Surveillance

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Surveillance—watching over through human and/or non-human technologies for an intended purpose—can connote a dystopian imaginary in which all activity becomes visible before a hostile gaze. Anthropology has explored and complexified this picture. While surveillance can enable intensive control over space, social categorisation, and the affective states of large societies, among other things, such asymmetries can also be evaded, refashioned, or reversed. Surveillance can take place from above ('panoptic') but also laterally ('synoptic'), or from below ('sousveillance'). Indeed, in the field of human relationships it is not always apparent who is watching who. Because of the vast range of human response to being monitored, surveillance infrastructures—particularly when implemented at scale—often do so within moral discourses that are regionally specific, and vital to their legitimacy.

The field of surveillance studies has extensively explored surveillance as a mode of security and policing, and this emphasis has shaped early anthropological engagements with the subject. With the growth of computerisation, surveillance has become more relevant to a variety of other ethnographic contexts. Digital monitoring now plays an expanding role in forms of care, public and private health, communication, and the management of work, in which the harvesting of data for profit always remains a near or distant possibility. An emerging 'anthropology of surveillance' invites us to consider not only conditions of visibility, but also their perpetual relation to what is not seen. Here the moral question is not whether surveillance itself is good or bad, but how and why are human beings rendered visible through technology, and under which circumstances do they seek to remain opaque?

Introduction

In its popular form, surveillance often connotes a dystopian imaginary in which all activity becomes visible before a hostile gaze. Significantly inflected by George Orwell's parable of totalitarianism, *1984* ([1949] 1990)*,* in which citizens are watched and listened to at all times through telescreens, this imaginary surfaces at moments of social tension around new intersections between power and information collection. In scholarship, this connotation was given a paradigmatic and enduring shape by Michel Foucault's influential text *Discipline and punish* ([1975] 2019). In it, Foucault introduces the image of the Panopticon: a series of architectural designs by English reformer Jeremy Bentham for controlling the behaviour of their occupants through the suggestion that they were being observed (Galič, Timan and Koops 2016). The Panopticon was at once an actual historical phenomenon as well as a theory for the coercive effects that could be exerted over human beings through practices of unequal exposure, and it was in the latter sense that the image shaped the field of surveillance studies. The 'panoptic' paradigm of the 1980s and 90s theorised how new technologies were reinscribing old asymmetrical relationships between observer and

observed, while a subsequent 'post-panoptic' paradigm (Deleuze 1992) explored how surveillance has become multi-directional and mobile, with overlapping state and capitalist incentives (Bauman and Lyon 2013; Zuboff 2019).

'Surveillance' is a modern word that has been increasingly used in English from the nineteenth century onwards. An anglicisation of the French *surveiller*—to watch (*veiller*) over (*sur*)—both the English and the French derive from the Latin verb *vigilare,* to keep watch. As a concept, surveillance has been defined many times with different connotations in different scholarly traditions. A particularly influential definition describes surveillance as 'the focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for the purposes of influence, management, protection or direction' (Lyon 2007, 14). In anthropology, however, a focus on the 'personal' is problematised by how the very concept of the person varies historically and culturally (Carrithers 1985; Strathern 2018). Therefore, in anthropology, another definition of surveillance is worth pursuing: watching over through human and/or non-human technologies for an intended purpose. This lays more emphasis on an understanding of 'technology' which, following the French tradition in which Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze were operating (Behrent 2013), derives from the French *techniques*. Conceived broadly as a set of practices, *techniques* include material culture but are not limited to it. These encompass social activities like guarding, spying, or undercover policing, as well as the use of analogue or digital devices to collect, store, or process information.

Anthropology has been a relative latecomer to the study of surveillance. This may be partly because it entails naming a relationship *as* surveillance, while anthropologists may prioritise other definitions. In this growing body of work, however, anthropologists have analysed surveillance as a technology of state security, policing, and capitalist accumulation. They have also shown that within these instantiations lie possibilities for political reciprocity and reversal, for dynamics of care, and for a reappropriation of technology (known as 'function creep') from above and beneath. As a way of making visible, surveillance is also in continual conversation with non-surveillance: whether through invisibility, anonymity, or concealment. In general, an emerging anthropology of surveillance considers the unfolding of relationships among and between 'surveillors' and 'surveillands' as a situated encounter. This encounter draws on historically constituted categories, relationships, and moral orders, in which it finds—or fails to find—its own legitimacy. As the proliferation of computing continues to enable the expansion of surveillance, anthropology invites attention to the conditions of visibility, and the purposes to which rendering subjects visible through technology is put.

