

INTERSECTIONS OF SURVEILLANCE,  
AND COMMUNITY

DATAFICATION,  
RESILIENCE



Workshop 4—Data Analysis Feedback Session and Zine  
Making  
June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

# Focus Group Data Content Analysis

## Focus Group 1

**Summary:** The focus group discussions revealed that participants view digital life as an unavoidable and integral part of their existence, intertwined with both opportunities and concerns. Data was redefined beyond technical terms to include personal and verbal interactions, highlighting its widespread and often decentralized nature. Participants felt more surveilled than seen, especially through predictive services and location-based apps, but acknowledged the utility of some features. There was a significant distrust in how data is collected and used, with a recurrent theme of the inability to opt out. This distrust extended to skepticism about the functionality and intent of surveillance tools like CCTVs. Overall, the participants expressed a heightened awareness of their data's journey and the complexities of privacy in a digitally connected world.

### **What is a digital life?**

- Separate area of your life that is also sometimes unsafe
- Accumulation or centralization of platforms and how one chooses to express oneself through them/within them.
- Unavoidable
- Intertwined

### **Defining Data:**

- Un-serious secrets, Serious secrets, and super-serious secrets.
- Data feels centralized through the tech but data diaries revealed how spread out the data collection is in all parts of life.
- Discussion around how participants would now define data in more broad terms such as through interpersonal or verbal means, or information created by you as a user, not just a random binary-code of metadata

### **“Seen” through data:**

- Not seen but watched
  - Particularly through the predictive features of location-based data services (maps, Waze, Scotrail etc)
  - However, the payoff of, say your phone knowing where you parked your car, is seen as too good to “pass”
- Participants took time to separate out CCTV data surveillance and being surveilled via personal online, usually platform-specific data
  - Also identified levels of distrust around whether or not CCTVS were actually “on”, although there was no discussion beyond the purpose or policies behind CCTVs that are for show only
- Final discussion brought up how data is for profit and to control behaviour

### **Misc:**

- Emergence of “wrapped” experiences from apps using our data
- Action of “tapping” for your data came up a couple times
- Facilitating a visual activity and discussion around the data diaries helped participants see their data as “going on a journey” and framed it that way post-creative activity
- The idea that “someone” knows “everything” showed up in interesting ways, even though participants also acknowledged that being “seen” is objective and there is not

a technical centralization of all this data despite large corporations and states “owning” parts of it.

- Discussion around who defines deviance online and light intro to why people may not want to be “seen” online for completely valid reasons
- The inability to opt-out was repeatedly brought up or joked about

### Interesting quotes:

- “I actually can be quite protective of my Spotify data I think.” (13:52)
- “Because data, like life, is all about secrets. So un-serious secrets, this is your Spotify, your Letterboxd, your GoodReads. Could be embarrassing, it's not going to destroy your career unless you've left a really shocking review. Serious secrets stuff like dead names, contact details, etc, etc. The only super serious secret I've had is tax stuff. Maybe I'm just too open. I'm not sure.” (35:01)
- “It shows that your data is sort of quite widely spread. There's no central hub where someone knows everything about you.” (36:57)
- “It feels more like surveilled than seen. It's not like, oh they get me. It's like, oh, I'm being watched.” (39:46)
- “It knows me more than I know myself, probably... And then things like popping into gym classes, they know where you are as well. This is just scaring me now. And then when I'm at work, I feel like it's so obvious by my phone that I'm in work, and I don't know how. It just says, “Go to work.” That I think's wild to me. And then driving is stop and start, and also, it's always on an app, because the Glasgow roads are so impossible. I always need a blue line to follow. So there's just, yeah, so much.” (1:06:51)
  - “...It's just about who has it, or about whether you are behaving yourself. Because it's all fine, everyone being able to access where you are at any given moment, until you don't want to be found...” (1:21:39)
  - Further response: “I really hate the idea of people making money off of things that I'm not well that I have consented to but... Well, things that you don't realize that you're actually a product for.” (1:21:55)
- “I would definitely define it more broadly than when I walked in because I think when I walked in, I thought data is something that is storage online, binary code. Then the idea of data being verbal stuff that you can even just share between friends, and stuff like CCTV, and things like that... Yeah...” (1:23:59)
- “I guess what came to mind is if you're not doing anything wrong, you shouldn't have anything to worry about. But I guess... how would I describe that? What's a good counter argument to that... Well, I guess it depends completely on the government at the time, how they define wrong in law. And they're all subject to change.” (1:24:37)
- “Yeah, it is that same just unavoidable-ness of it. Even with cookies, it's accept all or more options, so you can't really reject it unless you go through lots of things.” (1:29:27)

