

# Governance and Technologies of Surveillance

## Revisiting the Gendered Divide

### Abstract

Although new technologies can serve as tools for creating an environment of equal opportunities and empowerment, they also reflect and reinforce an offline gendered social order. The paper examines the emergence of new cultures of control based on technological designs that support infringements of privacy and new practices of surveillance and argues that technologies left unchecked constitute tools for new forms of surveillance and control of women's lives. These under-researched issues are mapped and international policy initiatives are discussed against this matrix. It discusses whether and in which ways policies adequately recognise gender based practices and impacts of these developments by interrogating the nexus of gender, privacy and surveillance in the digital age.

### Zusammenfassung

Die Nutzung neuer Technologien kann zu Chancengleichheit der Geschlechter und politischer Partizipation von Frauen beitragen. Gleichzeitig sind sie aber auch Agenten der Aufrechterhaltung einer dualen, hierarchischen Geschlechterordnung und können somit Bestrebungen der Gleichberechtigung behindern. Mit dem Aufkommen neuer Technologien geht die Entstehung einer neuen „Kultur der Kontrolle“ und „Kultur der Angst“ einher. Diese stehen im Kontext eines technologischen Designs, das sowohl die Rechte der Privatsphäre zu umgehen vermag, als auch neue Formen der Überwachung ermöglicht. Der Beitrag untersucht, ob und wie politische Maßnahmen auf nationaler Ebene, auf EU-Ebene als auch in Übersee auf eine geschlechtergerechte Umsetzung abzielen. Dabei zeigen sich in Bezug auf die Matrix Geschlecht, Privatsphäre und Überwachung eine weitgehend Auslassung bzw. Nicht-Beachtung der Geschlechterperspektive, sowie eine Komplexität der Materie, die eine differenzierte und gender-sensible Betrachtung der Dilemmata und Aporien notwendig macht.

### 1 Introduction

The digital divide is broadly understood as the set of social disparities in accessing and using information and communication technologies. Early claims about the role and impact of ICTs as tools of total equality, emancipation and seamless connection are much more nuanced today than they were a quarter of a century ago, as the rise of the Information Society did not erase social inequalities as proclaimed. In the case of gender, divides become conspicuous because they are found on the 'first level' of interaction between humans and machines, namely through access to and use of machines. They are also more persistent because they are present in deeper levels of interaction depending on the quality and conditions of usage, technological embeddedness in social structures and the role of intersectionality of disadvantage. Scholarship in the field of ICTs and gender has shed light to the various faces of inequality in the ways in which women's roles in the design, use and generation of communication technologies and meanings has been sidelined, misrepresented and silenced (Allan 2000; Benston 1992; Smith-Keller 1992; Tuchman 1981). Feminist scholarship has investigated systematically the structural and symbolic dimensions of inequality in accessing and using ICTs, as well as the gendered dimensions of online environments and the ways in which stereotypes and prejudice continue to affect women in gender specific ways (Youngs 2006; Sarikakis/Shade 2008). However, at a time where young boys and girls seem to be equal partners in the uses of new media, it is often assumed that the gender divide is no more. Or is it? Can we still speak of a gender digital divide today? This question becomes particularly intriguing in the context of ubiquitous technology which is everywhere, becoming itself in some ways 'invisible'. When the technological object vanishes, as is the case when technologies of communication are not physically 'locked', access to information can take place through a variety of mobile communication tools. These undermine the physicality of technology in users' perception, and boundaries between information 'carried' through communication technologies and technology itself are blurred. Locating the digital divide in the age of digital, mobile, 'cloud' communications is indeed often a challenge, especially for western and technologically developed countries. It is hard to imagine digital divides when social networking sites count hundreds of millions of users worldwide, and where concepts such as 'cloud computing' or the 'internet of things' and 'internet on the go' seem to define our everyday experience with the media.