Security, policing, and morality

A conversation across the social sciences began to take shape in the 1980s and 90s in response to the growing use of electronic monitoring in Europe and North America (Bogard 1996; Gandy 1993; Haggerty and Ericson 2000; Lyon 1994; Marx 1988; Norris and Armstrong 1999; Whitaker 1999). Scholars in the

emerging field of surveillance studies were concerned with how new forms of information-gathering were transforming existing social institutions, particularly the police. Anthropologists entered this field from the side sometime later by way of a burgeoning interest in security (Holbraad and Pedersen 2013; Goldstein 2010; Maguire, Frois and Zurawski 2014; Maguire and Low 2019).

Seen broadly as the promise of protection against some real or imagined existential threat, surveillance has been observed as an outcome of wider dynamics of securitisation that have intensified since the events of 9/11. In European airports, for example, increasing counter-terrorism measures have entailed new intersections between human and machine surveillance (Maguire, Frois and Zurawski 2014). Assessing the threat of would-be passengers, machine-screening of physiological clues operates alongside the 'skilled vision' of security personnel—an intuitive technique gained through experience (Grasseni 2007, cited in Maguire, Frois and Zurawski 2014, 127). The surveillance that is justified by a logic of security can be prone to a function creep that goes well beyond its overt purpose (Frois 2019; Maguire 2009). In Egyptian-ruled Gaza between 1948-67, police surveillance served not only to protect the Palestinian population from threat, but also to enforce its own standards of propriety in gender relations, or to inhibit residents from joining dissident organisations (Feldman 2015).

In the context of security, surveillance is often intended to produce effects on the affective and mental life of the surveilled. Foucault emphasised the capacity of surveillance to render a self-regulated conformity to established rules, a phenomenon now referred to by journalists and privacy activists as 'chilling effects'. Yet self-regulation is one of a panoply of responses that the idea of being watched may yield. Among the most common is a generalised suspicion of others, bred by the uncertainty of whether one is really being watched or not, which can spiral into paranoia (Masco 2017; Verdery 2018). For instance, in left-wing radical activism, the potential for undercover police surveillance can produce distrust of fellow activists that can inhibit the development of solidarity (Krøijer 2015). Sometimes cause-and-effect happens in an inverse way, as when certain affects, particularly fear, are mobilised at scale by media producers to justify the need for more surveillance (Masco 2014; Massumi 2015). But not all experienced affects are negative, and, in some contexts, surveillance may indeed deliver the feeling of security that it promises (Feldman 2015).

As a modality of security and policing, surveillance enables control over a bounded space (Levin, Frohne and Weibel 2002; Frois 2013; Maguire and Low 2019). Often this is commensurate with the territoriality of the state, in which national borders become sites of heightened surveillance, historically through an alliance of sensory and documentary forms (Baĭburin 2021; Breckenridge and Szreter 2012), which are increasingly automated through cameras, scanners, and biometric databases (Breckenridge 2014; Boe and Mainsah 2021). Sometimes it is internal boundaries within states that matter. In predominantly Alevi working-class neighbourhoods in Turkey, spatial control is achieved through a mixture of identity checks and interrogations at entrances, alongside the perambulation of armoured vehicles and undercover police

inside the neighbourhood (Yonucu 2022). Here, surveillance becomes a tool of spatial isolation to keep outsiders out and residents in. As surveillance becomes increasingly digitalised, the question arises over whether its traditional production of spatial enclosure is substituted for a diffuse 'digital enclosure' (Andrejevic 2007), where access is mediated through data stored in distributed drives. In the Xinjiang province of China, interoperability between facial recognition systems at security checkpoints with other forms of data collection segregates speed and access to space in real time, as Han residents move frictionlessly while Uyghur residents may be detained and diverted (Byler 2021). Yet even in the digital enclosure the question of spatiality never completely disappears.