### Technology/Apps/Platforms/Tools mentioned:

- Snapmaps
- BeReal
- Duolingo
- Spotify / Letterbox / GoodReads
- Waze
- Tesco Club Card
- Scot Rail / Young Scot Cards / First Bus / Trainline / CityMapper

## Focus Group 2

**Summary:** Participants in the second focus group discussed the complexities of geolocation and the prediction of movement, emphasizing both the utility and the privacy concerns associated with these features. The rigid "real name" policies on platforms were critiqued for failing to account for the needs of trans individuals and performers, highlighting issues with flexibility and authenticity. Shadow banning and censorship were noted as significant challenges, particularly for queer content creators who rely on social media for business and community outreach. The discussion also touched on the nuanced distinctions between offline and online identities, the ethics of tagging and consent, and the impact of digital actions on real-world interactions. Despite these challenges, participants acknowledged the positive role social media plays in identity formation and community building. The overall sentiment was a mix of appreciation for the connectivity provided by digital platforms and concern over privacy, censorship, and the control exerted by large corporations over personal data and identities

### **Geolocation/Prediction of Movement:**

- Certain platforms have built-in location features that do serve a function around connecting with others (dating apps for example). There was a tension that was presented here around the usefulness of those features but how also revealing this information has impacts in the physical world, as their literal location.

### **Real Name Policy:**

- What is a "real" name when considering trans realities and the need for separation of self and art or work, for example? How can a performer utilize Instagram as a "stage" without having to open access to their personal life?
- The flexibility to change one's name is not built into many of these platforms
- Corporations have determined that authenticity must be tied to a government-verified name and ID. While the "law of the [digital] land", it is also still an arbitrary choice. (I.e. names are not "more important" simply bc Facebook says they are)
- "False importance of a name" → a binary in and of itself

### **Shadow banning/Censorship:**

- Shows up as low engagement out of the blue
- Deeply impacts content creators who are hoping not just to promote queer events but in some cases, use their social media platforms as a business
- The specifics of how shadow banning is done and what posts are chosen are quite hidden. Participants who had experienced this before shared what the process was like (such as receiving messages from Instagram, a "three strikes" policy, no contact details to speak to someone on it, etc) but ultimately they were confused on how to anticipate it and work against it
  - Shadow banning puts users in a state of self-censorship
    - However, they are usually being asked to censor content that is just broadly queer, which begs the question, is queerness coded as deviant and inappropriate?
  - Shadow banning impacts information retrieval and open access to health information in particular
  - Discussion also around shadow banning impacting social networks in places without strong offline gathering spaces/third spaces/ safe queer spaces

### **Offline/Online Distinction:**

- Traceability vs visibility—would love to probe more here on this
- IP addresses and the unintentional ways we share and generate and stumble upon data

- Social media platforms allowed people to assume identify profiles of people (especially those they were in physical contact with, like a classmate or coworker) via others' data. For example, assuming someone is gay based on their "likes" or account following, etc.
- It can "feel" different to post to stories versus main grid versus posts only for close friends or on a finsta. The concept of who counts as the "intended audience" was noticeable
- Importance of private accounts and the additional features they give you for controlling audience access
- Impact of digital choices (such as removing followers, changing name or pronouns, etc) on community in person interactions
- Tagging and the ethics of consent
- Ephemerality and the digital archive—when corporations own your "memories"