Given these considerations, this paper discusses a particular function of new internet 'phenomena' that help sustain a gendered social order. In particular, it aims to map some of the most central areas in which technologies undermine empowerment and autonomy through the lack of appropriate regulatory provision. The paper discusses the ways in which the information society, alongside the many advantages it offers for connection, expression, education, and autonomy, is based on technological designs that are used for the surveillance, control and policing of women. It discusses



whether and how policies adequately recognise these dimensions of gendered experience. The article argues that despite tendencies towards a decrease in gendered divides in access to and adoption of new technologies and the Internet in particular, technologies left unchecked constitute tools for new forms of surveillance and control of women's lives. The discussion does not adopt a technological determinist approach, but rather argues that policy measures avoid decisive steps in steering technological development and constructing safe online environments and instead are based on regimes of self-regulation and soft policy. The paper argues this approach leaves a lot to be desired in the fight against the gender divide.

## 2 Gender and the Matrix of Surveillance, Privacy and the Digital Divide

Information and communication inequalities are a subset of social inequalities, indeed, as several studies demonstrate the paths of digital divide and economic inequality are parallel (Attewell 2001; DiMaggio et al. 2001; Bonfadelli 2002; Pippa 2001; Van Dijk 2005). Social structures determine who is able to access which kinds of technology and the ways in which to use it beneficially. Anthony Giddens (1984) argues through the "theory of structuration" that social systems are reproduced because of the continuity or transmutation of structures. The continuation of a digital divide is part of a vicious circle, which relies on the persistence of social differences in society, such as inequalities in education and income, age, gender and ethnic background. An important factor which often remains underexplored is the role of culture that is the dominant system of values of a society and the ways in which these impact on gender disparities.

Although women and men use the internet to similar extents<sup>1)</sup>, in employment and education in technology sectors, the gap between them is glaring. Overall, as far as accessing a set of technologies, such as computers, mobile phones and the Internet, the gender gap seems to be closing in European countries, but only as far as the youngest generation is concerned. This is usually considered the 'consuming' end of technologies. At the designing end of technologies, women remain a small minority. Only 2,4% of the 25% of all employees in the EU working in the high-tech, knowledge intensive industries are women (EC 2010a). In 2007, 37,5% of graduates in science, technology and computing in Europe were female. Austria rates below average with 34% (Eurostat 2010).

The culture of technologies is strongly aligned with masculinity (Wajcman 1991) and incorporates constraints for some users. The idea that users are able to renegotiate their (gender) identities in relation to technologies as co-designers that modify, trans-

1) The average of frequent Internet use in the EU 27 was 56% (2011), with a small gap between male users (60%) and female users (53%) aged between 16-74 years. In Austria, 65% of the male and 53% of the female population between 16-74 years access the internet frequently. Figures on Computer and Internet use indicate that the digital gap in access is diminishing in younger generations: In Austria, 100% of male persons between 16-24 and 98,4% of female persons in the same age range use a Computer. Internet usage of females is even slightly higher in the age of 25-34 and 35-44 years (Statistik Austria: 2011).

form and adapt scripts to their needs has been discussed in the past (Oudshoorn et al. 2004; Rommes 2002). Rommes's (2002) case study on the design of the Digital City of Amsterdam concludes that the work women need to put to be included into processes of technological innovation leads to frustration, self-doubt and anger as for them the output is not worth the effort. In particular, the lack of including users' perspectives in the process of technology development has been criticised as "I-methodology" (Berg 1996, Oudshoorn et al. 2004) determined by the needs of the mostly male designers of technology. The combination of social stratification together with the cultural values attached on social groups deepen inequalities and create a climate of insecurity, whether on the personal level of self-confidence to 'deal' with technological challenges or on social levels that hinder women as a social class from enjoying technologies in ways similar to men (Boyd/ Hargittai 2010).

