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# Digital Surveillance and Everyday Resistance in the Global South

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## ABSTRACT

Digital surveillance has become a defining feature of contemporary life in the Global South, shaped by the intersecting forces of state authority, corporate power, and historical legacies of colonialism. This paper examines the expanding scope of digital surveillance and the diverse forms of everyday resistance that emerge in response. It argues that surveillance in the Global South is not merely a top-down imposition but a complex, hybrid system embedded in socio-political, economic, and technological structures. Drawing on historical, theoretical, and empirical perspectives, the study explores state-led, corporate, and informal surveillance practices, highlighting how they influence individual autonomy, freedom of expression, and social organization. At the same time, it foregrounds grassroots digital agency, illustrating how individuals and communities employ creative, tactical, and networked strategies, such as anonymity practices, informal monitoring, mutual aid networks, and technological improvisation to resist, evade, or subvert surveillance systems. Through regional case studies across Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, the paper demonstrates that resistance is deeply contextual, often intertwined with survival and shaped by local conditions of precarity and inequality. Ultimately, the paper contends that everyday resistance in the Global South reveals both the limits of surveillance and the resilience of subaltern actors, calling for more context-sensitive theories and policies that centre lived experiences and local innovations.

**Keywords:** Digital surveillance; Everyday resistance; Global South; Subaltern agency; and Surveillance capitalism.

## INTRODUCTION

During the last couple of decades, digital technologies significantly augmented the capacity for surveillance by states, corporations, and other actors [1]. Digital capital is now ubiquitous: “the fear of being watched is becoming paramount, and strategies for actively resisting surveillance, and for using technology in subversive ways that frustrate, misdirect, and build agency against the omnipresence of capital, are proliferating” [1]. Surveillance pervades society in various forms: state technologies scrutinize populations, corporate platforms extract user data, and informal mechanisms filter activities [2]. Surveillance is used under regimes claiming radical democracy without efforts to contain corporate data extraction [2]. The ubiquity of digital surveillance cultivation highlights the need to search for alternatives. Within vast constituencies, however, surveillance-influenced encounters mediate efforts to hold onto and reclaim informality, intimacy, difficulty, and other qualities that augment the sense of agency. Resisting surveillance has become a daily concern [3]. Bennett and Grassmuck (9–10) documented this concern among some digital citizens and attributed resistance against surveillance to the ethos of freedom. Whether surveillance is avowedly civil or visibly predatory, opportunity spaces are constricted. Digital surveillance involves not only extensive gathering but also pretty constant processing. Under corporate capitalism, a vast number of subjects are analyzed and ranked in micro-temporal fragments that threaten informal connection and mutuality [3]. The material substratum of digital surveillance, global inter-operable stand-alone, increases the stakes of losing the electronic portfolio [4]. Intense attacks on preservation and technological saturation prompt interrogating alternative forms that contradiction the predication of present-day digitization.

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García-Roca and Rabinow documented tension between the notion of digital divide and commodification dilemma of extending services. Theoretical perspective thus focused on the connection between power and technology in earlier historical contexts. The framework indeed spoke to times of commodification growth [5]. Attention is turned to the particular digital surveillance regime meted out in the Global South, forming an essential bridge between diverse aspects of power and technology at stake today. Seeking to identify alignments, misalignments, and reflections still more complicated, González enquired the intricate genealogies of power and locate surveillance at the center [5]. Historical displacements form angle to approach inflection under digital capitalism, which work considerably shifting modes of technology circulation, consciousness formation, and process governing. González's focus on the interstices that open in the flow according to the specific regimes enables staying at the level of circulation. Such specific technology circulation and regime configuration join José Carlos Mariátegui observations concerning the contemporary demand emerged after Industrial Revolution industrialisation that deviated from colonies proper into still operative spectres of technicity in broad terms [6].

#### **Historical and Theoretical Foundations**

Colonialism disrupted community life and left a legacy of dependency in the Global South. In the Global North, Henry Ford and John Dewey proposed increasing educational access to stimulate local innovation and challenge American corporate hegemony [6]. In the 1960s, a model emerged emphasizing mass media and cultural imperialism. Distant nations were seen as vulnerable to penetration through advertising and the expansion of foreign media, requiring locally produced media to promote indigenous development [1]. In the Global South, early efforts focused on information and communication technology infrastructure to increase access to mass media and stimulate local content generation, in reaction to the satellite revolution and the 1982 MacBride Report. Thick tactical media networks and later the open source, free software, and free culture movements emerged in the Global South, coinciding with the maturation of mass communication and prefiguring today's digital turn [6]. Digital-capitalist surveillance is extensive but not absolute; careless exchanges expose limits and refashion identities. Subaltern agency in the Global South evokes Gramsci's conception of folk culture as the first stage of counterhegemony and Villebrun Castro's sylvan proliferation of resistance beyond the state's canopy of control [7]. Resistance at the ordinary level may nevertheless fold back, yielding support to the very power contested. In this combination, resistance throughout the Global South exemplifies everyday practice. Such defiance also occurs outside the digital, but digital forms document distinctive continuities, catalyze consciousness, and traverse distances [8]. Networked installations, sharing, improvisation, and bricolage unlock agency and dependency simultaneously while detournement and vernacular circles the globe. In extreme precarities, agency may merge with survival.