Surveillance may be less a matter of observation than of 'sorting' populations (Gandy 1993; Bowker and Star 1999). In the context of security and policing, though the effects may be experienced individually, it may not be specific people but rather *categories* of people who are placed under suspicion. Among CCTV operatives in Britain in the 1990s and 2000s, subjects of interest frequently fell into raced, gendered, classed, aged, and other demographic categories (Goold 2004; Norris and Armstrong 1999). In Kenya, China, or the US, falling into the category of 'Muslim' may be sufficient to constitute a police suspect (Al-Bulushi 2021; Ali 2018; Byler 2021). This association between surveillance and sorting is deeply rooted in the colonial past and is carried into the present through digital media (Jefferson 2020; Udupa and Dattatreyan 2023). The institution of the census across the former British Empire is a case in point (Breckenridge 2014; S. Browne 2015; Rao and Nair 2019). Processes of registering and categorising were normally linked to forms of identification that determined the ambit of a person's movement. Among these was the slave pass of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, which combined with differently mediated forms of surveillance to racialise certain bodies and render them legible as property (S. Browne 2015). These categories do not necessarily fall, however, along religious or racial lines. Anthropologists themselves have fallen into categories of suspicion throughout the discipline's history (Sökefeld and Strasser 2016): whether as communists in the US (Price 2004), or as foreign agents in the former Socialist states (Sampson 2022; Verdery 2012, 2018).

Although the surveillance performed by human and machine agents of the state continually seeks to solve the problem of large datasets by classification and sorting (Bowker and Star 1999), there is normally a much messier and more complex picture that exists on the ground or behind the scenes of any state surveillance project (Frois 2013; Jacobsen and Rao 2018). On the 'friendly' border between India and Bangladesh, curious political reversals occur between the Indian border soldiers, lonely and far from home, and the women and men seeking to carry contraband across the border. While the military officers enact the authority of the state's surveilling gaze, they are also subject to a 'counter-gaze' by these travellers, scanning for vulnerabilities or openness to illicit transactions (Ghosh 2019, 447). Not only might the gaze be met and even directed by a possible counter-gaze, but the act of being surveilled by the state may in some contexts be a conduit through which the state becomes aware of political grievances and acts on

them. This happened routinely in Egyptian-ruled Gaza, when grassroots complaints about the lack of currency in circulation led to behind-the-scenes instructions for banks to produce more (Feldman 2015) .

This leads to an aspect of surveillance that anthropology is well placed to address: namely, the ways in which monitoring technologies are introduced within moral discourses essential to their appropriation and acceptance. When video surveillance was installed in public areas in Portugal, it was driven by an apparent need to modernise the country to become more like its northern European counterparts (Frois 2013). In this discourse, surveillance becomes commensurate with development, an association that can be witnessed more widely. The most prominent example of this is India's *Aadhaar* system, the largest biometric identity project in human history (Nair 2021; Rao and Nair 2019). Fingerprints, iris scans, and other physiological information are collected alongside demographic details, which are matched to the holy grail of any mass surveillance project: the unique identifier (Clarke 1988), in this case a twelve-digit number. From its inception, *Aadhaar* has been rationalised through its provision of multiple goods (access to welfare, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and accessibility among others) and its elimination of undesirable phenomena such as poverty, corruption, and fraud. Yet for critics, *Aadhaar* constitutes the infrastructure for the biggest surveillance apparatus ever implemented. This antithesis touches on a paradox of modernity itself, that the history of surveillance is entwined with the history of the state and its capacity to institutionalise care on a very large scale (Dandeker 1990; Higgs 2003). In the UK, for example, the foundation of the National Health Service (NHS) was also the foundation of an information apparatus that could serve other ends (Rule 1973). The question, for any citizen, is that of reward for their enforced visibility. Are Indian citizens really being compensated by *Aadhaar*, or is this the final frontier in the state's appropriation of the citizen's body (Kapila 2022)?

Health surveillance and care

Surveillance is often justified through the interests of the common good, such as safeguarding those deemed to be vulnerable, caring for patients, or stopping the spread of disease. While health monitoring, in this logic, may be enacted as a 'caring' practice (Mol 2008), it now increasingly involves the collection of data stored on servers that are not always known to those who are being monitored (Sandvik 2020; Lyon 2021). Health surveillance is commonly defined as the systemic collection, analysis, and dissemination of health data for the implementation and evaluation of public health action (Choi 2012).[ii] In more general terms, it can be understood as the practice of watching over health, from the perceived 'health' of populations and individuals to that of communities and nations.

Recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has reinvigorated health surveillance as a matter of political and public concern (Kim and Chung 2021). Political responses to the pandemic were shaped by a range of moral rationalities that introduced and justified new modes of public health surveillance (Lyon 2021). Public

health interventions across the world sought to control and mitigate the outbreak, such as by responsibilising citizens to act in the interest of the state and to install contact tracing apps to curb infection rates. In places such as Germany and the UK, state-sponsored contact tracing apps received media criticism due to privacy concerns, as well as technical concerns over their ability to act as a public health measure (Laptander and Vitebsky 2021).