There is a fine line between the liberating powers of new technologies on the one hand, and their potential for exclusion, marginalisation and violation of basic rights, on the other. Access alone cannot guarantee equality of usage and says little about women's actual contribution to content, programming and design of technologies. It says little about the quality of interaction with technology and the conditions of usage, its limitations, the role of culture and motivation that might hinder women from reaching a wide range of information and services. Surveillance and the loss of privacy have become a major concern for media users in the digital era, but the gender dimension of this problem is under-researched. New technologies constantly broaden the capacity of storage, retrieval, connection and transmission of information. The extent, to which these capacities grow, widens the scope and power of surveillance. The (legal and technological) capacity of collection of information was formerly reserved for a limited register of actors, such as nation states and specialised companies, but today, every citizen of a post-industrial society is a potential target and agent of surveillance. Due to its fast changing face, we can only begin to understand the systematic underpinnings of surveillance strategies and habits (Lyon 2001). Computer-assisted surveillance allows monitoring and supervision at a large distance and for small budgets. As a consequence, it has become almost impossible for the ordinary citizen to be a "knowledgeable agent" (Giddens 1981, 177) who still maintains some control over the information others can obtain about her. In a similar vein, not so long ago, privacy was seen as either a concern of celebrities or of citizens in 'extreme' political systems such as dictatorial regimes. Media and communication scholars begin only now to investigate the impact of privacy erosion as with the advent of broadly used Internet technologies and in particular social media, privacy affects everyone. The principle of privacy is often referred to as the main discourse of resistance to surveillance (Lyon/Zureik 1996). Both, women and men can suffer from privacy infringements. Camille Calman (2005) points to the widespread practice of spyware installed on shared, private computers to monitor spouses and argues that certain software facilitates the infringement of individual rights and triggers the violation of privacy rights in the very spaces of lei-



sure and confidentiality. The right to determine the fate, usage and disclosure of one's personal data that one considers privileged is generally understood to constitute privacy. When this right is compromised, then the rights to autonomy and the ability to determine one's own personhood are compromised.

At the time of social networking and self-disclosure, privacy as a concept is being transformed. The dilemmas of privacy become noticeable in everyday lives and privacy as the "right to be left alone" (Scoglio 1998, 30) is increasingly conquering position in public debates (Sarikakis /Tsapogas 2013). The violation of privacy opens the door to practices of surveillance, which in our times, comes from corporations as well as other users. Studying surveillance and privacy in the digital age from a women-centred perspective is vital, as it helps to understand the ways in which the advent of new technologies frames women's lives. Privacy as "inaccessibility to others" (Allan 2000, 1177), implies among others the lack, excess of privacy or the option of selecting what may be disclosed to others (*ibid.*). Feminist scholars draw attention to the pushing back of women to the private sphere, their exclusion from the public and the commercialisation of their privacy in new technological environments (Fraser 1990; McLaughlin 2004; Sarikakis/Shade 2008). Allan (2000) argues that in cyberspace women's privacy is at risk more than that of men's, as the forms of discrimination with which women are confronted offline are reflected in infringements of their privacy online. This may derive from the additional possibilities to interact and engage online and the hope for economic, private or social empowerment through participation in online platforms. Empowerment in this case means to have the opportunity, motivation and skill to make decisions about how to engage with these new forms of communication (Huyer/Siskosa 2003). The internet offers surfaces which clash or overlap and therefore easily lead to giving up own privacy, for example when trading private data for money over electronic commerce activities or just as self-presentation and 'publicity'. This is especially the case in social media. The UN (2006) estimates that 95% of aggressive behaviour, harassment, abusive language and degrading images in online spaces are aimed at women. Studies conducted in the past in offline environments indicate that women are generally more concerned about surveillance and privacy infringements than men (Friedman et.al. 2006). As some scholars argue, this tendency might live on in a new "culture of fear". In 2007, it became known that thousands of known sex-offenders used the platform MySpace (Stone 2007). Facebook was confronted with similar claims and reports on a spam attack in November 2011, during which images of sexual violence were posted on users' profiles (Kessler, 2011). Permanent discourses on online safety add to this image of online dangers for women, although it has yet to be 'proven' whether there is a gender difference in the real danger of new technologies of surveillance (Boyd/Hargittai 2010; Glassner 1999; Valentine 2004). Therefore, it is no surprise that studies on users' privacy behaviour on SNS indicate differences between females and males and hence the complexity of the impact of these technologies (Boyd/Hargittai 2010; Caverlee/Webb 2008). On the one hand,

young women seem confident in applying privacy settings, but demonstrate less confidence in other categories of usage compared to their male counterparts (Boyd/Hargittai 2010). This may indicate the limitation of their engagement with the social dimensions of new technologies, as they become aware of being subject to surveillance (Lewis et al 2008).