#### **Forms of Digital Surveillance in Global South Contexts**

In the Global South, digital surveillance remains firmly entrenched among governments, corporations, and intermediaries alike [10]. Governments like China, India, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil have invested heavily in digital surveillance as an integral part of the governance system [15]. Besides serious concerns over national security, public health, and law enforcement, the current Covid-19 pandemic has led to substantial legal and illegal state surveillance that criminals have manipulated to their advantage [2]. During the pandemic, governments of both conservative and leftist political parties expanded their surveillance of citizens. Digital capitalism and imperialism impose their own forms of digital surveillance on Global South countries, threatening human dignity, freedom of expression, and safety [14]. Corporations like Facebook have almost unilaterally dominated public discourse in many countries of the Global South and induce other companies to adopt invasive, survey-based digital surveillance [11]. While many developing countries, civil society organizations, and activists are struggling against pervasive and oppressive state and corporate surveillance systems and attempts to undermine targeted communities, they face strong armed resistance from authoritarian governments like Brazil, India and Turkey [12]. People devise a variety of auxiliary, informal, and pro-actively established monitoring mechanisms to indirectly and securely survey suspected surveillance by states, corporations, or intermediaries [13]. These systems operate parallel to official structures, empowering the vulnerable and supporting mutual aid among marginalized populations [15]. The pandemic has intensified the struggle of these populations and made the auxiliary digital-surveillance systems crucial for survival.

#### **State-led Surveillance Practices**

State-led surveillance practices developed through colonialism and postcolonialism are variously and asymmetrically embedded in regions that constitute the Global South (Munoriyarwa, 2021) [7]. Colonial regimes gathered information from colonized groups to maintain control and legitimize rule. Data collected included group characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, religion, profession), statistical information (e.g., population numbers, crime rates), and other occurrences (e.g., protests, epidemics) [7]. Data-gathering techniques were often used to repress and punish groups [6]. After independence, many countries retained the mistrust of society created by colonial rule.

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State categorization of the population through ethnicity and religion was further entrenched during the Cold War. Certain periods saw the return or deepening of these practices [8]. Epidemiological surveillance for medical purposes began to emerge with European colonization in the sixteenth century. Such surveillance provided the basis for handling epidemics and establishing the health of the population as a national objective [6]. Subsequently, epidemic surveillance has been used for collecting data for managing and allocating state resources and for defining particular groups and intervening against them [5]. After independence, surveillance of this type continued to serve these same purposes and later re-emerged after intervention by the International Monetary Fund [3]. Surveillance during the Human Immunodeficiency Virus-Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome epidemic was pursued as a means of gathering information for the health of the economy and of allocating state resources [2].

### Corporate and Intermediary Surveillance

Corporate and intermediary surveillance both supplement and complement state surveillance of the digital realm. Unlike state-led surveillance mechanisms, companies do not actively monitor the dissemination of certain political information or closely follow individual accounts involved in social movements [5]. Nonetheless, their role in expanded digital surveillance remains critical, especially in specific geographical contexts where state surveillance takes on obscure and covert forms [4]. Dominant Internet corporations harvest vast user data to engineer personal consumption feeds. The accumulating metadata provides companies with greater insights into users' geographies, preferences, and even political inclinations [3]. Corporation's position advertisements on social networks, deploy targeted filtering among different user groups, and modify algorithmic processes depending on local contexts regarding political news and current affairs. Intermediaries such as Internet service providers (ISPs), telecommunication companies, credit card firms, and cloud-based infrastructures also connect with varying content but equally track users' movements to enhance targeted commodities and identify consumer spending habits [5]. Partnerships between states and corporations further develop localized user profiles. Emerging digital marketplaces introduce additional forms of corporate surveillance, particularly in certain Latin American regions [6]. The local telecommunication economy persists on a cash basis, fuelling illicit dealings that digital platforms disavow. When participants from neighbouring countries directly approach vendors via social media to negotiate delivery instead of transacting openly, these private exchanges avoid drawing attention from state apparatuses that keep records of public activity [4]. In the Southern context of Whatsapp and Telegram use, the traceable nature of even end-to-end encrypted text chat raises concern. Platforms nevertheless enjoy "safe-harbour exemptions" from liability for editorial control and limiting third-party participation in private discussions [6]. In such cases, aberrantly private interactions inadvertently challenge the dominant understanding of privacy or another burden of surveillance and underscore the diversity of agential practices [3].

