

eSurveillance and Panopticism

MS 3305 Information, Knowledge, Power

eSurveillance and Panopticism

This lecture

1. UK today
2. The 'new' Surveillance
3. What's wrong with Surveillance?
4. Foucault: The Panopticon metaphor
5. eSurveillance

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UK Today

2004:

"My anxiety is that we don't sleepwalk into a surveillance society ..."

Richard Thoma, UK Information Commissioner (Times)

2006:

"Our report commissioned from external experts really says we are already there. We are waking up to a surveillance society."

Richard Thomas (BBC4)

UK Today

Surveillance Studies Network
(editors: Ball, K. and Wood, D.M.) 2006

A report on the surveillance society for the Information Commissioner

Link available through

<http://deli.cio.us/ueluk/surveillance>

UK Today: Facts & Figures

1. Visual Surveillance
2. Databases
3. Tracking

UK Today: Facts & Figures

1. Visual Surveillance

- CCTV from 1970ies in response to IRA
- Between 1996 and 1998, Home office spent 75% of budget for crime prevention on CCTV; effect on crime prevention debatable
- London today: approx. 4,2 million CCTV cameras
- surveillance 'package': transmitting (Cameras); observing (manpower); processing (software)
eg. Face and movement recognition

UK Today: Facts & Figures

2. Databases

- DNA database (since 1995)
- Traffic database (CC): ANPR; computer processes 35 million number plates per day
- National Identity register (from 2008): biometric info of all citizens and foreign nationals; discussion to extend NIR to super-database that collates data from all other databases
- central NHS database (from 2010)

UK Today: Facts & Figures

3. Tracking

- Mobile phones
- Oyster cards
- Customer Loyalty cards
- Radio-trackable chips (persons, cars, objects)

The 'New' Surveillance

Two key features of 'new' surveillance:

- Every citizen is a potential suspect
- Shift from human surveillance to computer-assisted (algorithmic) surveillance

Modern surveillance is characterized by ever increasing distances between observer and observed (Giddens 1990)

control is wholly or partly automated (Marx, 2002:28)

DIMENSION	A. Traditional Surveillance	B. The New Surveillance
<i>Object of data collection</i>	individual	individual, categories of interest
<i>Comprehensiveness</i>	single measure	multiple measures
<i>Context</i>	contextual	accontextual
<i>Depth</i>	less intensive	more intensive
<i>Breadth</i>	less extensive	more extensive
<i>Ratio of self to surveillant knowledge</i>	higher (what the surveillant knows, the subject probably knows as well)	lower (surveillant knows things the subject doesn't)
<i>Identifiability of object of surveillance</i>	emphasis on known individuals	emphasis also on anonymous individuals, masses
<i>Emphasis on</i>	individuals	individual, networks systems
<i>Realism</i>	direct representation	direct and simulation
<i>Form</i>	single media (likely or narrative or numerical)	multiple media (including video and/or audio)
<i>Who collects data</i>	specialists	specialists, role dispersal, self-monitoring
<i>Data analysis</i>	more difficult to organize, store, retrieve, analyze	easier to organize, store, retrieve, analyze
<i>Data merging</i>	discrete non-combinable data (whether because of different format or location)	easy to combine visual, auditory, text, numerical data
<i>Data communication</i>	more difficult to send, receive	easier to send, receive

(Marx 2002)

The 'New' Surveillance

Tools of new surveillance (Marx 2002):

- video and audio surveillance
- heat-, light-, motion-, sound- and olfactory sensors
- night vision goggles
- electronic tagging
- biometric devices
- drug testing
- DNA analysis
- computer monitoring including email and web
- use of computer techniques such as expert systems, matching and profiling, data mining, mapping, network analysis and simulation

The 'New' Surveillance

Characteristics of new surveillance (Marx 2002):

Object shifts from individual suspect to: categories of interest, contexts, spaces, time period (longitudinal observation), networks, systems

"The subject of data collection goes beyond the individual suspect to categories of interest."