#### **Positive Identity Formation Online:**

- Individual use of social media was really actually quite important for people's queer identities
- Participants noted surprise within themselves that their takeaways at the end centered on actually also naming the grounding/expansive/positive impacts of platforms and the internet on their identities

#### **Misc.:**

- Distinction between "desktop" version of platforms versus mobile-accessible or only.
- Tagging features on Facebook in particular make context collapse feel bigger and participants shared on how they were less inclined to use the platform in this way.
  - Is there an element of self-presentation online in seemingly "hetero" spaces (...maybe like Facebook...) versus presentation of self on platforms with more control features?
- Safety > visibility

#### **Interesting quotes:**

- "Yeah, I move between here and... Because I study in Edinburgh, so I'm always between here and Edinburgh. I don't go in every single day. I'd go in odd days when I have meetings with my teacher, or whatever. So in theory, I'm like, "You'll never know which day I'm in Edinburgh. It could be any day. It might not be every day." There's someone I'm dating, who... This is fine, and I was happy with them using my information this way, but a dating app, it says, "This person is 60 kilometers away." If I'm 60 kilometers away, I'm in Edinburgh. If I'm two kilometers away I'm in Glasgow. So they were like, "I could meet you off the train," and I was like, "How did you know I was in Edinburgh today?" Because I'm not in every day."
- "It's sort of apologizing for a harmful policy. Happens all the time in the queer community, companies and governments saying, "I'm sorry I did that," just after doing it. You could have just not done it. You could have just asked someone if that was okay, and we would've told you "No."" (19:38)
- "I have a stage name, and I was trying to put a shortened version of my stage name, just the initials, and it was like, "You can't have just initials as a surname," on Facebook. I was like, "Fine. I'll use my full stage name then," but then that means I'm searchable, because it's also my surname." (20:02)
- "I feel like Facebook is that one app as well for everyone's mums. Or, mums go on it, but so much family, even if I was looking at my mum's profile picture of Facebook, I look very straight and not like myself ." (21:15)
- "But I remember when we were in school actually, we had a civics lesson where we were to create LinkedIn accounts, and I was going by a new name but I hadn't changed my driver's license, or anything like that. But to actually... What was the word I'm for?...Authenticate, yeah. I had to have a driver's license that matched the name that I was trying to set up the account with, and I didn't have that at the time, so I couldn't set up an account. And everyone else in my class was doing that, and I was like, "Yeah, it's not working. Sorry." But it's an ordeal changing your name on everything. It is such a

faff. And it's probably easier now, but even four or five years ago, it was a lot harder on social media. Snapchat, you could only change your username in the last two years, maybe. Can't remember. I was lucky I just had a random username, but that would've been really annoying had it been my old name." (23:39)