### Auxiliary and Informal Monitoring Mechanisms

Surveillance practices in the Global South are varied, evolving in hybrid ways reflective of unique social, political, and technological contexts [5]. Even in these circumstances, auxiliary informal monitoring remains vital to how individuals and organizations observe others [4]. Such extra-institutional modes of scrutiny arise from both state and corporate practices that, while often distant or disconnected, still shape local and regional surveillance. Faced with digital interdictions, journalists in Zimbabwe counteract restrictive laws using informal monitoring approaches and tools [2]. Ad-hoc and focus group arrangements facilitate undercover newsgathering of politically sensitive topics actions that, while commonplace during enduring political repression, adapt to augmented public exposure [9]. In Angola, ecological surveillance occurs outside local cellular networks. Important quotidian information remains unavailable even as state-driven downsizing impoverishes communication [11]. Whatsapp and cellular service use introduction, however, gives rise to informal tracking based on location indicators and investigative recycling of aerial photography for enhanced overview [2].

### Everyday Resistance: Conceptualizing Grassroots Digital Agency

Contemporary analyses of digital surveillance and everyday resistance encompass a broad spectrum of tactics and aspirations [5]. A wide-based activist movement in the Global South emphasizes the urgency of data protection from private intermediaries and government authorities [6]. Public opinion seeks to curtail the proliferation of digital apparatuses associated with widely-circulated terms such as datification and surveillance capitalism. Nevertheless, ordinary individuals also exploit these technologies for their private ends. Various strands of data extraction, classification, and transmission offer critical components of everyday agency that contest the prevailing hegemony of capitalist-extractive platforms [6]. Grassroots digital agency can materialize through alternative channels managed by individual and collective subalterns, as well as movements of mutual aid and networking among them [4]. Certain participants exploit technologies and networks to disseminate supplementary information and organize mutual assistance against predation by the authority of the state or capital [6]. The relevance of supplementary, reciprocal, and lateral efforts has been revived by the worldwide pandemic. During

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episodes of biopolitical enclosure and police repression, additional resources have been made available [5]. Concerns about state surveillance have directed the implementation of subverting technologies by journalists facing opposition in their reporting [2]. The urgency of these various forms of agency demands their preliminary mapping [6].

### Subaltern Uses of Technology

Digital surveillance of journalists threatens their role as watchdogs. In Zimbabwe and South Africa, widespread state surveillance involves clandestine collection of metadata and monitoring of activities [5]. In this increasingly adversarial environment, journalists adopt strategies to navigate surveillance. Resistance includes acts to circumvent, oppose, or evade surveillance systems, integrated into broader movements [6]. Early opposition targeted private-data collection programs. Surveillance resistance is interactional, with fluid and interchangeable positions of surveillor and surveilled [2]. The effectiveness of surveillance tools depends on micro-scale interdependence between technology and daily life, and macro-scale participation in a supranational order requiring technology for all operations [4]. Voluntary involvement in technological consumption considered inevitable and necessary facilitates control. Disclosure efforts expose technological practices, policy implications, actors, and operations [7]. Communication campaigns promote citizen demands and local-global issues. Training enhances digital culture and personal-data privacy. Citizens face the challenge of understanding socio-technical control and cultivating a digital and privacy culture that hampers surveillance [6]. Crowdsourcing and ubiquity, by contrast, can support decolonial action, enabling communities to construct alternative digital spaces and share cultural practices and knowledge. Feminist perspectives view gender as crucial for grasping harm and contesting datafication that accelerates capitalism's worst dimensions, termed *gore capitalism* [4]. Feminist groups, indigenous communities, and scholars from the Global South and North work against hegemonic datafication, revealing its connections to poverty, violence, and cultural erasure, while promoting digital literacy. Activist networks develop alternative algorithms, data-collection strategies, and data-governance models [6]. These collectives question existing platforms and envision multi-perspective interactions between digital and physical bodies. Decolonisation of the metaverse calls for less quantitative, more sensitive digital environments and interrogates whether dismantling metaverse datafication hegemony could yield more humane digital territories [5].

