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SUPERVISION: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY[1]

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Surveillance studies is a continuously growing discipline within the social sciences and it has been gaining prominence due to recent developments and scandals concerning surveillance. SuperVision is a book which introduces the various surveillance mechanisms applied in the world we live in and also attempts to reflect on theoretical debates within surveillance studies. However, as the authors claim, it is primarily "a crash course in the current practices of surveillance and a set of core questions that can guide a journey" (p. vii). Both authors are established surveillance studies scholars, who have published extensively on topics ranging from surveillance, security and power to surveillance in schools.

SuperVision is an academic book, but it was written primarily for people outside surveillance studies. The main body is an overview of surveillance possibilities, and practices relating to the various technologies we use (such as the internet, mobile phones) and the institutions we spend our lives in (workplaces, schools). It gives the reader an overall idea of what it means to live in the surveillance society. It produces a large number of real life examples of how the information collected through these various channels can be used or misused. The book serves as a good introduction to surveillance studies, especially from the practical point of view.

As the subtitle of the book suggests, we live in the surveillance society, characterized as a society in which "virtually all significant social, institutional, or business activities … involve the systematic monitoring, gathering and analysis of information in order to make decisions, minimize risk, sort populations, and exercise power" (p. 2). In the course of the book, the authors attempt to provide us with answers to questions such as why we should care about the fact we live in a surveillance society, how we should understand surveillance and whether surveillance really makes our lives easier and safer and what effect it has on our lives. In this review, I shall not provide all of the details and examples of various surveillance mechanisms and their practice, but I will focus on demonstrating how these questions were answered.

[1] Gilliom, J., & Monahan, T. (2013). *SuperVision: An Introduction to Surveillance Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

The book draws heavily on previous research by surveillance scholars, especially in the theoretical background to the phenomena studied. David Lyon identifies two broad goals of surveillance systems—care and social control (Lyon, 2001). The concept of care encompasses various mechanisms used by the state in looking after the population, particularly the welfare state and various welfare programs. The state requires information on people in order to target the benefits. Social control is closely connected to risk management. "Everyday governance in contemporary societies tilts towards the management of risks and especially risks associated with obtaining compliance or containing threatening behavior. Surveillance is the means whereby knowledge is produced for administering populations in relation to risk (Lyon, 2001, p. 6). The authors of SuperVision are predominantly interested in the dimension of social control and risk management.

What can we understand by surveillance? Monahan and Gilliom argue against the understanding of surveillance in an Orwellian (as an omnipotent Big Brother) or Foucaultian sense. The Panopticon—a centralized authority which oversees the subjects' every activity (Foucault, 1991)—is outdated and does not capture the reality. "We are watched not from a single site, but by many actors in many contexts with many motives, and we're not always aware that we might be seen" (p. 22). Information about us is collected by various government agencies (for the purpose of taxation), private companies—such as our employer, the stores where we shop (consumer surveillance), our banks (personal account transactions), on the internet (for targeted marketing) or our cell phone providers. However, this information is not shared, it is collected for various purposes.

Therefore, the authors suggest it is better to view surveillance in terms of Haggerty and Ericson's (2000) metaphor of *surveillant assemblage*. This view is reinforced throughout the book. There is surveillance in various places, such as schools, workplaces and hospitals and it is conducted using various technologies, such as GoogleEarth, meaning that "surveillance society has millions of observers and observed spread across space and time" (p. 129). Connected with this is a need to reformulate and rethink the idea of temporality. The technological nature of surveillance today blurs the traditional linear understanding of time, allowing for more than just real-time surveillance. Our online activities leave traces that stay in the online world forever. The same principle, accessing information about a person, applies to CCTV footage, pictures, and information from various databases. What we did in the past and what we are doing right now stays recorded forever and can be accessed in the future.

However, I believe the authors fail to acknowledge the fact that closed institutions, such as workplaces or schools—discussed extensively in the book—do create disciplinary power relationships. Workers and students are subjected to the gaze of watchers—whether it is through CCTV, monitored computer systems in the office or the eye of the teacher in the classroom, not to mention the ever increasing use of various modern technologies in these environments, such as RFID (Radio frequency identification) devices to monitor movement—and so these institutions can be considered miniscule Panopticons. The subjects of the gaze are visible and they are aware of their visibility, so they adjust their behavior according to the institution's norms.

Surveillance is also traditionally understood to be the antithesis of privacy. This view is also challenged by the authors on two premises. The first premise is that this view is too simplistic and therefore does not help us understand modern-day surveillance. "[S]urveillance

is not just an isolated practice but a comprehensive mode of social organization, the implications and issues go way beyond the relatively simple and limited idea of privacy" (p. 23). In other words, it not only impacts on individuals and their rights, but impacts on the functioning of various segments of society. This claim prompts a very interesting question—how exactly do the various surveillance systems impact on the functioning of society and on the way that people behave? The book does not provide any clear answers, since it deals with surveillance in many aspects of our daily lives, but the impact of surveillance systems is partly explained.

