After broadening the concept of security to describe the general human needs and rights to secure their well-being (UN), ‘security’ has recently been narrowed down again, in light of terrorist and criminal activities. One area of concern is the expansion of surveillance technologies.

The ‘re-turn’ to the narrow security concept has been framed as a necessary ‘trade off’ between security and freedom. But is this ‘framing’ appropriate? And does surveillance undermine trust as a condition for social cooperation? How will the technologies affect us in our personal relationships, and our presence in the public sphere? A new ‘social contract’ is needed that not only readjusts the political control of individuals but also critically examines the role of companies promoting security and surveillance technologies in comparison with other socio-economic efforts to create security for human beings.

The European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE), which advises the European Commission on ethical issues, has recently submitted an opinion on the topic. In an era where rapid advances in telecommunications and computing have enabled the data of billions of citizens around the globe to be tracked and scrutinized on an unprecedented scale, the Opinion aims to provide a reference point for the European Commission regarding the ethics of security and surveillance measures.

In this public lecture, Professor Hille Haker, a member of the EGE, will outline her thoughts on the ethics of surveillance technologies.

Organised by School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology at TCD, and the Ethics and Privacy Working Group of the ADAPT centre

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