### Networked Solidarity and Mutual Aid

Grassroots movements find creative ways to advance mutual aid and foster solidarity on the internet.[1] They resist the digital architectures, social platforms, and algorithms produced and governed by big tech firms, which tend to side with the most privileged[3]. Zoom breaks become a fertile ground for globally distributed mutual aid societies to form [2]. User-controlled forums rise devoted to sharing information on sick neighbours and offering groceries, advice, medicines, and emotional support. Those who have precarious documents or no papers at all use fake names and pretend to have French citizenship, not because they wish to deceive but to access services that should be available to all [2]. In relation to such informal practices, solidarity and mutual aid become more prominent terms than trust and common resources [4]. The work of the Popular Urban Imaginaries Research Lab focuses on how artists, collectives and institutions of different types build collective strategies to share with, accompany, and inform communities that have been neglected in the urban sphere and have no access to the cultural resources usually found in global cities [7]. Solidarity moves beyond resources that may perish with the partnership, but is rather common when subjects are engaged in the fight against the same issue and defend the same values. Solidarity acts on the content, the purpose of the work rather than on the shared content itself [9].

### Creative and Tactical Adaptations

Amidst extensive state and corporate surveillance, everyday agents in the Global South exhibit novel, searchable forms of agency and resistance [4]. Resistance activities include routine compliance with technologies and systems fostered by figures of authority or capital, tempered by tactical ambivalence, improvisation, and subversion of their intended effects. This participation operates along the grain of available infrastructural options while simultaneously investing them with alternative meanings [5]. Within constrained circumstances, sustained and arduous efforts familiar to residents of the Global South motivate searching adaptations and intensive participation; resource-intensive acts of suppression propel fundamental indignation that motivates sustained yet imperfect engagements at or beyond the thresholds of minimalist affordance [2]. Creative adaptations range from laughter, irony, parody, and satire to playful reappropriation of officially sanctioned materials and soft disobedience [4]. Tactical adaptations reference condition, context, and craft; tactics emerge from opportunistic readings of forms of receptiveness or occlusion. Potentially productive and punitive concatenations of indifference, opposition, facilitation, and proximity shape participation [5]. These adaptations, both creative and tactical, cohere in familiar social formations gatherings, salons, assemblies, countermarches where improvisations engage predominant orders adjacent to yet distinct from top-down, prescribed forms of contestation[3].

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### Case Studies across Regions

Surveillance practices associated with the colonial and post-colonial state and those that emerged under SAPs and globalization provide insights into the specifics of digital surveillance in Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and, to a lesser extent, Sub-Saharan Africa [2]. Unlike the North, where the deployment of biometric systems before the Internet's spread marked the beginning of the digital surveillance regime, many countries in the South denote the arrival of the Internet in the 1990s as the start of digital surveillance [3]. A reading of contemporary digital surveillance can shed light on the search for a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of surveillance in non-optimal settings, the workings of hegemonic power, and the concept of everyday resistance as an outward observation of such power [4]. The politics of data collection and data protection of digital devices, and their implications on freedom of expression and information, access to personal data, and knowledge management systems, represent other aspects dissimilar to the Northern scenario [5].

#### Latin America

When 2007 and 2011 the Mexican state assassinated several journalists and activists in a high-profile and strategic manner, killing the leading figures of the regional struggle against crime, corruption, and injustice, assassinations were followed by a cavalcade of social acts of citizen solidarity and actors from new anti-system assemblies seized the spaces resources of public autonomy enshrined in law and illusory democracy to declare the illegitimacy and unconstitutional character of the Mexican state and to invoke the rights of the people to cease to obey the phantom democratic institutions [13]. Without the press, reporters began to make of themselves the units of conveying the news from citizen's organs of the struggle to the people, and the people began to intervene to inform on what the press could not cover or to proclaim their own elaborations on the news beyond what the press was concocting to cover [11]. These messages were distributed by cell technologies in a citizen's communication network that covered the country, nurtured by the gifts of numerous networks of public services, exchanges, forums, and various actions of communal action [8]. When water shortages made lines of women carrying buckets for water more than 100 yards long, women took to decorating their buckets artfully and, along with the devotion of interest or effort, accumulating other messages, sent texts describing the as well as the state coverage. In this way, the people filled the gaps remaining in the matrix of regime formation and control still intact around the people [9]. New technology thus appeared as an enabler of the range of subaltern news activities during and after colonial dominations; bagged cells of activity opened for the people themselves to partially extend before the critical break from successor-colonial and metropolitan shapes, made themselves even more vital to survival when the transformation around substitution began to click into place; and trans-continental, trans-oceanic, and trans-species solidary contributions from fellow elaborators bolstered magnificent yet precarious autonomous endeavors over and again during and after the invasively subterranean slide under trans-Global-Bios toward full dystopia of which digital scenes now teleport diverse movements of post-pop after, during, and amid followed the very routes of the original dreams [9]. A wide range of small, intermediate, and large-scale activities requiring substantial sensitivity to signals, flows, and ranges hazardous to their transduction yet geolocation-wise compatible with diverse contributions have shown the organic resilience of those preliminary postal-infrastructures to supplement critical informacji [10].

#### Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has been characterized by unprecedented media openness since the 1990s, accompanying a significant transition towards multiparty systems [10]. Nevertheless, whereas multiparty regimes tend to simultaneously promote and constrain media use, the terrain of media freedom is particularly precarious in Sub-Saharan countries [12]. They have witnessed waves of media liberalization resulting from external and internal pressures yet experience constant attempts at re-marginalization in the form of repressive legal frameworks, surveillance technologies, and restrictive internet policies (e.g. intrusive SIM registration requirements) [11]. Examples abound of journalists and citizens combing their alerts or evening news channels for signs of impending shutdowns of media outlets, occasional unannounced censorship by powerful "regulatory" organs and commercial or state media, and interaction through messaging apps with anonymous bloggers located in production countries to gain a forecast of authoritative election outcomes ([12].

#### South Asia

In 2004, a privacy-enhancing technological project called the "Internet Freedom Gateway for South Asia" targeted five countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan [11]. The project aimed to assist human rights defenders, journalists, and political activists to communicate privately and securely, but it was terminated due to safety concerns. The melancholy fate of the "Internet Freedom Gateway for South Asia" underscores the growing lack of freedom and autonomy in digital communications gadgets throughout South Asia [12]. A large volume of digital surveillance legislation, programs, and spyware targeting opposition and civil society indicates that, despite the promises of mobile telephony and the Internet, the medium serves more as a tool for repression than as a

channel for greater freedom [13]. In Nepal, the establishment of a government-controlled Internet exchange facility raises concerns over the administration's capacity to conduct surveillance to curtail dissent using easily available surveillance technologies [13]. In Bangladesh, the purchase of new surveillance technologies reinforces fears of growing repression, while the Digital Security Act curtails freedom of expression, shutting down debates and dissent after political, religious, and other cracks have manifested [12]. In Pakistan, the surveillance of a mobile communication through any communication service provider creates fear amongst people [2]. The acquisition of IP information also evokes worry because the IP may constitute a violation of privacy that can lead to further disregard for freedom of expression online [6]. The dominant idea about digital technology in South Asia suggests that the dimensions and meaning of digital surveillance are dwarfed and ignored but the consequences of online activity do not depict that reality. Surveillance legislation, policies, and ranking at a local and international level prove that a different narrative envisions authorities' capability in limiting, monitoring, and intervening in online space whilst averting the progressive notion of information society [7]. The narrative of South Asia envisages a storyline where digital technologies take unexpected turns confounding preconceived notions about the enabling and liberating properties of mobile telephony and the Internet [4]. This counter-narrative questions the existing territorial, national, and state-centric paradigms of the information society discourse, while stimulating a need to rethink surveillance strategies [2].

#### **Southeast Asia**

Southeast Asia's socio-political and digital landscape is shaped by a set of common governance, economic, cultural and geographic characteristics [11]. It is also influenced by international developments from adjacent regions of South Asia and East Asia. Across the region, governance and management of technologies epitomise authoritarianism and call upon technology companies fulfil demands to surveil and filter communications [12]. There is unevenness in regulation and governance frameworks due to the longstanding dialectic between colonial and post-colonial nation-state structures and de-westernised development models of information and communication sectors [13].

#### **Governance, Rights, and Policy Implications**

Surveillance governance within the Global South continues to evolve in line with domestic and international sociopolitical conditions [8]. In the wake of emerging digital affordances, state views on the legitimacy of surveillance practices change, understanding surveillance as a method of tackling information asymmetries generated by innovative ordering initiatives [5]. Historically rooted, judicial oversight regimes instead of progressively denying or harshly extending the capacity to survey shape the current state of individual autonomy and therefore continue to impose restrictions on academy and research [7]. Currently, a somewhat enabling policy environment continues to expose operators in varied circumstances across the continent to multiple and diverse instances of political meddling [6]. Nevertheless, an increasing interest to build and establish avant-garde theories that could implicitly impact the unbinding of these entangled transmissions to deter illicit governance urges the comprehension of the propriety of the surveilling agent as an essential directive in the decoupling of unsolicited bureaucratic enchainment [11].

