

Sat, 03.10.2015–Sun, 01.05.2016

## GLOBAL CONTROL AND CENSORSHIP Weltweite Überwachung und Zensur

ZKM\_Atrium 1+2

As part of the ZKM's GLOBALE event, the exhibition GLOBAL CONTROL AND CENSORSHIP investigates the inexorable penetration of surveillance and censorship into our everyday lives. The exhibition is based on collaboration with correspondents from twenty-six countries. It is realized in collaboration with the Arbeitsgruppe Netzpolitik [Internet Governance Group] at the Institute of Political Science of Heidelberg University and the Kompetenzzentrum für angewandte Sicherheitstechnologie (KASTEL) [Center of Excellence for Applied Security Technology] at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). Other important partners in this endeavor are the Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln (KHM) [Academy of Media Arts Cologne], Reporters Without Borders, the artists residence Villa Aurora Berlin, the Chaos Computer Club e.V. (CCC), and netzpolitik.org.

At GLOBAL CONTROL AND CENSORSHIP over one hundred artworks by seventy artists, scholars, and scientists are on show in the entire spectrum of artistic formats. Interactive exhibits stand alongside video works, paintings, drawings, photographs, installations, and sculptural objects, and films are next to Sound art, performances, and workshops.

Knowledge is power. And power is above all possessed by whoever controls the flow of information. This applies particularly to digital culture, because all the information on the World Wide Web can be surveilled and manipulated, unhindered.

That mobile communication devices have been enthusiastically embraced means that these days, billions of people all over the world are connected to each other. Billions of all kinds of content and data are generated every day and transmitted across the globe within seconds. Even before it reaches the recipients, massive amounts of this data are intercepted by private companies and government agencies, checked, and then used for their purposes. Whereas not so long ago digital forms of communication were seen as the hope for new forms of democratic participation, they have recently been converted and perverted into ideal door openers for the perfect surveillance and control of billions of people.

**Those who use such devices are being used.** This is the proviso to which we have all acquiesced in order to profit from these convenient forms of communication. Smartphones, which accompany their users with every step they take, are infected with spyware without their owners' consent or

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Press Conference  
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knowledge, and can be used as surveillance cameras and listening devices even when they are turned off. Our locations and movement profiles can be accessed at any time. Our browsing and consumer behavior, our contacts, our preferences, and our weaknesses can be analyzed and passed on at any time without us knowing or being asked.

**Surveillance and censorship are mutually dependent; they cannot be viewed separately.** The surveillance of citizens, institutions, and companies – yes, including the monitoring of democratically elected politicians and parliaments or of journalists and lawyers – has always been an open secret, that this is the mission of government agencies. Recently, however, this historical practice of government-legitimized spying on all citizens has been expanded to include spying by powerful service contractors and economic enterprises. And parallel to this, for passing on important information to the general public by courageous citizens and journalists, their disclosures even of illegal surveillance, and drawing attention to censorship and torture by government institutions, these people are now being prosecuted and punished in the strongest possible terms.

**The paramount importance of an exhibition on this subject is evidenced every single day.** The media reports daily on new cases of spying and the massive interference with disclosing precisely these practices. It can no longer be denied that in Germany, too, state agencies on the orders of and sanctioned by the government itself, have taken action contrary to the welfare of citizens and the economy. Parliamentary investigation committees are refused access to documents which would lead to the solving of such cases. In totalitarian states, whistle-blowers disappear – they are kidnapped or even assassinated – but the danger that even in Germany they may find themselves prosecuted for treason, has recently increased dramatically.

Besides direct measures to exercise influence and punish, the surveillance apparatus always uses fear as the most effective instrument. From Olympus to the Old Testament, from the Pharaohs to the Inquisition, in all religions and governmental systems from antiquity to the present, surveillance always referenced God Almighty or the gods. The total control of individuals always took place preemptively in the form of self-censorship resulting from fear. When this mechanism did not work, in their presumptuous omnipotence as representatives of God, both religious and worldly rulers have always had recourse to ubiquitous spy systems to identify and locate people who think differently, and to mete out the punishment they are supposed to deserve.

Thus, up to the end of the eighteenth century, the writings and correspondence of scholars and scientists who were deemed suspicious were intercepted, evaluated, manipulated, and used against the sender by the Inquisition – often with devastating consequences for them. In 1415, Jan Hus was burned at the stake in Konstanz for heresy against the teachings of the Catholic

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Church. In 1600, Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake on the Campo dei Fiori in Rome for heresy because he denied several Catholic core doctrines based on Aristotle's natural philosophy. It was not so much about Bruno himself, but rather about setting a public example, which would supposedly deter others from publishing what they knew. In 1633, after the Inquisition threatened him with the same fate as Bruno, Galileo Galilei was forced to retract his scientific findings, which were contrary to official church doctrine: for the Roman Catholic Church the Earth was the center of the universe around which the other celestial bodies revolved.