Monitoring populations for the purpose of controlling and caring for citizens is not a new phenomenon. It was partly through shifting modes of governance in Europe from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onwards, with the monitoring of populations and publics, that practices of health surveillance took shape. Health surveillance has therefore historically played a key role in constituting not only visible, measurable, and governable spaces, but also governable persons willing to self-monitor in the name of their own health (Foucault 1973; Rose 1989). In many parts of the world, the provision of public health services, including their administration and governance, have become increasingly digitalised through practices of 'datafication' in which the mass collection of personal health data informs interventions (Hoeyer, Bauer and Pickersgill 2019; Ruckenstein and Schüll 2017). Surveillance, in this vein, unfolds through a range of monitoring practices that claim to sustain human life in different ways. Drawing on Foucault's notion of biopolitics, health surveillance can thus be seen to form part of a 'politics of life itself' (Rose 2006), in which bodies and minds have become 'vital' objects of observation and intervention. Such practices rely on people's capacity and willingness to engage in forms of everyday self-monitoring in the service of care (Weiner et al. 2020; Kent, Lupton and Zeena 2020).

In surveillance studies, care and control have been described as two entangled interests driving practices of monitoring. Watching over children, for instance, may be intended with their protection in mind but can also be motivated by other intentions, such as direction and control (Lyon 2003; Widmer and Albrechtslund 2021). In many contexts, people actively participate in the monitoring of their bodies but in ways that are not always known to them. In rural India, for example, the 'Khushi baby necklace', a tracking device presented as a piece of jewellery, was trialled as a digital tool of recording and storing immunisation records (Sandvik 2020). More recently, it was also used to collect other health data such as HIV medication records. Developers attempted to make it locally 'appropriate', designing it with a black thread to ward off evil spirits, showing how such technologies are incorporated within cosmological systems (Sandvik 2020). While the necklace can be seen as 'doing good'—as a caring technology—digital health data also has the potential to be exploited and commodified without people's consent or knowledge in the service of corporate interests.

Dynamics of care and control were simultaneously at work in the 1950s, when a team of doctors brought an antibiotic to the Navajo population in Arizona to treat tuberculosis (Jones 2001). When patients failed to take their medications, healthcare professionals regarded them as non-compliant, and responded by implementing powerful technologies of surveillance: random tests were performed, such as urine testing or

radioactive pill clocks[2], often without patients being informed about their purposes. These interventions introduced distrust into doctor-patient relationships and many feared participating as the urine sample testing could potentially expose their ceremonial use of the peyote plant, which had been prohibited by the tribal council. In this case, medical surveillance as a tool of control was operating within existing political structures of colonisation and racialisation, and it is unclear what opportunities the Navajo had, if any, to resist these medical interventions.

Health technologies are sometimes welcomed and appropriated in new ways beyond the way they were intended (Stadler 2021). Digital health technologies of surveillance, such as the MERM ('medication event reminder monitoring') device, have been introduced to persuade and remind 'non-compliant' tuberculosis or HIV patients to take their medications. Some patients referred to the device as 'the box', whereas others gave it affectionate nicknames such as 'my child', which one user explained was due to the box containing pills that would give her access to a healthy life. Some stored their boxes safely for this reason, or wore clothes that would match the box, hence trying to transform it from an adherence-monitoring device to a person-entity that represented hope.

Health surveillance technologies have often been used as mechanisms of governance, but it is important to emphasise that people might actively use monitoring technologies in the name of improving their own health or in the interest of looking after others. The past two decades have seen an intensive proliferation of, and investment in, digital monitoring technologies that claim to improve our physical and mental health, as well as offer care and support for others (Lupton 2016; Neff and Nafus 2016; Ajana, Braga and Guidi 2022). For example, physical rehabilitation apps can monitor exercises done at home (Schwennesen 2019), and smartphone apps and 'wearables' can be used to track children's locations (Widmer and Albrechtslund 2021). Self-monitoring in the context of health can therefore foreground more intimate and subtler aspects of monitoring effected by everyday acts of self-surveillance. Wearable self-tracking technologies such as Fitbit and Apple Watch enable people to monitor a range of activities and functions associated with their bodies and minds. These practices might include tracking exercise and steps (Brüggen and Schober 2020), menstrual cycles (Ford, De Togni and Miller 2021), heart rates, and sleeping patterns (Hardey 2022). Digital wearables also increasingly allow people to report on, quantify, and monitor various 'mental and emotional' experiences and sensations, from stress and anxiety to mindful moments and other perceived states of well-being (Gregory and Bowker 2016; Schüll 2016; Davies 2017; Minozzo 2022).