#### **Privacy, Data Protection, and Individual Autonomy**

Digital sovereignty, which has gained prominence on the policy agenda of many governments, signals the transmission of authority and control over digital technology that is well-established in the Global North and belatedly entering the Global South [13]. Multiple governmental entities, such as the European Commission and several French ministries, adopted initiatives designed to promote a fundamental effort for technological sovereignty in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting interdependencies created through data and seminars [10]. A major technical solution to managing Covid-19 cross-border asymmetry-related data, a naturally concerning issue across borders in many jurisdictions, is networked public health infrastructures, which facilitate the appointment of (inter)digitalization technology at the core of sovereignty [9]. State-led surveillance, supported by a growing ecosystem of corporate instruments and platforms, remains the most prevalent operationality and establishes a distinct profile of digital capitalism in the Global South [5].

#### **Access, Inclusion, and Digital Literacy**

Life opportunities and nation-building discourse often frame access to information and communication technology (ICT) as a fundamental aspiration in the Global South; yet, Internet penetration and ownership remain modest [14]. Marginalized population sub-groups experience even higher rates of exclusion [3]. In large urban areas, public access points may circulate beyond technical frameworks to urban or work contracts, increasing content access on smart-phones through trust contacts, manipulating interactions beyond surveillance scrutiny, collective development of accessible fibre optic distribution, and permitting secure short message service (SMS) addressing. Connectivity to computer-mediated networks enables local languages in text micro-blogging, and usability through accessible transmission of marginalised local languages [4]. From food and health consultations, beyond

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mass media or community radio to professional and welfare instruction tuned for illiteracy, through core transition documents from ICTs, social movements are sustained entirely through broadcasting. In rural or peri-urban areas, potential heterogeneous access situations exist, often restrictive of additional connections, and security-feared. Sealing access through a combination of advanced multi-species fitness theory, film-centric security trajectories, and geo-dependent savings credit collective loan schemes originated from transit workshops guarded against verbal privatization, growing collective action productions capable of trans-mutated livelihoods [6]. Simulating new digital multiple agreement dynamics to broaden production horizons [6]. Given the capacity to jump possibilities or avoid direct state scrutiny in many Global South societies, equipment for engaging emergencies or slowing development degrades toward near-functionless levels [7].

#### **International Actors and Aid Governance**

Governance is closely intertwined with the politics of data and access in different development contexts. In the Global South, development actors, including countries, international organizations, and private multinational corporations play influential roles in shaping IT infrastructures. Countries such as the United States, the European Union, Japan, and China dominate the information communication technology (ICT) supply chain, which is key for public administration, government services, citizen information, and digital surveillance [1]. In the Global South, connectivity is viewed as a national strategic issue, but it can also be argued to constitute a violation of territorial sovereignty and citizen rights [2]. Concerns include the economic dependence of developing countries in the service sector on external tools, platforms, applications, and software; the digital divide and inclusion; cyber-detractors; the capacity of local and national governments to intervene without invoking sovereign prerogatives; and how major power brokers shape, finance, and govern developmental projects through access and data [3]. How these actors influence the problem of surveillance and surveillance technologies and help to develop a sub-conglomerate through the establishment of formal or informal rules, regulations, protocols, emulation, or national strategic alignment-verticals among different states remains an open question [4]. The development of distributed architectures is widely discussed. Access to the global Internet and the ability of citizens to engage freely in political, economic, and social exchanges is seen more as collaboration by influential countries either in isolation or aggregation in the Global North through national strategies and roadmaps [5]. In the Global South, influential countries tend to intervene more directly with major strategy initiatives, agreements, regional alignment, tools, platforms, projects, and evaluation [6].

#### **Methodological Approaches to Studying Digital Surveillance and Resistance**

Digital surveillance has emerged as one of the contemporary world's leading problems, requiring pressing attention from scholars and practitioners across the globe [2]. With the advent of the internet, surveillance became a critical part of governance and national development [2]. Successful opposition, therefore, depends on understanding the nature of surveillance. This calls for an investigation into forms of surveillance that occur under various, often contradictory, regimes of power [4]. Surveillance in countries in the Global South across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia presents a paradox: regimes promote digital inclusion while simultaneously sponsoring intense surveillance. In the Global South, surveillance is associated with the legacy of colonization and national liberation to combat power asymmetries in dynamic political economies [5]. Digital surveillance guarantees access to global cyberspace while ensuring constant monitoring. Information technology reinforces old power relations and simultaneously enables the mobilisation of collective action against states. Exploring this paradox reveals the complexity and multidimensionality of surveillance contemporary societies face [6].

