, they actively engage in diverse forms of everyday resistance that seek to limit intrusive monitoring and reclaim agency over digital spaces. These strategies often occur outside formal political institutions and include subtle practices such as privacy-protective behaviors, informal networks of digital literacy, the creation of alternative platforms, and grassroots mobilization for digital rights. Networked communication technologies have also enabled new forms of collective action, allowing activists, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens to organize across borders and share knowledge about surveillance practices and counter-measures. Regional experiences demonstrate that resistance to surveillance is shaped by specific political and socio-economic contexts. In Latin America, debates around data ownership and digital commons have stimulated community-led initiatives and policy reforms. In Sub-Saharan Africa, youth-led movements and local networks have mobilized against expanding biometric systems and corporate data extraction. South Asian contexts highlight struggles between state-driven digital governance and grassroots privacy advocacy, while Southeast Asia reveals hybrid systems of state and corporate surveillance countered by civil society campaigns and digital security initiatives. These regional variations illustrate that everyday resistance is both locally grounded and globally interconnected. Nevertheless, structural constraints remain significant. Persistent digital divides, limited regulatory capacity, and uneven access to digital literacy restrict the ability of many citizens to effectively challenge surveillance systems. Moreover, the global dominance of large technology companies complicates efforts to establish meaningful national or regional governance frameworks. Addressing these challenges requires stronger legal protections for data privacy, greater transparency in the deployment of surveillance technologies, and increased investment in digital literacy and inclusive infrastructure. Ultimately, understanding digital surveillance in the Global South requires recognizing the dynamic interplay between power and resistance. Surveillance systems may expand through technological innovation and governance agendas, but they are continually contested by citizens seeking to protect autonomy, dignity, and democratic participation. Future research and policy development should therefore pay greater attention to grassroots perspectives and everyday practices of resistance, as these experiences provide critical insights for building more equitable and rights-respecting digital futures.

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