1   The Problem Field

1.1   Introduction

What do the Amazon video doorbell Ring, Tesla's electric cars and the Waze navigation app have in common? At first glance not much, other than all being consumer goods that come with a substantial price tag – at least in the case of Tesla and Ring. The American tech company Amazon introduced the smart doorbell Ring to the market a few years ago. This doorbell enables users to see who's at the door. It works over Wi-Fi and when someone presses the bell, they appear on the owner's smartphone or tablet, allowing the user to decide whether or not to let them in. In the most expensive version of the digital doorbell, filming starts a few seconds before the person rings the bell – as someone rides up on their bike, for instance, or walks up the garden path to the front door.

Tesla's electric cars have a similar monitoring system installed, known as Sentry Mode. This function uses the car's inbuilt cameras not only to record the owner's driving, but also to check the area outside the car for suspicious movements. It

makes use of the latest technology to identify people who want to damage or break into the Tesla. When these people come into view on the cameras, the owner receives a warning on the Tesla app. This is intended to protect the car against theft or vandalism.

Users of the popular navigation app Waze receive real-time traffic information as to how busy the roads are, but also how to get to the destination without driving through a 'higher crime risk area'. Waze is the property of Google and the app includes the function 'Avoid high risk areas' which advises drivers to avoid dangerous neighbourhoods, even if they are on the quickest route.

The Ring doorbell and Tesla's Sentry monitoring system are examples of what Chris Gilliard and David Golombia (2021) have termed 'luxury surveillance' – products for which people are prepared to pay a great deal of money because their presumed advantages, in preventing crime and monitoring oneself, are seen as positive characteristics. A similar monitoring system can be found in the e-bikes of the futuristic bicycle brand Van-Moof, with an average price of more than 3,000 euros. When cycling, the motor sensors send speed information to your phone, and the associated app sends these on to the company's servers to calculate your journey time and distance, among other things. Luxury surveillance differs in this respect from externally imposed surveillance: surveillance that the subject would rather not have but is required for some reason. The latter case might include electronic monitoring by means of an ankle tag, a kind of Apple Watch for prisoners, allowing

detainees to spend their sentence outside prison walls because a transmitter on the tag allows staff to check their whereabouts at all times.

Aside from the substantial price tag and voluntary purchase by wealthy individuals, luxury surveillance is characterised by the imperatives of surveillance capitalism: customers are tied to private tech companies by an app, and large quantities of personal data are collected and unlocked using algorithms, one of the aims being to make society safer. For instance, the recorded images from the Ring Bel and the Sentry monitoring mode are not only shared with other individuals on Amazon and Tesla's online platforms; users of these digital saviours also receive automatic notifications of 'suspicious' activity in their street or around their Tesla.

1.2   What is surveillance?

The word *surveillance* comes from Latin and French. The Latin word *vigilāre* means 'to keep watch' or 'to guard'. The French word *surveiller* means 'to keep watch over' and 'to monitor' (*veiller*) 'from above' (*sur*). The term has been used in English since the nineteenth century in the sense of 'keeping an eye on' things, which invokes a range of different activities that tend to be viewed as synonymous, from inspecting and examining to observing individuals.[1] These are human actions that often take place in a secretive and unnoticed manner rather than being visible to the general public, and in which the individuals monitored form a passive object of control. This

'monitoring' was initially carried out with the naked eye, with a clear distinction between the person watching and the individual being watched. This physical form of surveillance was extremely labour-intensive and relatively little information was stored. Gary Marx (2016) terms this 'traditional surveillance'.

Political scientists such as James Scott (1999) and Anthony Giddens (1984) have shown that with the rise and expansion of the nation state, surveillance activities have increasingly come to revolve around collecting information to serve the purpose of governing society. Intensified monitoring of the population in various domains of society, including work, school and in prisons, is seen as necessary in order to better govern this territory and is thought to guarantee greater prosperity and well-being. Giddens defines surveillance as 'the coding of information relevant to the administration of subject populations, plus their direct supervision by officials and administrators of all sorts' (1984: 183).[2] Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson base their reasoning on the same rationale of governance and describe surveillance as 'the collection and analysis of information about populations in order to govern their activities' (2006: 3). Western governments began to conduct population censuses in the nineteenth century, the results being entered into registers by hand in a standardised format, which made a more detailed view of the lives and living conditions of the population available. The recognition and registration of a country's residents makes the society, in the words of Scott (1999), 'legible' – and therefore also malleable, controllable and governable.[3]

From the beginning, surveillance has had negative connotations for many people. It invokes the dystopian image of a totalitarian regime, of a state or sect wanting to know everything about its citizens and using surveillance for monitoring and guarding the population. Media suggestions that we are sleepwalking into a digital surveillance state or surveillance dictatorship contribute to this view. The surveillance state is seen as a contemporary expression of a sovereign power, a negative conception of power that is repressive by nature and is used to determine what is permitted and what is not.[4] This power is exercised from above and with its long information tentacles reaches all corners of society – its main goal being to control every aspect of daily life. China is the nightmare scenario. The media often refer to the Leviathan-like omnipotence of the Chinese state, where Big Brother and Big Data come together in a national social credit system, scoring citizens based on high-volume data collection in order to express their level of 'trustworthiness'. Anyone in China who runs a red light, gambles or has a criminal record can be excluded from things like jobs, accommodation or loans. The fear of such developments is understandable. No one feels comfortable with being constantly watched by technical gadgets like drones, smart cameras and sensors, or being ranked as an A-, B-, C- or D-citizen, particularly if this happens unchecked and on a large scale, with the potential for exclusion from certain rights or from access to particular amenities.

It is also precisely this image of deep and ubiquitous oversight and monitoring that was the first major stimulus for scientif-