#### **Ethnographic and Participatory Methods**

Despite high levels of surveillance, mobile phone ownership continues to increase and is expected to exceed four billion subscriptions in 2020. Smartphone penetration in emerging economies is already extensive [10]. It is vital to understand how these technologies are used in day-to-day transactions and activities, particularly in the Global South, given the pressure for individuals to always be connected [9]. Determining how people can resist surveillance and reclaim agency with their phones is equally crucial, particularly in societies with a history of colonialism and where social media and thumb-sized video formats increasingly dominate [8]. Timan and Albrechtslund 15 measure surveillance not just by the quantity of data collected, but also by the type of user engagement encouraged, the degree to which information is rendered anonymous, and the ability individuals have to find out who collects their data. Social media platforms invite users to announce their whereabouts and personal lives and generate vast amounts of information, including their movements [7]. Conversely, other applications afford users privacy by allowing them to operate largely anonymously and limiting the amount of information divulged [6].

#### **Data-Driven Analysis and Comparative Frameworks**

Epidemiological modeling commonly associated with studying the spread of infectious diseases has been adapted to explore patterns of digital surveillance [13]. The goal of such models is to articulate the socio-technical

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mechanisms that enable certain kinds of surveillance to proliferate, while others become restricted or extinguished. Johnson, Tonin, and Mukherjee present an approach based on differential equations [14]. They identify four spheres where surveillance data can circulate: data creation (the provenance of data), storage (the capacity of a system to retain data), channels (the capacity of systems to move data across environments), and use (the legal and technical rules governing the deployment of data) [13]. A sovereign data frame emphasizing a strict separation of data permits, for instance, the widespread circulation of location datasets through several intermediaries without cross-contamination of the data [12]. Other everyday resistance instances occur within a more signalling-frame architecture, where third-party datastores are unbounded or dynamic, yet outreach signalling remains not just restricted but empirically contained, reflecting critically on the dimensionality of surveillance alike. In epidemiological parlance, within either sovereignty or signalling frameworks, resistance can nonetheless be characterised as an endemic trait of the surveillance constellation pertaining to specific media or reliance on specific data dimensions [13]. A different modelling approach focusing on surveillance enters through societal-typing theory where two institutional dimensions, formalisation of governance relations (kingdom) and democratic participatory principles (plasticity), set up a hyphenated typology (plastic-kingdom or its antipodes) that allows describing and contrasting several societies with respect to significant variables [14]. The team proposes an overall exposition of the state of the digital society for each type (under concentric diffusion yet between versatile stimuli); for example, plastic-kingdom societies designate the mound spread and regime of competing hype, crisis, and myth [15].

### **Ethical Considerations and Risk Mitigation**

Digital surveillance has emerged as a major global phenomenon over the past two decades. Surveillance the systematic monitoring of individuals and groups, typically by authoritative institutions has undergone a dramatic transformation in scope, scale, and technique, with the rise of what has been termed digital capitalism [4]. Surveillance practices in social, political, cultural, and economic spheres have the potential to influence the quotidian lives of countless individuals [5]. Yet surveillance is not a uni-directional, deterministic, or immutable exercise of totalising power; nor is it exclusively a domain of the Global North [9]. Contemporary government-led surveillance practices in the Global South, especially in countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, and China, are deployed against a backdrop of ongoing coloniality and increased datification. The Global South remains an uneven archival space within the contemporary surveillance state [6]. State-led digital surveillance has grown, notwithstanding national geographies of asymmetric technological adoption, internet bandwidth, data storage, and transmission speeds. India, Brazil, and South Africa colonial nation-states entrenched in a capitalist world economy have instigated major data initiatives encompassing biometric and social media surveillance. Such schemes serve the interests of elites, including incidentally assisting multinational corporations active in the Global North, at the expense of broader social and infrastructural investment. Such decentralised and territorialised forms of digital (infra) surveillance cannot be understood through the orthodox North-centric lens of datification [7]. Informal peer-to-peer and auxiliary surveillance practices, typically modelled on Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), are similarly growing. Arguably, these projection and imitation practices may be more prevalent in Global South contexts [8]. The projection of a so-called 'global' digital avant-garde, spearheaded by a small coterie of Global North institutions, deepens the misalignment between formally imitated institutional and organically adapted quotidian practices. In the Global South, agency at the periphery often manifests not through alternative yet convergent profferings, but through distinctly different modalities, liberated from global prefigurations by historical fracture [9]. Everyday resistance can be understood as subaltern agency forming counter to the logics of dominant powers. Such acts dodge, evade, or disrupt imposed codes; further counter-interpret dominant signs; or use them for oppositional ends [10]. Everyday resistance extends beyond civil disobedience, sabotage, or protest to include myriad workforce tactics concerning time, space, movement, technique, publication, discourse, and affect [14]. These continuing negotiations at the margins manifest heteronomous detours around norms; adaption of technologies, systems, and processes; layering of new codes or identifiers; repurposing, recoding, or remaking of artefacts; contact with, formation of, or reference to opponents; code-switching between registers; disruption or interference of signals; large-scale, zero-impact takeovers; and ironic, parodic, and auto-destructive strategies [14]. Resilience to digital surveillance in the Global South is best framed within specific contexts and historical, political, and social geographies [13]. Desk-based analyses may overlook the diverse range of local media bars building types, architectures, or multispecies assemblages available to particular constituencies that inform the shapeshifting practices undertaken. Global surveillance mechanisms, transaction volumes, and agent motivations differ vastly from South to North; yet multivalent forms of surveillance frequently employed by agents in the South remain unexamined by the Northern-dominated literature [2].