The 'New' Surveillance

Characteristics of new surveillance (Marx 2002):

Tools extend senses and tend to be invisible;
data collection is integrated in routine activity

"probe more deeply, widely and softly than traditional methods, transcending natural (distance, darkness, skin, time and microscopic size) and constructed (walls, sealed envelopes) barriers that historically protected personal information"

The 'New' Surveillance

Characteristics of new surveillance (Marx 2002):

Tools extend senses and tend to be invisible;
data collection is integrated in routine activity

- data collection and processing is likely to be automated
- looks at settings and patterns of relationships. Meaning may reside in cross classifying discrete sources of data

Surveillance - What's wrong?

Surveillance causes changes of social practices in urban spaces

"It is likely to make urban space segregated, polarised, more difficult to approach and stay in, less lively, less spontaneous and even 'dead'."
Koskela 2003

Surveillance - What's wrong?

Electronic means are increasingly replacing informal social control

"Surveillance (...) tends to drive responsibility away from individuals, creating a feeling that there is no longer need to watch over each other."
Koskela 2003

Surveillance - What's wrong?

Visual surveillance reinforces existing power relations

"Surveillance is used to monitor groups, whose visual appearance is interpreted as somehow deviant [e.g. 'suspicious' youths, the homeless, political activists, people of colour, or sexual minorities] It is a powerful tool in managing and enforcing exclusion."
Norris, 2002:267

Black people are twice as likely to be surveilled for no apparent reason than white.
(Norris and Armstrong 1999: 155)

Surveillance - What's wrong?

The emergence of a virtual Super-Panopticon

"electronic superpanopticon."
Lyon 2001:108)

Foucault's Panopticism

"There was of course **no way of knowing** whether you were being **watched** at any given moment. How often, or on what **system**, the **Thought Police** plugged in on any individual wire was **guesswork**. It was even conceivable that they watched **everybody all the time**. You had to live (...) in the assumption that **every sound** you made was **overheard**, and, except in darkness, every moment **scrutinized**."

From: George Orwell, 1984

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Foucault's Panopticism

Concept of the Panopticon ubiquitous metaphor for surveillance practices

"Discipline and Punish" (Foucault 1979)
investigates how state power evolved over the period of modernity (example: state prison)

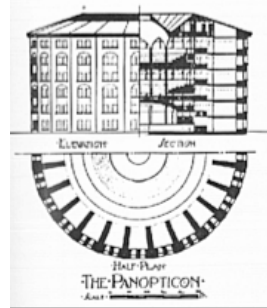
The prison design described by Foucault goes back to the social reformer and utilitarian Jeremy Bentham

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Foucault's Panopticism

- Central guard tower
- Prisoners in cells arranged in circle around the tower
- Guards can (theoretically) see activities of any and all prisoners
- Prisoners assume to be constantly observed; self-regulation of disciplined behaviour

The actual design of the Panopticon is less important than its function as a "genealogical marker" (Foucault)



Panopticon - strong metaphor?

Parrallels:

- Using technological means for the exercise of power

Same strategic idea: using technology in order to exercise power without physical intervention

"The panoptic technology of power has been electronically extended: our cities have become like enormous Panopticons"

Koskela 2003

Panopticon - strong metaphor?

Parrallels:

- Surveillance by means of vision

CCTVs and Cameras as extensions of the human eye

See Jay (1993) 'Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought

Panopticon - strong metaphor?

Parrallels:

- Discipline enforced by the 'unverifiable gaze'

Bentham's design built on the idea that power should be visible and unverifiable

"A camera represents total one-way-ness of the gaze by making it impossible to look back. (...) The nature of the potential overseer is 'God-like', someone who is there, and simultaneously, is not."

Koskela 2003

Panopticon - strong metaphor?

Parrallels:

- 'Easy and effective' system to control large groups of people

Internalisation of control means 'easy and effective' exercise of power
(Foucault, 1980: 148)

Same argument is being employed by politicians and police

Panopticon - strong metaphor?