- "Facebook as well, you are kind of still attached to it. There's many things that bring me back, my work, for example. All the rotas and stuff are on the Facebook group. So even if though it's not to see that silly photo of me with really long, straight hair, I have to do it anyway. I could just remove it, but I'm not privy to how to do that." (27:10)
- "I think sometimes, you do need a level of traceability, on things like this. Because then if there's some 50-year-old man commenting like, "Hot baby," on someone's newborn photos, you need to be able to find who that person is. But then there's no reason that the company, or whoever... You don't make yourself untraceable by not using your government name. You just don't. Because an account is registered to an email address, or a phone number, so there's no reason that that traceability would ever need to be tied to a government name. It's sort of just excluding certain groups of people, at that point." (29:17)
- "Like when I go home, obviously I'm sharing an IP address with my mum. So if I'm looking at whatever, nothing necessarily bad, but just stuff that is linked to identity, whether it's buying stuff, clothes, gay clothes okay, or looking at certain things. If you're sharing that IP address and accepting those cookies, then she will end up with things coming up on her devices that are linked to me, and what I'm doing, which is a bit weird... That's how she finds my Christmas present. It's like, "Oh, my God, you're looking at this. You want that?" (34:43)
- "I'm a burlesque performer, so the shows I perform in is usually burlesque, drag, queer events, and the hashtags that surround those events. There's an element of that work, which is maybe deemed sexual and inappropriate and age-restricted, so maybe that is a section of it. But there's also a very queer-heavy identity surrounded by that, and the amount of performers that I know. You can see it in very popular performers' engagement as well. It will dip for like three weeks, they'll get nowhere near as many likes, comments, engagements, nothing. And then out nowhere, it'll just go back. It doesn't make any sense. Because sometimes it's not even explicit content." (40:23)
- "I remember when I was searching for top surgery related things a few years ago, and often the creators that I followed, they'd post something... Well, trans men or trans masculine people, would post something of the results, and then it would get taken down because it was violating guidelines. And obviously, being like 'that was a woman's chest, that can't be out'. Which is also like, come on, now, let's have that conversation." (45:54)
- "I think a lot of people, if you were growing up somewhere where maybe there's not that many queer people, if you don't have access to queer language, around identity and expression, it's going to take you so much longer to come to terms with your own identity, or explore your own identity, if you don't have the resources to begin to understand it. Because there's no one around you talking about it. You don't know what your options are yet." (47:39)
- "I would say where I'm from, there's not it's like a bit of a small town just like, it's in between Glasgow and Livingston. It's like you can find it through social media, even though you're with these people. Like a person who is gay, just through following accounts of what they share. It's like, "All right, okay, they're on the same wavelength as me. They're thinking about this." (49:08)
- "Yeah, I'd say I don't use really Facebook at all. I just decided about a year ago I wasn't going to post on it anymore. Started a new job, and all these people were adding me on it. I often un-add people on their birthday. It's just like "Who are you here?" The weirdest group of people as friends on Facebook. I don't even know most of them. I just decided, I'm not going to do it anymore. Instagram, I feel like in recent years, I tend to use, Snapchat as well, the close friends and private story feature. Because it's like over 1,000 followers on Instagram is like... When I post it on my main story, which I do sometimes, but it tends to be a very vague photo that doesn't have a location or anything on it. I'm like, "Who am I posting that for?" So I do definitely use close friends a lot. And I do post about, I'm very open about the fact that I'm gay, but I'm not open about the fact that I'm

trans on my socials, at all really. But I'm open about that on my close friends, 30 people doesn't matter. But yeah, I do think I definitely have changed the way that I use it. But I think that's also more so just coming to uni, and it's kind of just a thing where if you meet someone they'll be like, "Oh, can I get your social?" I'm like, "I don't know you, but sure." So I do think that there's just a ridiculous amount of strangers on there as well, which they don't need to know." (54:38)