Self-monitoring emerges here as a way of caring for, and knowing about, bodies, such as in the management and understanding of pain, affects, and medical uncertainties. For example, health monitoring technologies can figure as practices of self-knowledge in the hands of menstruating people, as an ethnography of period tracking apps in the context of the FemTech[3] wave in the US describes (Ford et al 2021). Yet these health tracking apps can also be situated and critiqued within a political frame of

'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff 2019) that raises concerns about the ethics of data sharing and its potentially discriminatory ends, such as limited access to healthcare services (e.g., abortion). For example, one user in favour of menstrual tracking but critical of the harvesting of personal data describes her circumstance as a 'no-exit situation' wherein one just tries to 'limit the damage' of self-tracking in the face of corporate profit-making (Ford, De Togni and Miller 2021, 59). While users are 'empowered within conditions not of their choosing' (Ford, De Togni and Miller 2021, 58), Andrea Ford and her colleagues argue that self-monitoring nevertheless offers a way for women to recognise, and in turn exercise, a mode of control over affective and bodily experiences that have been historically, and are still routinely, neglected in healthcare systems.

Within circumstances of what is now commonly termed 'digital health', the use of self-monitoring technology constitutes the very body-self it assumes: subjects that are capable of self-checking and self-reporting (Bruun 2023). The notion of the reflexive, measurable, and quantifiable self is in many ways built into the design and operation of health trackers, which in turn shapes users' experiential realities of what it means to be 'healthy', 'fit', and 'well'. Digital self-monitoring can thus be seen to constitute new caring and corporeal capacities that can be extended to self and others (see e.g. Davies 2017; Bergroth 2019; Kent 2023). Yet these new modes of monitoring demand that we constantly 'watch our selves' in ways that construe people as objects of self-observation and self-inspection in pursuit of particular health goods.

Monitoring labour

Labour has always gone hand-in-hand with some form of surveillance—whether understood as such, or in the more benign language of monitoring or supervision. Because employers have legitimate goods to protect, for instance regulatory compliance or productivity, surveillance is often accepted by employees as a 'taken-for-granted' element of working life (Ball 2010, 19). How this takes place, however, varies greatly according to historical, regional, and technological conditions. In anthropological terms, there are certain analytical points to consider. The first is whether the surveillance in question is happening through social relationships or is construed as abstract from relationships. Both can occur through old and new forms of mediation. On the former side, overseers, foremen, drivers, or other figures to monitor or coerce workers extend deep into the history of agricultural and industrial economies (R.M. Browne 2024; Thompson 1967), and persist in the present through forms of in-person or camera-enabled visual supervision. On the latter side, technologies of quantification developed in the early twentieth century through Frederick Taylor's principles of 'scientific management' (Taylor [1911] 1993), which incentivised workers to manage themselves, and are evolving in some contexts into what is known as 'algorithmic management'. In addition, because some form of surveillance is an accepted part of working life, it plays a more-than-usual role in *constituting* working life, communicating to workers—like a 'paralanguage' (Ball 2010, 97)—about what tasks are valued. Lastly, because the workplace is a peculiarly purposeful setting, the increase of

digital surveillance in recent years appears to be transforming these domains at the highest pace, as new configurations between work and non-working life are negotiated, new ethical norms around personal information tested, and new working identities made.

In examining the nature of monitoring at work, anthropologists have looked towards their own institutions. Higher education reforms across the world in the 1980s and 90s transformed monitoring in the academy, as part of a wider shift in public institutions more generally, towards external auditing (Born 2004; Harper 1998; Strathern 2000b). Financial concepts were imported to assess academics and their work in terms of 'outputs', 'impact', and 'efficiency'—using much of the language developed by Taylor—in ways that supplanted older social and qualitative forms of evaluation. While the new regime of 'audit culture' was coercive to the extent that there was no opt-out (Strathern 2000a), and academics became compelled to monitor themselves and each other in quantifiable, ends-orientated, and often labour-intensive ways, it also became constitutive, to some extent, of academic work and workers. Departments and universities were collectivised as subjects of surveillance into the bodies in which they were assessed; meanwhile, some academics learned to refer to themselves using the terminology of the 'h-index', the 'i-index', or the numerical values of audit criteria, as these became avenues for promotion or job security (Shore and Wright 2000; Lazar 2022). As a form of bureaucratic surveillance, audit or 'metric culture' (Ajana 2018) functions like bureaucracy more generally, effacing its own political basis (Ferguson 1994; see also Bear and Mathur 2015). One of the ways in which anthropologists have critiqued these developments is by reinscribing this politics through acts of extra-institutional writing. In this, they dovetail with a wider phenomenon in workplace surveillance, when workers turn to anonymous blogs, forums, Facebook, or WhatsApp groups beyond the surveilled domain, to forge critical identities and find workarounds (Ball 2010; Lazar 2022).