Problems:

- A city is not a prison

"The Panopticon model is analytically limited beyond the forced enclosures of 'total' institutions"
Simon 2005

Prisoners are made homogeneous, urban citizens are extremely diverse

People apparently not care much about CCTV, they do exactly what they would do without cameras (in fact, they do not even have an impact on crime prevention)

Panopticon - strong metaphor?

Problems:

- Discipline is not central to power and exercise in Postmodern societies

The concept of discipline through surveillance has got limitations when considering power relations in today's society

Can binary forms of power be applied to (postmodern) urban individuals

Discipline & Control

Post-Foucaultian thought ...

From the concept of Discipline (Foucault)
to the concept of Control (Deleuze)

or

From molds (Panopticon)
to modulation (Postmodern societies)

Discipline & Control

Deleuze: spatial metaphor is not applicable to postmodern institutions ...

- 'Discipline' relies on enclosures that work as "molds, distinct castings"
- Enclosures can be material, cultural or psychical. 'Discipline' acts on the body, it molds the body, stabilizes and objectifies it.
- In disciplined societies, every individual has got a distinctive number (a "signature") in order to identify the individual

Discipline & Control

Deleuze suggests the concept of 'control' to understand power in open and fluid spaces

- 'Control' does not act on the body so much as the environment through which the body moves
- In 'controlled' societies, bodies are represented by a code; a signature or a fixed number is no longer important. Codes serve as passwords for gaining or refusing access to locations and sources.

Discipline & Control

"In societies of control the individual is doubled as code, as information, or as simulation such that the reference of the panoptic gaze is no longer the body but its [digital] double, and indeed this is no longer a matter of looking but rather one of data analysis."

Simon 2005:15

Discipline & Control

"Controls are a modulation, like a self- deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other"

Deleuze 1992

You may do whatever you like within the allocations for your digital alter-ego (which may change any minute according to information collated from different databases).

Examples: students, customers, citizens ...

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Information gathering practices (census, surveys, shopping, travelling, communicating etc.) impact on people's lives

Utilitarians (19th century): collection of information crucial for improving on social conditions

Computing technology: capacity and processing power brings qualitative change in data gathering and evaluation

Gathered data have an immediate impact; examples: social infrastructure, credit cards, insurances ...

eSurveillance

Poster (1990): Databases as 'Superpanopticon'

the database is a Superpanopticon controlling public life in postmodern society (according to its own logic)

Information is sourced with surveillance technology AND from voluntary individuals:

"No carefully designed edifice is needed, no science such as criminology is employed, and no complex administrative apparatus is invoked. In the superpanopticon, surveillance is assured when the act of the individual is communicated by telephone line to the computerized database"

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"It is the computer - not the camera - that heralds the panopticonization of urban space. Anonymous bodies can be transformed into digital subjects, identified and linked to their digital personae residing in electronic databases." Norris 2002: 27

'Dataveillance'

The systemic use of personal data systems in the investigation or monitoring of one or more persons (Clarke 1988: 499)

'Algorithmic Surveillance'

Refers to the use of elaborated software to process and analyse the data (Norris)

eSurveillance

'Databased Selves'

"No one is watching us and we do not perceive ourselves as being watched. We simply go about our business while our databased selves are assembled, scrutinized and evaluated"
Simon 2005:17

the digital representation of real bodies, formed through information from databases

"We do not produce our databased selves, the databased selves produce us." Simon 2005:16

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'Databased Selves'

Databased selves are subject to modulation
(Deleuze)

"This modulation is made possible by the capacity of digital technology to generate and manipulate 'data doubles' of citizen-subjects. These are stable representations of identity such as no visual enclosure could ever produce. The object of traditional disciplinary surveillance is the body but in dataveillance the object of control is simply the digital representation of the body."
Simon 2005:15

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'Retrievable Identities'

"the subject is multiplied and decentered in the database, acted on by remote computers each time a record is automatically verified or checked against another, without ever referring to the individual concerned... computers become machines for producing retrievable identities"
Lyon 2001: 115

Conclusion

Foucault's Panopticon useful metaphor but needs to be interpreted considering

- geographical and social space
- control vs. discipline
- impact of databases and algorithms
- non-visual and voluntary methods of surveillance