- "If your account's in private, obviously you can just remove people, right? So before I changed my name on my Instagram, I removed like 200 people. Because it was just a, do you need to know this? Do I need to be talked about at the pub in my hometown?" (56:59)
- "You feel awkward as well though, if you bump into someone. I had a bit of an awkward experience with BeReal, because the first thing I did... Because people added me, and I was like, I actually don't want to see what this person that I met three times is doing every day on Tuesday to be fair so I stopped... I went through and did a BeReal cleanse, and deleted loads of people off. And now I only have people I actually know on it. And I went to the pubs with my friends and they're like, "Oh, Laura said that you removed her on BeReal and she's quite upset," and I'm like, "I met Laura twice." I was like, "Why does Laura need to see this?" And quite a few people were bothered by this. So I get worried now when I delete people, on any form of social media, really, that they're going to take it personal. It's not personal at all. I would just never, ever need to contact you, so why are you on this?" (57:34)
- "Social media gives people the impression that you are accessible to anyone, for any reason, and it just... You are allowed to have boundaries. (58:17)
- "Yeah, it's funny that it's just kind of... Because posting online is so common now, you don't ask people for consent, a lot of the time, to post a photo. I went on a trip to Belfast with five other people, and we've all got hundreds of photos each. Everyone did a post, and I was like, "Wow, I've never seen this photo before. Thanks for that. I look horrible in this photo." We used to in school, I feel like, be more mindful of whether or not someone wanted to remember that. But I do kind of remember conversations of being like, "Are you okay with me posting this?" And they'd be like, "Yeah, cool." Whereas now, that's never." (1:01:28)
- "I think things like memories are really not harmful, that's maybe a bit unfounded. Because it would be something that someone else can share, from like four years ago. That it is me, but that's not me. It's horrible. And to see that again after changing yourself, like it'll be something you're trying to distance yourself from that kind of identity. It's really odd." (1:02:55)
- "I think most of what I've discovered about my identity has been online. All of my trans identity has come from social media. Don't really know where I would be in my transition without it, to be honest. I didn't even meet a single other trans person until last week, actually. And even now, I only know a handful. Don't know that many." (1:05:54)
  - "I thought, although we all have our individual experiences, I think it's interesting, and a little bit sad, that we've all got fairly similar experiences of being queer and using data, and understanding data, and how it's benefited us, and also not benefited us in numerous ways. And I don't think about data a lot, because I think it's such a part of everyday life, you can't avoid it. I think one of these things are just like, "Oh, well, I just have to accept these terms and conditions, otherwise I can't use this app." But how, especially as a queer person, you just kind of have to sometimes swallow your safety, and be like, "Oh, I guess I'll just hope this one is fine as well." (1:06:33)

Technology/Apps/Platforms/Tools mentioned:

- Feeld
- Spotify
- Facebook
  - Messenger
- Instagram

- Hashtags, filters, Finstas, Close Friends Stories
- Giff Gaff
- LinkedIn
- Tumblr
- Bereal



### Focus Group 3

**Summary:** In Focus Group 3, participants emphasized the importance of feeling safe and empowered to express themselves online, particularly for queer individuals navigating issues of race and migration. They noted the critical role of the internet in learning about and connecting with queer communities, even in unsafe environments. However, they also highlighted the challenges of visibility, such as shadow banning and hate speech, and the need for better self-archiving and data control. Discussions covered the need for flexible identity management online, balancing censorship with freedom of speech, and the capitalist influences on internet features. Participants expressed a desire for a safer, community-driven internet where individuals have greater control over their data and online interactions.

#### **Tensions around Documentation and Privacy:**

- Feeling empowered and safe to express oneself online leads to more variety of experiences that get to be labelled and understood as “queer”—especially along lines of race and migration.
  - In a safe world (both online and offline), visibility for the sake of community creation and expansion is possible and wanted.
  - A lot of participants also noted that the way they learned about queerness and gathering spaces while they were in unsafe places (such as hometowns) was through the internet and content creators documenting their experiences or platforms like TikTok, Insta, and Tumblr being formative in the language and symbolic meanings that they now attach to queerness.
- So, visibility is also still important in an unsafe world but where is the line, the threshold that is “allowed” online and why is it that queer folks are having to learn this through shadow banning, censorship, receiving hate speech comments, etc.
  - Part of an ideal internet then is the ability to self-archive and to share and tell peoples’ own stories without it being told for them/us.
  - On the other side, participants challenged the idea that visibility without the ability to easily erase yourself/your data “works”

#### **“Real Names”:**

- Accounts do not need to be attached to a name only verified through an ID.
- Platforms should make it very easy to change names so that it is not the central component of how people are known online
- Ability to change your name from socials however many times you want
- Name changes apply to comments and previous tags

#### **Censorship versus Freedom of Speech:**

- Spaces and content that were once meant for queer folks or those trying to learn are now often overrun with hate speech
  - Interesting dynamic as participants spent time thinking through ways that people how engage with hate speech could still be protected online or at least not lose their “freedom”, while they themselves were often direct recipients of such attacks.
- Comment section restricted to accounts that are mutually “friends”
  - Discussion around how if engagement was not centred around or galvanized on by the comment section, maybe these spaces could be safer
- Big tension around censoring hate speech. Would censoring hate speech make queer people safer in the “real” world, or would it just hide who is homophobic?
  - Discussion turned more to how individual accounts can list banned words (such as slurs) from their comments or chats through a platform feature