Surveillance scholars have observed the gendering of surveillance relations in some labour contexts, as women perform before a mediated male gaze (Dubrofsky and Magnet 2015; Meulen and Heynen 2016). Anthropologists examining care work, which is disproportionately gendered female, have encountered the increasing use of surveillance technologies (Johnson 2015; Glaser 2021). Here, gender asymmetries frequently intersect with class and ethnic asymmetries, dynamics all being remediated through location tracking and CCTV, among others. In Hong Kong, for example, migrant Filipino women are employed by high- to middle-income families to care for children and perform domestic chores, labour that is increasingly scrutinised through so-called 'nanny cams' (Johnson et al 2020). Because of the informal nature of much of this work, the use of surveillance can also be less formal, as workers are not told in advance that they would be filmed, nor where and for how long the data would be stored. In some cases, they report discovering hidden cameras in the process of cleaning, or being called to task for activities that could only have been observed remotely—only realising in hindsight their exposure to a male employer. To avoid these gazes, they might respond tactically by 'accidentally' dropping their cleaning cloths on the lens

or spending more time in unmonitored areas like the bathroom. In care settings, the presence of surveillance technologies can interrupt or even substitute for care itself and thus jeopardise important wells of trust. On the other hand, they may also manufacture it, as hours of labour that would have otherwise gone unrecorded are captured on camera for their employer to see.

While surveillance happens at work, it can *itself* be a form of labour and subject to the imperatives that shape labour: namely, a drive towards automation and outsourcing to reduce costs. It is in this context that labour monitoring is increasingly taking place through enhanced forms of datafication and algorithmic management. This can be understood as an extension of scientific management, to the extent that algorithmic management involves a calculation of time and resources needed for tasks (Lazar 2022), such as picking up a box in an Amazon warehouse or delivering meals across a city. However, this form of monitoring also greatly reduces the presence of employed overseers. In these new constellations, surveillance becomes 'multimodal', assembling mathematical calculations, customer ratings and reviews, and a small number of human dispatchers or 'rider captains' who play a supporting role in the work of overseeing (Newlands 2021, 725). Though these new relations are sometimes represented as replacing 'bosses' with algorithms, anthropologically it is more accurate to think of these as 'human-in-the-loop' systems that depend much more heavily on computing (Newlands 2021, 724). If a food delivery driver does not have access to a functioning smartphone, not only are they unsupervised, but they cannot work at all (Duus, Bruun and Dalsgård 2023). With these techno-orientated systems arrive new technical vulnerabilities, as well as new possibilities for worker reappropriation or resistance. Some Deliveroo drivers in Brussels, for example, found ways to 'hack' the employee app to circumvent the performance score system (Duus, Bruun and Dalsgård 2023), while truckers in the US have applied a number of methods to 'beat the box' of newly installed Electronic Logging Devices, for instance by covering GPS masts with tinfoil or shattering their interiors with a rubber hammer (Levy 2022). Despite the social and legal risks that emerge from the rise of 'smart' surveillance in workplaces, because of the role of capital incentives this area looks set to expand, particularly with the growth of generative AI (Ball 2022; Duke 2023).

Participatory surveillance

Social vigilance, understood in the broadest sense, has long been a subject of anthropological inquiry. During the first half of the twentieth century, some anthropologists construed ritual action as a matter of 'watching over others' (Bateson [1936] 1958; Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1993; Leach [1964] 1970). For example, the Azande of central Africa conducted divination ceremonies to 'see' and expose suspected witches (Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1993). Similarly, 'bewitchment talk' in the French Bocage, or rural Normandy, included secret malicious spells or even the transfer of 'power' through gazes, causing serious misfortune in the lives of those affected (Favret-Saada 1980). Consequently, bewitchment in the Bocage sustained a pervasive sense of fear and suspicion, which intensified and at times escalated the constant

monitoring of social rivalries in the village.