Today, in the year 2015, writers and journalists critical of the system and **whistle-blowers** are branded as traitors; they are pursued across all continents, threatened with bans on publishing their work, with house arrest and travel bans, with life imprisonment or even death.

### Control by means of electronic media

After the Nazi control regime, which culminated in the annihilation of millions of people, George Orwell's Big Brother became a metaphor for the God-like, omnipresent, totalitarian authority of state control by means of electronic media. Under Stalin's dictatorship, no different to the USA in the anti-Communist McCarthy era, millions of people were hounded and persecuted because of their opinions and beliefs, incarcerated in prisons and camps, tortured, and killed. The dictatorships of Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal, the regimes of Pinochet, Suharto, and Ceauseşcu, to name but a few examples, were only able to survive because of the surveillance and intimidation of the populace; the same applied to East Germany, which owed its continued existence until 1989 to the Ministry for State Security's blanket system of informers.

At the latest since 1947, the global espionage network Echelon operated by the Five Eyes – USA, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand – has focused on spying on political, commercial, and private communications traffic, both in the east and the west. Since the end of the Second World War the Federal German Government has known and sanctioned that the Allied Powers in Germany systematically monitor all postal, telephone, and radio communications. The people were told this was to counter the Communist threat: today it is ostensibly to wage "war on terror."

**For around thirty years now digital networks have enabled automated, targeted blanket interception, manipulation, and storing of information available on the Internet as well as targeted spying on users worldwide and 24/7.** The courageous disclosures of Edward Snowden and other whistle-blowers have made it very clear that this capability of total electronic surveillance by intelligence agencies in the east and the west has been developed and is implemented on the broadest possible basis. Super-efficient spying software is developed with the aid of state funding at

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German universities and prestigious private sector research institutions as a new form of weapons technology; it is a lucrative business for German companies with totalitarian states from all over the world.

Just how all-encompassing digital surveillance and censorship function today was revealed in July 2014 when the CIA admitted it had manipulated the computers of the U.S. Congress committee that is tasked with democratic control of the CIA. The manipulation included deleting documents about torture conducted by the CIA, which the committee was investigating.

That digital surveillance functions perfectly in Germany as well is evidenced by the recent revelations that several thousand computers of the German Bundestag and prominent politicians had been successfully hacked for years. After the NSA admitted they had even hacked Chancellor Merkel's cell phone to spy on her, it is likely that the attacks on the Bundestag and politicians, which are still ongoing, were also carried out by the intelligence services of foreign nations. It is a matter of grave concern that such spying activities in Germany – possibly also by “friendly” powers – are not being vigorously prosecuted.

For a long time now the Five Eyes states as well as other nations have granted themselves the right to spy on all other nations: in all military, economic, and social areas, and at all levels – government, organizations, business concerns, activists, NGOs, and individual citizens. The motto is: If it's technically possible to do, it will be done. Issues of legality, ethical scruples, or friendly relations between states or business concerns have ceased to exist.

**Military warfare has long since been expanded to include the control and manipulation of electronic communications networks.** We have to take it as given that today all important information relating to politics and the economy will be intercepted at some point on its way from sender to receiver, manipulated, and even distorted or falsified. The mass effects of such possible manipulations on political decision-making processes, on stock exchanges and markets, and also on the proper functioning of essential technological systems, such as public utilities and transport could in future be far greater and more subtle than attacks with conventional weapons.

**Besides the mass analysis of communications metadata in electronic networks and direct interception of the data of individuals, open or clandestine censorship through interference, manipulation, and shutdown is on the increase.** A certain awareness of these actions always results in enhancing a background scenario of all-pervasive threat and in a tendency to self-censure. When fear of imminent censorship as a control mechanism does not work, secrecy is implemented to withhold important information from the general public: by keeping out journalists and controlling them (embedded journalists), preventing the publication of specific

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items, or impeding reporting on entire thematic complexes. The range of reprisals faced by journalists, photographers, writers, and filmmakers in many countries includes personal intimidation, prohibition from exercising their profession, arrest, abduction, incarceration, torture, and murder. Such practices are not restricted to authoritarian systems, but are also found in states that regard their exercise of power as democratically legitimated.

The typical excuse for censorship has always been the actual or pretended jeopardizing of security by disclosure of information and, recently, impeding the foiling of terrorist attacks. Security has therefore become the common and cheap key term with which it is possible to justify authoritarian measures of whatever nature in the certainty that opposition will be minimal. That control and withholding information, surveillance and punishment, as well as the intelligent manipulation of knowledge and communications ultimately do not serve in the main to guarantee the security of citizens but rather to maintain power that is not legitimate, is hotly denied. And that the buzzword “security” is at the center of a mammoth new industry, which makes vast profits from the fears it fuels and plays upon, is also not deemed a suitable topic for general discussion.