### **What is the Internet?**

- Noticed a persistent pattern in all three FGs where “social media”, “internet”, “website” and “platforms” were often interchanged. When it came time to draw the ideal queer internet, the discussion revolved most heavily around social media platform features/adaptations and stakeholders
- Discussion around the capitalistic underpinning of the internet and how that influenced features such as “filters”. Participants noted that the more “good or glamorous” a thing looked, the more profitable it was. (24:45-25:21)
  - Pornhub versus Onlyfans discussion
- Who owns it? Lots of discussion around, maybe the solution is each individual can store their data on a local device and how can one retain autonomy over their own content and data after they “share” it (post)

### **Misc.:**

- Ability to see when a post/story/chat is screenshotted
- Customizable labels for identifying and expressing yourself (“greater room for self-identification”)
- The lack of safety makes authenticity incredibly challenging and sometimes fully impossible.
- Password protected self-archives that could be shared with others
- Ability to be anonymous
- Post it notes and sharpies were specifically chosen to represent permanence and erasure and flexibility.
- Facebook as the default
- The idea of no internet, no computers or social media was brought up and then promptly shut down by other participants
- Grew on the idea of self-moderation and community-directed moderation
- Is there a “true” internet?
- Our favorite nuggets from you: “Government mandated Grindr”; “The Sun”; “Nationalized social media”; “charitable gay social medias”; “You just dead-named Twitter”; “I like that Feeld doesn’t make you say your height.”; “And can we get rid of the Waitrose website.”

### **Drawing 1:**

- “So there’s a slot in here for us to put the things that documented, it’s archived. And then there’s also room here for things to be removed at will.” (49:33)
  - The drawing represented the idea of safer archiving with clearer boundaries and intended audiences, along with the ability to remove content whenever.
- Discussed tension around safe but also public and how that could be achieved.

### **Drawing 2:**

- Bad internet, good internet, and the purpose of the internet
- Purpose: resource for accessing and providing aid. It was used for magnifying marginalized voices and doing that so safely. It was also an opportunity to unify communities.
- Good internet: no legal names required, private methods of self-authentication if you do need a legally to sign up for something it doesn’t mean it has to be public information, community-ran, more autonomy over your own information
- Bad internet: shadow-banning, censorship, expectation of permanency or ongoing consent
- Overall, they wanted to emphasize that this was not about a perfect internet but a safe one for them.