It can be argued that the nature of the Internet, the difficulty of controlling third parties in possession of our personal data and the fact that data are never 'forgotten' foster further vulnerabilities. Internet related technologies, such as Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) allow for the tracking of individuals and provide information about their possessions, even habits and whereabouts. The "Internet of things" in its current form may provide a degree of access for tracing and monitoring, but in its futuristic projections, this access is thought to become, almost, absolute: the totality of buildings and human bodies will be subject to technological monitoring and feedback, giving rise to a series of issues for women's autonomy that are complex and largely understudied, from reproductive related issues to sexuality, medical history, or habits and beliefs. The immanent relation of information to objects and the human body, and the interface of data among between create limitless possibilities for outsourcing private information to publicly accessible sources. As a consequence, spaces of "leisure", privacy or of just "being", away from scrutiny, diminish further. The risks intertwined with these developments are that they foster a stronger culture of consumerism and one that relies on economic criteria to determine the value of a person. Identity and social sorting with which surveillance systems operate are based on stereotypical and prejudicial sources (Lyon 2003). These produce systems of discrimination through technologies that categorize people into groups of winners and losers (Gandy 1993; Lyon 2003). At the same time, censorship of sexual health information through software is at odds with the sheer numbers of extreme pornographic websites. One telling example for this is "Siri", Apple's personal virtual assistant, which helps users find pharmacies or doctors. The programme recognizes places and where to get "Viagra prescriptions", but not "birth control prescription" (Amplifyyourvoice.org 2011). Given this context of emerging dilemmas and challenges to hitherto stable concepts and norms, how sophisticated and concerned is the lawmaker? The next section explores political aims and policy developments.

### 3 Digital Policies and Cultures of Control

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a milestone meeting that brought to the policy agenda the empowerment of women through equity in accessing and using ICTs, as well as non-sexist representations of women in the media (UN 1995, 237). A decade later, the World Summit on the Information Society (2003–05) put gender perspectives again on the international agenda, but mainly focused on the divides in access and skills. The Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+10) declared



stagnation and lack of gender-sensitivity in media policies as an ongoing problem (UN 2005). The problematic of new technologies as tools of surveillance and control and the loss of women's privacy have not seen the same attention at an international level.

When policies do address the specific problems of women and ICTs, these are largely framed in terms of 'including' women into a system, but do not challenge the conditions within which ICTs are designed and used. Furthermore, there seems to be a worrying trend that recent policy initiatives do not pay close enough attention to issues that were once recognised as important. The assumption could be that decades of ICT policies (must) have resolved most problems as discussed, the data show near equal access to technologies. One of the early policy initiatives in Europe was the European Parliament's "Resolution on women in the new information society" (EP 2003), where a rounded approach to women's relation with communication technology made references to empowerment through education, inclusion in the market, elimination of discrimination and stereotypes, enabling knowledge transfer for sexual (health) education. The Commission's proposals for a "Strategy for equality between women and men – 2009" recognises the gender divide and underlines the necessity to combat the absence of women and girls in ICT-related professions (EC 2009 c). However, more recent policies do not follow up on these first steps of binding ICT-related topics to gender perspectives, but rather focus on broader issues of equal economic independence, equal pay, equality in decision-making, end to gender-based violence and gender equality in external actions without taking into account the merging of these areas with the online environment (EC 2010 a).