Neighbours, spouses, kinsfolk, and peers all frequently and regularly engage in vigilant behaviour as part of ordinary life. For example, self-presentation in different social contexts is often based on the monitoring of others' behaviour and the 'alignment' of one's own behaviour with the expectations of others (Goffman [1963] 1990). Similarly, the spread of gossip and rumour in an English council estate was used to limit the level of prestige that people could gain in the community (Gluckman 1963). Yet, gossip can also serve to *build* prestige. Some women in the Polynesian Nukulaelae Atoll, for example, may use gossip to reinstate broken social hierarchies, resist negative stigma, and negotiate power imbalances (Besnier 2019). In all these cases, mundane monitoring is a ubiquitous form of social control involving the relational negotiation of reputation and respectability.

The advent of social media has taken these monitorial negotiations into new territories. Practices of 'lateral surveillance' (Andrejevic 2004) are an integral aspect of peer-to-peer monitoring in online social worlds. Lateral surveillance can be imagined as surveillance that is enacted in many directions simultaneously, including 'sideways', as opposed to the linear 'top-down' monitoring famously associated with the Panopticon.[1] Contrarily, lateral monitoring sometimes produces an empowering process of identity construction, of which surveillance is an important positive element (Koskela 2018). Since the ability to 'follow' others is intrinsic to the exchange of information on social platforms, users actively take part in practices of mutual surveillance (Albrechtslund and Lauritsen 2013). On Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or TikTok, for example, online users voluntarily enable others to monitor their accounts in different ways, including the ability to download and share their photos, locate them geographically, or track their whereabouts (Trottier 2013). While social media acquires distinctive characteristics in different social contexts, these forms of sharing and mutual exposure are basic communicational features that enable rather than restrict dialogue (Miller 2011; see also Widlok 2021). The term 'participatory surveillance' (Albrechtslund 2008) highlights the customary rather than coercive nature of such practices.

One important feature of participatory surveillance is its 'synoptic' nature: an inversion of Bentham's Panopticon, the concept of the 'synopticon' refers to surveillance of the few by the many (Mathiesen 1997). Unlike the linear, demarcated, and clearly defined form of control produced in panoptic realities, power in synoptic realities is dispersed across society in multiple directions.[2] One of the consequences of a synoptic reality is that individuals can profit from the monitoring of their own lives. At the end of the 1990s, 'everyday surveillance' became linked to new flows of capital in the emergent online market economy so that, for example, a college student in the US could instal a webcam in her apartment and charge subscription fees from internet users for viewing access (Staples 2013). Over the past two decades, 'web-camming' has become a lucrative business in the online sex industry (Van Doorn and Velthuis 2018). While such sites as Only Fans operate under little or no ethical regulation, they continue to thrive (Stegeman

2021). Rather than initiating traditional 'top-down' publicity campaigns, which target vast numbers of potential customers through mass visibility, commercial companies increasingly hire social media influencers, YouTubers, or vloggers to recommend products and services to their followers (Lange 2019). In this process, the companies behind these products also gain access to the followers' data (see Clarke 1988 on 'dataveillance'), thus complicating the notion of synoptic surveillance as purely lateral.

Participatory surveillance does, however, include a 'vertical' dimension, in the sense that people can monitor the authorities 'bottom up'. For example, civil society 'watchdogs', non-military use of Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) techniques (wherein civil society actors identify crimes or human rights abuses [see Trottier 2015]), and smartphone apps that enable drivers to detect speeding cameras, all invert the 'top-down' monitoring used by those in power. The term 'sousveillance' (from French *sous*, 'from below') characterises this form of monitoring (Mann, Nolan and Wellman 2003). While surveillance may convey the idea of the omnipresent, overarching gaze, sousveillance indicates grassroots resistance to state or corporate monitoring powers by which people attempt to defy and deter potential privacy infringements (Garrido 2015). Sousveillance is not antithetical to synoptic surveillance, however. CCTV gadgets, recording devise, and mobile tracking applications can all be used 'laterally' to document or monitor peers at work, at home, or in public spaces (Lyon 2007).

Both in its synoptic (lateral) and sousveillant (vertical) manifestations, participatory surveillance now seems commonplace. Depending on the mundane settings in which it is being implemented, this sense of immanent and constant surveillance could blur the distinctions between those who monitor and the subjects of monitoring. In some digital contexts, every person is turned into an observer who must assume that they are simultaneously always being observed. Participatory surveillance thereby prompts fresh discussions about power and sovereignty, visibility and opacity, as well as the role of individual and collective agency, in a world characterised by ubiquitous surveillance.