The other premise is that our understanding and privacy and the value we place on it is shifting in the digital era we live in. This is best illustrated in the Lives Online chapter on social networks. The authors argue that people willingly subject themselves to scrutiny and monitoring—they want to be part of the community of their friends. "People use social networking sites to see and be seen" (p. 49). This undermines the classic understanding of privacy, anonymity and invisibility as things people strive to achieve.

Why should we care about surveillance? Many people do not consider extensive and ubiquitous surveillance problematic, claiming that they have nothing to hide, because they have done nothing wrong. The authors' answer is that "in the surveillance society, definitions of "wrong" shift and vary and can include things like participating in political demonstrations, having poor health, losing your job, being young, getting old, being male, being female, or belonging to any racial or ethnic group on the planet… we're all doing something wrong all the time" (p. 5-6). Surveillance leads to social sorting—the categorization and classification of people based on some of their characteristics. Throughout the book, the authors provide examples of social sorting in almost every chapter—ranging from credit risk assessment by banks and insurance companies, sorting consumers on the basis of consumer behavior, data-mining techniques which allow companies to target their marketing to performance monitoring systems in the workplace, and airport security systems where racial and religious profiling seems to be a practice. The authors cite a government report which found that 67% of personal searches upon arrival to the US are conducted on people of color and "black-women are more likely than any other US citizen to be strip-searched" (p.111).

Does surveillance help make our lives safer? The advocates of surveillance technologies (when it comes to fighting and preventing crime) defend it on the grounds that it is necessary for those purposes. Monahan and Gilliom argue that the link between surveillance and security is not straightforward and an increase in one does not automatically mean an increase in the other. One example is security cameras, which do not prevent crime but as the authors argue just move crime to other locations. Moreover, security systems create power relationships, which lead to the creation or reinforcement of existing inequalities. "[I]n trying to achieve security, one must always make decisions about who belongs and who doesn't, which means security is exclusionary by design" (p. 110). This is visible not only when it comes to border controls or access to certain institutions, but also in automated (or partially automated) security systems which are programmed to target individuals with certain characteristics.

The pervasive motif in the book is the effects on our lives of living in the surveillance society. As already mentioned, social sorting is one of the consequences. This practice can

lead to the marginalization of certain groups, or neighborhoods. One example in the book refers to schools in poor areas. "[P]oorer schools with more minority students experience the first hard-core forms of surveillance and control…" (p.77). This includes not only CCTV cameras and on-site school resource officers, which are becoming the norm in US schools, but also metal detectors, drug sniffer dogs, various drug-testing programs and the introduction of RFID chips to control the movement of students. In fact, schools have become leading laboratories for new surveillance practices, because they provide a large number of individuals under daily institutional control. This affects the socialization of students—they are "normalized to this surveillance—it becomes commonplace, unquestioned, and unremarkable" (p. 79).

Another effect of ubiquitous surveillance is that it shapes individuals' identities "by creating odd edited versions of who we are (a test score, a driving record, a credit risk) to form the basis of decisions about us" (p. 8). Surveillance creates people's "data doubles," simplified versions of the real personality based on data held in various databases.

As mentioned in the introduction, the main strength of the book is the provision of practical experiences of surveillance, it gives the reader a clear idea of where individuals are watched and what consequences these practices can have. The authors implicitly and sometimes quite explicitly brand surveillance as a negative practice, although it is in fact necessary for societies to function in today's world. One of the main weaknesses of the book is that the theoretical questions are left in the background; they are only explicitly dealt with in the introduction and conclusion. Some chapters offer good examples which could be utilized better in theoretical debates. The chapter on social networking for example could offer more insights into the debates into why network users understand privacy and visibility in ways that are different from the traditional understanding—a debate quite extensively elaborated by David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman in their discussions in Liquid Surveillance (2013). Baumann argues that "the condition of being watched and seen has been reclassified from a menace into a temptation. The promise of enhanced visibility, the prospect of 'being in the open' for everybody to see and everybody to notice, chimes well with the most avidly south proof of social recognition" (Lyon & Baumann, 2013, p. 23). This discussion is very closely connected with the fact that the relationship between surveillance and privacy is not straightforward—a notion argued by the authors of SuperVision.

In summary, the book touches on some of the contemporary debates in surveillance studies theory, but its main strength lies in its overview of the various surveillance practices we encounter in our everyday lives, notwithstanding our social status. It depicts the reality of living in the 21st century, in which surveillance is proliferating and becoming more and more ubiquitous. Therefore it is something we should start to take an interest in and we should demand that policymakers make the processes whereby various surveillance systems are implanted more transparent and subject to public debate, regulation and audit.

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