Although Gender Mainstreaming<sup>2)</sup> has been widely adopted at an EU level in the design and evaluation of policies, it is not applied in media and communication policies (Sarikakis/Nguyen 2009). In relation to circumventing emerging disadvantages for women in an increasingly cyberspace-based everyday life, policy-making tends to favour 'soft' policy and self-regulation. This approach is enmeshed in an economic discourse that measures the social worth of ICTs in their role in providing growth and wealth. Hence, women are largely addressed as market actors important for the further growth of the sector. The European Parliament resolution on a new Digital Agenda for Europe 2015 (EP 2010) aims at the "inclusion" of minorities in general and understands the digital age as a chance to fight inequalities through the application of digital devices and through effective policies. It underlines the importance of digital competences and the necessity to inspire young professionals to work in the ICT sector. The resolution refers to "users' rights," in relation to the protection of privacy, vulnerability and digital contents and situates those rights within the framework of fundamental rights. The Council of Europe also frames the digital agenda as one of fundamental rights online, and in particular of freedom of expression. The human rights

2) Gender Mainstreaming follows the idea that even seemingly gender-neutral policies have a strong gender dimension through offering male objectivity (Crow, Shauchuk: 2008, MacKinnon: 1989, Sarikakis: 2012). It pursues the prolongation of a gender perspective into fields such as economy, technological development with the aim to end the marginalisation of gender perspectives in policy-ghettos (Sarikakis/Nguyen: 2009, 205).

perspective on digital policies argues in favour of a multi-stakeholder approach in policy-making process, but policies do not fully recognise the added burden of gender specific violations of these rights (Council of Europe 2011 a; Council of Europe 2011b).

The status of women in the new digital communications environment and the silence surrounding this area features in Europe in two major policy documents, the Digital Agenda for Europe (EP 2010) and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (EP/CoE 2010). At the time of writing, the European Commission is proposing a reform of the 1995 Data Protection Directive that aims at the establishment of the individual right to 'be forgotten' on a pan-European level (EC 2012 b, Art. 17). This way companies can save over 2.3 billion Euro per year. For that purpose, independent national data protection authorities shall be 'strengthened' to enforce EU rules better besides self-control and self-regulation on organizational level, access to one's own data and the option to transfer personal data from one service provider to another at any time shall be guaranteed to the citizens (EC 2012 a). This means that even though data can be erased, it is up to the citizens to pursue the implementation of their right to be forgotten effectively and each individually.

Self-regulation and fragmentation of policies is another trait in policy provision for women and communication technologies. Signing up to "Codes of best practice for women and ICTs (EC 2009)" 59 organisations, including Universities, the BBC, Women in Technology, Sony, Google, orange, Microsoft, Motorola, hp and Telecom, focus on women's inclusion in the market. This self-regulatory, voluntary approach treats women as consumers and (largely low rank) workers in ICTs. Women's representation in digital content, combating sexual and other violence against women or the empowerment of women as users for the protection of their privacy and control over their data are absent (Ibid.). The qualitative divide threatens to restrict women's range of options in deliberating freely in digital public spheres. Debates in European policies hardly consider this problematic. For example, the Stockholm Programme (2010–2014) provides a general frame of recommendations for cybercrime, however without identifying the gender specific problematic deriving from the assumption that technologies affect all equally (EC 2010).

The Council of Europe seems to be the most sensitised of the international European organisations. In its conference paper: "Internet Governance. Developing the future together" the Council recognises gender specific violence through technologies, such as abuse through cyber stalking, sexual harassment, GPS tracking and trafficking of women, arguing that

*"women need to be closely associated with the design of technology, as well as the online tools and applications used by them and the means of protection. It is crucial to associate women as a distinct stakeholder group to Internet governance and related discussions."*  
(CoE 2011d, 87)

The Council establishes a clear link between (unrecognised) risks of the use and design of technologies and their contents to the need to involve women in the design of



new technologies and the production of content (CoE 2011d, 23). These ideas found their way into the Convention on "Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" of the Council of Europe, which adopts also a pro self-regulator approach, as the aim of the convention is

*"to encourage the private sector, including the media and the ICT sector to set guidelines and self-regulating standards to prevent violence against women and to enhance respect for women's dignity."* (CoE 2011c, Article 17.107)

Whilst this is a thoroughly designed document that refers to women as particularly concerned by issues of online violence, privacy as an issue the governments should be concerned with, it also demonstrates the regulators' weakness in constructing a legal framework that requires communication companies to take active responsibility for their part, or other institutions to safeguard specifically women's and girls' rights. Instead, the status quo is maintained as social goals are to be approached on a voluntary basis for organisations and on a purely individualistic way, as far as citizens are concerned.

