

Legal Regulation & Education: Doing the Right Thing?

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Internet as a tool of surveillance and social control

The terrorist attacks which happened in the last fifteen years has led to the obsession of guaranteeing a high level of security at an international level and within the European Union (EU). Therefore, the EU has responded to those events by developing various security strategies based on the prevention of terrorist attacks in order to protect society from the damages that these attacks may cause. Thus, the deployment of security technologies in order to prevent and counter terrorism appeared after 9/11. Those technologies has enabled the collection of personal data by law enforcement and security services to perceive security threat. Data-gathering, tracing and profiling individuals are against the first principle of the EU law stated in the article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union, against the article 8 of the European Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, against the article 7 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and against the Data protection directive. However, these practices are legitimate in order to protect the security of the EU. Such irregularities reveal that in parallel of the fight against terrorism, the EU is exerting a surveillance over the individuals on a daily basis.

The surveillance of the society is not only exerted within the physical limits of a sovereign State and may well go beyond. The ubiquitous internet available today might be used as the new tool of surveillance exerted over the individuals. First of all, the use of internet appears to be crucial in individual's every day life. Indeed, it enables them to work, find a job, or develop their career but also to have a social life, be aware of the relevant news and actualities in the current information society. Individuals are using on-line applications for a diversity of usage e.g. sharing experiences, watching video or browsing the web looking for information. They are putting lots of private information all over the web, information detained by privates companies. Therefore, Google, Facebook but also internet service providers are detaining massive data concerning individuals' private life and communications. They are collecting and using individuals data for commercial purposes but also are transferring them to secret services and law enforcement authorities without any consent. Such process of data collection and transfer has consequently made Google, Facebook and internet service providers crucial actors in the fight against serious crime and in parallel in the surveillance process.

As consequence a question may arise:

Are private companies such as Google and Facebook part of a social control?

This question will be answered through the following structure. First of all it is necessary to assess the implication of private compagnies in the surveillance process. Facebook, Google and internet service providers are detaining, gathering and analyzing individuals' personal data without their consent for various purposes. Their first aim is targeting

individuals needs while conducting commercial-based business. The second one is the passive or active collaboration with law enforcement authorities in order to target them whether they present a threat for security. Through this first part, the impact of the surveillance process on individuals daily life is obvious. Indeed internet appears to segment individuals based on thousands of criteria such as gender, age, job, location, consumers habits. Internet individualization is thus directly affecting their choices on a daily basis. Such process also involved that individuals are classified based on the previous parameters.

The practices stated above are leading to an intrusion in individuals' private life. However, individuals appear to be not concerned about such privacy intrusion and are sharing the values of the surveillance process. Indeed, by developing an «I have nothing to hide » state of mind, they show their willingness to share their personal data to get discounts and ensure their security. Therefore, at the question « are individuals still detaining their data?» the answer is no but both private companies and law enforcement authorities are the owner of those precious information. A third part will be dedicated to the remedy of such social control. New standards shall be found in order to ensure individuals data protection and private life in the future.