

Abstract

Since the second half of the 20th century an increase in surveillance measures can be observed in most Western societies. Particularly after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA, governments are considerably more often employing such measures of any kind. Although surveillance activities are often promoted as security-enhancing, more and more individuals perceive their privacy as infringed by them. In addition, increasingly more people show scepticism towards and also resistance to such measures. This tension between surveillance, privacy, and society is also more often addressed in various academic fields, among them in Science and Technology Studies (STS).

Particularly in the relation of surveillance and society, so-called privacy advocates are seen as important mediators between a broader public and other actors like journalists, politicians, or companies. Nonetheless, the role of privacy advocates in surveillance debates is hardly addressed in academia. In social science and STS literature on activist groups in general, and in literature on privacy advocacy groups in particular, expertise is seen as an important resource for successful activism. However, so far it has not been elaborated on the role of expertise in the context of privacy advocacy groups in detail.

The goal of this thesis is to fill this gap by investigating the role of knowledge in more detail by looking at the Austrian-based privacy advocacy group *quintessenz*. More precisely, it will analyse how forms of expertise and intellectual resources matter both within the group and when it comes to their engagement towards a broader public. The analytical work of this thesis is based on two main theoretical concepts from the field of Science and Technology Studies, namely that of *ethno-epistemic assemblages* (Irwin & Michael, 2003) and the theory of the *front stage and backstage performance of science/expertise* (Hilgartner, 2000). Methodologically, this study draws on semi-structured interviews with members of the privacy advocacy group *quintessenz* and ethnographic fieldwork. The collected data was analysed using a Grounded Theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The results of this thesis suggest that for successful epistemic work of a bottom-up organised group institutionalised forms of expertise alone are not sufficient, but it requires the usage of manifold resources. Moreover, this study's outcomes show that a broad range of different forms of expertise, intellectual resources, abilities, and skills contribute to the engagement of a privacy advocacy group. These resources are not individually applied, but they are strongly entangled in many cases. Furthermore they are differently applied within the group and when reaching towards a larger public.