Meanwhile, essential technologies, such as mobile phones have become tools for risk and crime: tracking and stalking of women through the tracking of their technologies are some of the outcomes of technological design combined with profit driven software design that is indifferent to cultures of discrimination against women and control. However, this is not just a European issue, but rather one of global relevance, as a glance overseas reveals: In the US, companies such as AT&T offer software packages to find family members through their mobile phones, from \$9.99 per month. The advertisement says "Know where your kids and loved ones are at any time" (Scheck 2010). The Federal Communication Commission required all U.S. mobile phone providers to make at least 95% of the phones in their networks traceable by satellite or other technologies (FCC 1997; FCC 2007). At the same time, the U.S. Justice Department estimates that more than 26000 adults in the U.S. are victims of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) stalking annually, including through mobile phones (Baum et al 2009). GPS made it easier for abusers to track their victims. Users do not have the means (or right) to not be tracked, if they use their phones. Cyber stalking is the single most recognised abuse that policies address to some extent. Difficult to grasp, generally it is defined as harassing a person using the Internet, e-mail or other electronic communication devices" (Kamal 2005, 55). Offensive and discriminating contents and uses of online devices, such as the production and online distribution of pornography, sexualised images and nude images of young people or "grooming" also constitute offenses with particular reference to the protection of children. This sensitisation is not extended to adult women, as any attempts to regulate content for the protection of the citizen is treated as suspicious and opposed to freedom of expression (Sarikakis/Nguyen 2009). Policy-makers identified cyber stalking, however, as an urgent issue: The USA present a pioneering example by adopting the "Federal Anti-Cyber-Stalking law" (USCS 2006) and the "Violence Against Women Act", (USCS

2000). However, not all federal states follow this direction. Whilst Washington State legislature adopted its own cyber-stalking, harassment and bullying laws (Rev. Code Wash 2004), Texas only enforces one cyber-harassment law (Tex. Penal Code 2009). This creates an opaque net of rules which effectively follow (or not) the idea that women are especially affected by new technologies of surveillance in a very diverse manner. Unlike the USA, countries like Australia, Spain, the UK and Austria treat surveillance as an infringement of privacy rights – on or offline – as an offense without gender specific characteristics. In Australia, different jurisdictions apply different anti-stalking laws. Queensland, for example, applied the Stalking Amendment Act (1999) which includes in the definition of stalking the use of any form of technology to harass a target as forms of "criminal stalking" (The Parliament of Queensland 1999, 359 B (c) (ii)). Spain established agencies, such as the Brigada de Investigación Tecnológica (BIT) – Alértas Tecnológicas, where information on any kind of cyber related offense, such as child pornography, fraud, acts of online piracy and stalking through mobile phones, e-mails, social networks, can be transmitted to specialized law enforcement agencies (Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs 2011). In the UK, cyber stalking is classified as malicious communication and as such regulated in the Malicious Communications Act (1988) as a criminal offense. In Austria, the right to data protection is constitutionally protected (sect. 1 (1) by the "Data Protection Act" (Bundeskanzleramt 2000). However, discussions related to the service Google Street View, for example, show that constant adjustments and control of the validity of existing legislations are necessary to guarantee protection of Internet users' privacy rights. In Austria, Google is allowed to register its Google Street view, however, following the "Data Protection Act" the Austrian Data Protection Commission recommends to blur entire images of individuals (not just faces), of private properties, provide easily accessible information on the right to object to the publication of online images, and to provide easy tools for using this right (Bundeskanzleramt 2000).

