

Surveillance in the Global South Researchers' Workshop 2021

23 August 2021, Online

Report by Azadeh Akbari

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[Surveillance in the Global South](#) is a research network aiming to expand the scope of surveillance studies to include non-Western discourses and practices. The network pursues to be a place for exchange, collaboration, and activism against the undemocratic use of surveillance technologies. The network's first researchers' workshop was held on 23 August 2021, with five presenters and six discussants. The workshop's primary goal was to provide a discussion-oriented supportive environment to explore under-represented or neglected research areas, examine new research approaches and methodologies, and contribute to research/activist collaborations.

The workshop was organised by Azadeh Akbari, the founder of the Surveillance in the Global South research network. The 2021 workshop included six topics, each with an affiliated discussant with research experience in that field (see below table).

Discussant	Affiliation	Topic
Azadeh Akbari	Academic Staff (Post-Doc), Political Geography Working Group, University of Münster	Platform Surveillance
Chenai Chair	Special Advisor for Africa Innovation at Mozilla	Surveillance and gender
Shyam Krishna	PhD Candidate, Digital Organisation and Society Research Centre, Royal Holloway University of London	Workplace datafication and surveillance
Midori Ogasawara	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria	Surveillance & COVID-19
Ozgun Topak	Assistant Professor, Department of Social Science, York University	Surveillance and democracy
Keren Weitzberg	Lecturer, History Department, University College London (UCL) and independent consultant	Surveillance and humanitarian aid

The focus of the workshop was on the discussions after the presentations, where the small group had enough time to engage meaningfully in providing others with feedback, comments, and ideas. The presentation titles are mentioned in the table below. Furthermore, a short summary of each participant's abstract is introduced.

Presentation by:	Title	Topic
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Silvia Masiero University of Oslo Associate Professor	Digital Identity as Platform-Mediated Surveillance: A Study of Design Properties	platform surveillance
Margie Cheesman Oxford Internet Institute DPhil Student	Faith in infrastructure: Reconceptualising blockchain in aid	Surveillance and humanitarian aid
Deniz Yonucu Newcastle University Lecturer	Refusing to be an informant: Affective Technologies of Surveillance, Refusal, and the Reclamation of Dignity	surveillance and democracy
Mardiya Siba Yahaya Witwatersrand University (Johannesburg) Master Student- Sociology	The Gendered Surveillance of Black Muslim Influencers on Instagram	Gender and Surveillance
Marcella Siqueira Cassiano Memorial University of Newfoundland (Canada) Lecturer in Sociology	China's COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Surveillance, Nationalism, and Autonomy	Surveillance and COVID-19

Silvia Masiero debated the less-discussed design properties of digital identity platforms as modular systems endowed with a *core*, *boundary resources* and *complements* ([Masiero & Arvidsson, 2021](#)). Her research develops the concept of platform-mediated surveillance ([Masiero & Shakthi, 2020](#)) by arguing that the modular architecture of digital platforms, developed through the design properties in point, is instrumental in producing the profiling and policing outcomes that the surveillance literature details.

Margie Cheesman questioned the dominant concept of trust in scholarly and policy debates surrounding blockchain and argued that faith is a more pertinent term. She presented a close-up research in women's centres in Jordan, where blockchain technology is being used to deliver financial aid. She focuses on how the Islamic concept *barakeh*--with various cultural meanings, including blessed, consistent, substantial and dependable--is the central lens through which they evaluate the new digital system.

Deniz Yonucu examined the hypervisibility of undercover police surveillance and informant activities and their affective power over Turkey's target populations' political subjectivities. Following a National programme of community-oriented policing introduced in 2006, her work suggests that the threat posed by police surveillance does not necessarily or exclusively produce docility, inaction or a desire to withdraw from public visibility and become inactive.

Mardiya Siba Yahaya analysed the role the three-dimensional oppressive elements (racism, Islamophobia, misogyny) play in how black Muslim women Influencers on Instagram experience gendered affordances on the platform. Her work explores what it means to be an agent of a 'cybergaze' while reproducing it.

Marcella Siqueira Cassiano's work examined the surveillance practices and technologies underpinning China's pandemic response's social-political, technological, and psychological facets based on policy documents issued by China's State Council between December 2019 and December 2020. Her work demonstrates how the Communist Party has used the pandemic and its social and psychological consequences to assemble, expand, and automate its surveillance strategies and revitalize its governance apparatus.

The workshop concluded with the plans to hold the first face to face members' assembly at the Surveillance Studies Network's biennial conference in Rotterdam in 2022.