### Interesting quotes:

- "...a Ctrl+F button for these things on social media would be wonderful, where you could just replace all..." (4:13)
- "I think I talked in previous weeks one of my biggest frustrations of the internet is having to self-censor quite a lot of the time and the implication that queer spaces, queer events, queer art, queer protest is controversial or sexual and it's immediately censored." (6:09)
- "I find TikTok a great place for finding... even just seeing other queer people's journeys or events or something like that. But then you go to the comment section and it's always filled with people who it's not meant for. It's like how can we find a way to, I don't know, have a queer TikTok without that kind of being an infringement on freedom of speech you know what I mean-" (7:01)
- "Yeah, it's such a shame. So often like, "This is a great video, let's go to the comment section," and then immediately shot down. And it's like, "Great, cool, wish I didn't do that." (7:27)
- "On the flip of the documenting side, you'd probably want a permanent erasure of everything as well." (20:23)
- "I think both, we want to keep the history, but in the same time, we want to remove it when we find its time is come." (21:01)
- "This isn't a world we're doing, it's a website. We can't just pretend that extremism doesn't exist at either end." (22:38)
- "It's not letting people just be an asshole. Is that really censorship? Or is that just making everyone behave themselves for once in their lives?" (22:48)
  - "I don't necessarily think it's stopping people from being an asshole, it's just stopping you from seeing people being an asshole." (22:54)
    - But it's also important that you're aware that people are assholes because you need to be aware of your safety in situations." (23:00)
- "I mean, we said this last week about Zoom meetings wherever when you go into uni and they're like, "Say your pronouns." And it's like that's great for a cisgender person, like that doesn't change anything for you. But if you're sat there in class with 30 people and there's one person that's non-binary, they're immediately just opening up to all these people that they don't know. Yeah, it feels like you should be able to have the option. But, also, I think as well, when I see someone's Instagram bio, and they don't have pronouns, I'm like, "Oh."" (27:48)
  - "Yeah, I've done that." (28:23)
    - "But then also, if I was non-binary and I didn't want people to know I just wouldn't put anything in my bio either so it is kind of a weird... I don't know, it's difficult." (28:26)
    - "Everyone without pronouns in their bio is non-binary." (28:32)
      - "Yeah, that's a false aspiration."
- "It's just frustrating because it's like, yay, freedom of speech, but why does someone like to sit and call you horrible things? It's not nice. It's just not nice." (31:35)
- "You see how... I mean the internet is a place for us to express ourselves and all of that, right? And for some people... Okay. For me, now, for example, because I'm thinking about the idea of documenting and so things to be there for people to see and even when you're dead, for example. There's also people that erasure is very important to them, "I don't want this to be here anymore. As much as this is an archive, or whatever, I want this out. I want this part of it taken out." Is there a place where these two different ideas meet and it's possible for like, these are the nice posts, [inaudible 00:35:56]. So is there anything quite where being visible and being invisible kind of marry and the two needs can still be met with the same idea?" (35:28)

- “Well, I guess the theme there is that visibility seems unsafe, right? I guess the whole thing about making the queer internet is making sure it's not unsafe. So how can we get to that point?” (37:14)
- “It's almost like as soon as you post something you lose autonomy over it, like you've signed it away to, I don't know, Jeff Bezos...” (38:02)
- “Well, that's just because they're all a private company. And if we do that, they're profiting off of us doing that. So the only way to get rid of that would... Nationalized social media?” (38:56)
- “Or, I guess if it's in perfect world, we are the shareholders”
  - “Well, as long as something's profitable, it is... you're not going to have autonomy over it unless you own whoever app you download but none of us own Instagram so.”
  - “So we should make charitable gay social medias.”
- “Bad things can change, too.” (44:07) :-)
- “I banned Pornhub but said if we behave ourselves, OnlyFans is allowed but they should probably unionize.” (48:38)
- Do you think there is a true internet? It's like our personality is not only our personality. It's also associated with my Facebook profile and Instagram profile. You will not judge me by what I'm saying, you will judge me what I also say to Facebook, what I also put in Instagram. So it's like a hybrid, like a modification. It's like if I have a artificial some body part, it's living like that. So it's getting hyperversion. Our personality is not only our personality. It's also with the social media that we are using.” (1:00)
- “...move towards creators owning their own content to group autonomy for workers and their financials rather than going to the corporations. Becuase people on that one do not get any revenue from videos at all, it all goes to the website. So they just get paid for a show, an event. And then on the bad internet there's shadow-banning, so that means-” (1:07)
- “It's sort of contradictory but I think in the same time, we want to have it safe, but public. So it should reach to anyone and everyone but in the same time we know that in that hate speech could be there.” (1:09)
- “I think the flexibility of it is the most beautiful part, because even right now, might be talking about things and in our heads we're like, “Oh, yeah, this is probably going to constitute some subtle change.” And then next year, it's not going to be like yeah this is uncomfortable and this is why. So the ability for things to be changed is, I think, is important.” (1:11)
- “I guess the main thing is it's not really about a perfect internet, it's just about safe internet, since we can't get it perfect. And if this was a real thing, it would have to change all of the time. But I think a lot of the things we talked about are more about... Safety and autonomy, seems to be the main things.” (1:14)

#### **Technology/Apps/Platforms/Tools mentioned:**

- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- Grindr
- Feeld
- Yahoo
- Zoom