**Nobody today has an overview any longer of the technical possibilities for surveillance and censorship of electronic networks.** And no committee of control, however critical, has the precise knowledge necessary to understand the technically complex and also subtle measures of surveillance and control. It is not only since the disclosures of Edward Snowden and other whistle-blowers that politicians in democratic states repeat the same old refrain that people who have nothing to hide have no objections to surveillance. And people who do object have something to hide. According to this cheap logic thus everyone needs to be surveilled. But this is and always was the principle under which totalitarian states operate and operated – in East and West alike.

Besides knowing that state agencies are conducting far reaching, politically motivated spying activities, we have also known for a long time about the **massive influence of commercial companies** on the public and the private sphere, on political and economic decisions, and on our real everyday behavior. Globally operating companies, whose stock trades at high prices on the stock exchanges, such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Apple, Twitter, and very many others, profit from the data on individual and social dependencies they acquire from their users of all forms of social media. The newly awakened need for communication and entertainment that never stops has all the hallmarks of an addiction. While even very small children are being introduced to a brave new world of digital amusement to enhance their little lives, at the same time their future profiles as consumers are being explored and developed. The latest project of this branch of the industry is “Hello Barbie,” a talking version of the eponymous doll that kids are sup-

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posed to talk to and tell about their secrets and dreams – the doll is connected to a central server of the manufacturer which then analyses and evaluates the data collected by eavesdropping Barbie.

As consumers, we know it is now standard practice that we can't take advantage of special offers while online shopping or even book a plane or train ticket without granting access to our personal data. Very few people are aware that there are actually no cheap or free offers at all. We always pay with our data and with our most precious belonging, our privacy, as well as with our attention to the advertising that bombards us on every website.

**Being at the mercy of overwhelmingly powerful authorities of control and censorship has become the conditio humana, the basic condition of our culture.** To some extent we realize this and reflect upon it, but we cannot reverse or undo it. We have become accustomed to this situation, just as we are not deterred by the myriads of video cameras on the way to work or on our way back home. We are well on the way to accepting surveillance and censorship as a given, just as we have learned to accept other conditions as facts of modern life – traffic noise, ubiquitous advertising, environmental pollution, and our insignificance in the political arena.

In spite of the alarming things we now know a large section of the public has already resigned in the face of the ubiquitous presence of state and commercial surveillance. Our grandchildren will hopefully still be able to ask us what we did about it; in a totalitarian society such questions will not even be posed.

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**The exhibition owes a great debt of thanks to all the whistle-blowers who had, have, and will have the courage to reveal the undemocratic practices of states and commercial enterprises to the general public. It is only on the basis of greater commitment and concern on the part of every one of us that defense strategies can be developed, because here the same dictum applies: Knowledge is power.**

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The exhibition is curated by Bernhard Serexhe with Livia Rózsás.

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**Artists of the exhibition:** aaajiao (Xu Wenkai), Hamra Abbas, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Selma Alaçam, Halil Altındere, Jacob Appelbaum , Olivia Arthur, Sophia Bauer, Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, Michael Bielicky & Kamila B. Richter, Zach Blas, Osman Bozkurt, James Bridle, Gonçalo F. Cardoso, Alice Cavoudjian dite Galli, Chen Ching-Yao, James Coupe, Maxim Dondyuk, Hasan Elahi, mounir fatmi, Lutz Fezer, Finger Pointing Worker + Kota Takeuchi, Alicia Framis, Daniel G. Andújar, Fidel García, Benjamin Gaulon, Laurent Grasso, Michael Grudziecki , Holly Herndon, Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung, Jonathon Keats, Martin Lukas Kim, Andée Korpys & Marcus Löffler, Joe Krasean, Frédéric Krauke, Kwan Sheung Chi, Marc Lee, Alexander Lehmann, Milica Lopičić, Jorge Loureiro, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Jonas Lund, Jill Magid , Virginia Mastrogiannaki, Erik Mátrai, Metahaven, Tomomi Morishima, Jens Mühlhoff, Gerardo Nolasco Magaña, Chris Oakley, Şener Özmen, Trevor Paglen, Ruben Pater, Dieter Paul, Chantal Peñalosa, Dan Perjovschi, Axel Philipp, Sascha Pohle, Ma Qiusha , Oliver Ressler, Khvay Samnang, Julia Scher , Shinseungback Kimyonghun, Christian Sievers, Hito Steyerl , Svay Sareth, Team Titanic, Wilko Thiele, UBERMORGEN.COM, YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES, Damian Weber, Moritz Walsler, Alex Wenger & Max-Gerd Retzlaff

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