However, when it comes to women as victims of violence, new technologies as potential tools are bypassed. The second "Austrian Protection Against Violence Act" (Bundeskanzleramt 2009) talks only generally about the improvement of protection for the victims, but does not regulate juridical consequences for the offender. It neither considers nor gives concrete steps of how to protect potential victims from cyber-stalking, geographic tracing. The role of content and use of ICTs and devices is similarly ignored (Ibid.). The Anti-Stalking Law counts as "stalking" offenses through telecommunications devices, such as E-Mail or text messages which imply threat or harassment "during a longer period of time" and can be considered "unacceptable" (Bundeskanzleramt 2006). Cases of stalking through GPS software and mobile phones have been reported in Austria. The first lawsuit in 2006 resulted in a settlement of 500 Euro for the victim, while the offender is exempted from punishment. The offender sent 80 messages within two days and persecuted his victim by car. The trivialisation of important claims for personal safety and space leads to the individualisation of pro-



tection and shifts the responsibility entirely on women's shoulders. Where the state dares not – or cannot – make decisive steps for zero tolerance on harassment, citizens are encouraged to obtain information on how they can modify their behaviours online by the website of the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria responsible for gender mainstreaming and policy of women and equality. There, extensive information on the risks and challenges of the Information Society (security, privacy issues) is given. Again, topics such as (sexual) violence, pornography, trafficking, are missing. Cyber stalking is presented as a risk for youngsters and children, implying that adults are in a position to deflect such behaviour.

As the space control is occupying in women's lives expands and the space of safe environments of leisure diminishes, new women's initiatives that fight for creating awareness about the new divides emerge out of civil society groups. The issue of technology-generated violence against women, for instance, was put on the agenda of women organizations from all over the world calling for attention to this problematic. The online platform "takebackthetech" launched the collaborative campaign "It is a call to everyone – especially women and girls – to take control of technology to end violence against women." The main objectives are to recover the digital space and take control over technology to first end women's invisibility online and second to document acts of digital violence to create witness and trigger consciousness of technology-related violence of women all over the world (takebackthetech.net/ 2011). Other organisations such as "women in technology and EWCT" lobby for a better education of women regarding use, programming and design of ICTs and easier access into the sector's employment market (EC 2009 b). The creation of new political opportunities of women, as demanded by feminist scholars in the end, derives from the women themselves. These address the necessary change of perspectives, but also of structures, which determine the forms and contents policy-making in the different fields address (Beveridge et al. 2000, Sarikakis 2012). It is therefore not just a change in content of policies, but also a change of structures to achieve recognition and inclusion of gendered perspectives and for the successful pursuit of women's goals in their increasingly converging online/offline lives.

#### 4 Conclusion

With new technologies, new forms of digital divides emerge. Women are increasingly exposed to online environments which pose threats very similar to those in the offline world. The merging of these two worlds erases barriers of privacy and pushes the limits of self-exposure. Harassment, stalking, sexual offenses and abusive behaviour accompany these changes. This causes women to move, act, react and articulate and in the end, participate differently in the online environments which pose new limits to rights for freedom of expression and the right to be left alone.

This paper mapped some of these emerging concerns and the ways in which policy-makers react to these challenges. Whilst former divides of access were partly on the policy agenda, these new forms of digital divides are being largely underestimated. This contradicts earlier policies by supranational bodies that place a lot of attention on digital policy concerns overall and promoted gender mainstreaming strategies. At the same time, gender dimensions are approached from an economic, rather than from a human rights point of view and this severely constrain the range of debate. Policy documents discuss how women as a workforce can be beneficiary for the growth of ICT related sectors. Abuses through pornographic content or "grooming" which harm adults are not addressed systematically by the authorities. Policy in the field focuses on self-control and self-policing on online platforms, placing the responsibility of safety disproportionately on individuals who may find themselves at the receiving end of harassment. The approach of soft policy and self-regulation for companies coupled with the individualisation of law-abiding context for citizens allows ample space for abuse and requires self-reliance as the answer.

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