## Overall Patterns and Themes:

### Ongoing themes:

- Visibility in the archive
- Ownership
- Resignation (opposed to passivity)
- Discovery and connection
- Peer surveillance and boundaries
  - Interpersonal surveillance
- Usefulness and gratuitousness
- Alienation and algorithms
- Inability to see possibilities of an ideal internet
  - “Monopolizing our imagination”

### Tension between visibility and permanency

Imagining an internet that allows queer folks to be as visible as they want, but that does not crystallize that visibility permanently. This theme emerges clearly in FG3, with participants talking about the importance of documenting queer lives and connect with other queer people, but also affirming the need to have technologies adjust/adapt to people changing identities and generally just changing their minds. This applies not just to names/identities (although it's a big theme) but also pictures, getting tagged (as they discussed in FG2), etc. Some of it is about “safety”, but the overarching idea is that of a flexible internet, that doesn't crystallize identities, that can adapt to reflect the lived experience of (queer) people, and offers people a choice of what/how much they want to disclose (+ when/to whom).

### Unavoidability of datafication

In FG1 participants talk about datafication and surveillance as unavoidable. Unavoidable in two different ways: 1) it's impossible to opt out 2) technologies seem omniscient/all-knowing.

### Knowing ourselves through digital technologies vs technologies knowing us

There is some tension around technologies and how much/what they know about the self.

There are three points to this:

1. Participants are worried about technologies “knowing you more than you know yourself” (e.g. guessing where you live, predicting where you are going based on your habits) (FG1)
2. Participants also talk about being known through the things you post / people you follow (this is not entirely negative, in FG2 they talk about figuring out other people are queer based on what they like/follow on social media; but there is also an element of being watched and known by other people in ways that are not welcome)
3. Participants discovering/knowning themselves as queer through use of digital tech (FG2 & 3)

### How much the current state of the internet makes it hard to imagine alternatives

Participants express a lot of discomfort about the current shape of the internet (in terms of its for profit nature, harassment, etc) but when we asked them to imagine what they'd like a queer internet to be like, the scope remained within the current structure of the internet. For instance, they ended up defaulting to drawing the internet as a Facebook page, even if they don't really like or use Facebook. They also joked about “government mandated Grindr”, “nationalized social media”, or “charitable gay social media”, in opposition to corporate technologies; however, they didn't really take these ideas did not show up in the final

drawing. Is there maybe no mainstream vocabulary to express what an alternative, non-corporate internet would look like?

### **Lingering Questions:**

- Is there a queer way of seeing social media platforms?
  - Are they things we DO and are done to us (datafication) or are they just the stage in which we DO the social?
- Are we really saying that these technologies and algorithms KNOW us, as profit generators? Is that market descriptor reality?
- What does safety mean online? What can we gain from generating discussion, art, and ideas from queer folks?
- What does an ideal internet divorced of this current for-profit structure actually consist of? How can we define it outside of what it does *not* have?

## Next Steps

- Pause until August, then beginning to write up our findings
  - Things that might be included: scans of drawings and zines, established patterns and observations, core working theories and relevant evidence, call to action
- Research has been accepted for the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) conference, October 30<sup>th</sup> in Sheffield
  - Title of our talk: “Queer digital lives: Understanding datafication through creative collaborative approaches”
- After the conference, we’ll be working on academic papers (likely 2), which we’re aiming to draft by the end of 2024
- We will share drafts with you, the participants
- As was explained in session 1, some anonymized materials (drawings, zines and any preparatory materials for the zines, all) will “live” in Enlighten, the University of Glasgow’s data repository, where they might be accessed by other interested researchers. All other data (drafts, notes, scraps) will be deleted and/or shredded when we finish the project.
- Names have been assigned a pseudonym in ALL materials (including transcripts)
- Zine will be scanned here but after you can either take them home with you or donate to the Glasgow Zine Library!
- We will also create one or more zines based on the findings of the project
- We would like to host all the zines on a website in order to increase their reach—thoughts?