### Implications for Theory and Practice

Colonial and postcolonial regimes in the Global South centralized, codified, and systematized information collection and processing to exercise control over populations, and colonial information infrastructures persisted into the digital age [15]. Theories of power align with exogenous notions of surveillance imposed by elites, and capitalist expropriation and accumulation theories center the Global South as a marginal consideration in capitalism's digital phase despite basic surveillance practices [12]. Historical counter-archiving strategies such as resistance mapping and temporal-spatial recontextualization offer avenues for investigating subaltern technology use, networked solidarity, and grassroots political contentions [10]. In the Global South, emerging discourses on surveillance frame state-, corporate-, and auxiliary-sponsored observation as the paramount threat to social organization and individual liberties [10]. Public expressions detailing how stationed forces, equipment, information systems, and agents watch, exhibit, believe, and verify extend beyond the pervasive, fettered, omnipresent, or ever-watched to cover multiple cooperative, strategic, and parallel modes unnecessarily populated by additional annotations, fleshing out a complex surveillance spectrum [11]. Discussions on human agency amplify the connective and conditional dimensions of social organization beyond scanning, alerting, exploitation, and contagion [12]. Subaltern recovery relies on compulsory, necessity driven, and improvised acquisition strategies pursued through configuring, composing, and channeling passages in crowdsourced pedagogical constellations [13]. Elements self-configure and self-compose without recipient designation, emphasizing that configuration and composition represent alternative social paradigms distinct from variabened transmission [14]. Beyond online shopping, accessible and publicly narrated installers, browsers, and padlocks facilitate emergence, co-publishing within expansive aggregative systems attracting unestablished actors engaged in prosaic crafting [14]. Supporting and filtering material within broader prevailing, conceivably contingent analogous constellations constrain singular entanglement to confined, local enclosure and enables expansive, uninterrupted exposition. Feasible assistance, ordinarily obscured, propagates elaboration-governed self-acquisition complexly circling commonplace, elementary proliferation towards sector-driven aggregation pursuits universally economically attractive yet marginally returnable [15]. Networks realize option-sharing as disclosed passage-within-passage overlaid by collective components enlarging consultable variety and yielding co-creation by interfacing with collocated practicable fragments. Visits serve mass dissatisfaction enablement, fulfilling alternative agency affiliation-periodically modulated [15]. Co-publishing necessity modulates without fully receding, complementary undercurrent safeguarded through collaborative compilation across expansive, collective assemblages [2].

### CONCLUSION

Digital surveillance in the Global South reflects a complex interplay of historical legacies, political authority, and contemporary digital capitalism, producing layered systems of control that permeate everyday life. However, these systems are neither absolute nor uncontested. This study has shown that individuals and communities continuously negotiate, resist, and reshape surveillance through diverse and context-specific practices. From informal monitoring networks and encrypted communication to satire, anonymity, and mutual aid, everyday resistance demonstrates the capacity of subaltern actors to reclaim agency within constrained environments. Importantly, these forms of resistance are not always overt or oppositional; they are often subtle, adaptive, and embedded in daily routines, reflecting the realities of living under persistent surveillance. While such practices may not dismantle surveillance structures entirely, they expose their limitations and create alternative spaces of autonomy and solidarity. At the same time, the persistence of structural inequalities, weak regulatory frameworks, and external technological dependencies underscores the need for stronger governance, data protection, and inclusive digital policies. Future research should further explore the long-term effectiveness of resistance strategies, the role of emerging technologies, and the ethical implications of surveillance in diverse contexts. Policymakers and practitioners must move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches and instead prioritize locally grounded, participatory frameworks that empower communities while safeguarding rights. Ultimately, understanding digital surveillance in the Global South requires recognizing not only systems of control but also the enduring creativity, resilience, and agency of those who live within and resist them.

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