Non-surveillance

Any anthropology of surveillance must reckon with its inverse and counterpart: non-surveillance. Non-surveillance can be understood as the broad spectrum of individual and collective activities that seek to resist or reimagine visibility before a surveilling authority. This frequently takes on a moral force. In a world where even deserts are technologically monitored, their sands mapped by satellites and scanned by drones, the idea of anonymity has become a value around which new kinds of collectives have gathered (Anon Collective 2021; Coleman 2014; Comité invisible 2009). One of the most renown is the Anonymous movement, in which participants could be identified by the wearing of homogenous Guy Fawkes masks. In Britain, becoming 'Anonymous' paradoxically became a strategy of hyper-visible protest, in order to oppose an invisibilisation by the state enacted through the discourse of austerity (Peacock n.d.). Indeed, any reflection on surveillance in relation to the state soon upends any straightforward moral binary between

surveillance and non-surveillance (Birchall 2021). If making their citizenry legible is an essential part of the state's capacity to enable them to live, its obverse allows the state to let others die (Mbembé and Meintjes 2003). Deliberate forms of 'looking away' from people on the margins (Kalir and Schendel 2017), such as migrants and refugees passing through or around national borders, permit these polities to absolve themselves of duties of care (Yarbakhsh 2018).

It can be argued that these dynamics of revelation and concealment lie at the very heart of the anthropological enterprise (Göpfert 2020). Ethnography, anthropology's flagship method, involves forms of data collection through technologies that can, and have been, compared to surveillance. As she examines the eleven-volume file collected on her by the Romanian Security Services (*Securitate*) in the 1970s and 80s, Katharine Verdery asks herself, 'When I read in the file that I "exploit people for informative purposes" can I deny that anthropologists often do just that as *Securitate* officers do? Isn't this part of the critique of my discipline that likens it to a colonial practice?' (2018, 18). These existential doubts about anthropology are important to address[a] (cf. Boas [1919] 2005; Price 2016), and one response is to return to our opening statements: that what matters are the conditions and purposes in and for which human subjects become visible through ethnography. In the 1930s, Bronislaw Malinowski advocated for the creation of a 'nation-wide surveillance network' through forms of mass ethnographic observation (1938), which would address the ills of society. Similarly, for other anthropologists, refusing to collect or include information that could serve structures of domination becomes a political act (Price 2011; Simpson 2014; Yonucu 2022). The questions that anthropologists often ask themselves are those that must also be asked of surveillance: how are human beings becoming visible through monitoring technologies, and why?

Conclusion

The anthropology of surveillance is a relatively new area of inquiry that looks set to expand as relations that can be named as surveillance do. Anthropology has the potential to demonstrate the social and cultural complexity of these relationships as historically constituted ways of seeing interact with new technologies. While public discourses may continue to express alarm at the growth of 'Orwellian' societies, it is worth remembering that *1984* was written partly in protest at new forms of identification in Britain that came to underpin the NHS (Higgs 2003). Anthropology shows us that it is the social projects around monitoring, whether large or small, that define what the qualities of these relationships are.

Acknowledgements

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[1] The World Health Organization (WHO) defines public health surveillance as 'the continuous, systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of health-related data.' World Health Organization. 2023. "Surveillance." https://www.who.int/emergencies/surveillance. Accessed 23 March 2023.

[2] A radioactive pill clock was a cylindrical block drilled with a number of holes that could hold a daily supply of pills. The pill clock had a cover that allowed the removal of only one set of pills at a time. A patient would rotate the device and remove the daily pills. Yet it was unknown to the patient that the device had a small piece of photographic film and a radioactive emitter embedded in plastic that could determine time intervals and hence a patient's irregularity.

[3] FemTech, short for 'female [health] technology', is a fast-growing women's health movement in the digital health industry and beyond. The term was coined in 2016 by the Danish entrepreneur Ida Tin, co-founder of the period-tracking app, 'Clue'.

[4] The term 'lateral' should not be taken literally as 'sideways'. Instead, the idea of 'lateral surveillance' involves looking around in all directions and being able to survey peers as much as subordinates or superiors. Within this perspective, which is endemic to any form of participatory surveillance, there is little qualified difference between lateral, synoptic and sous-veillance, all of which express the same fluidity as a response to the relative rigidity of Foucault's analysis.

[5] Thomas Mathiesen attributes this to the emergent construction of new moral sensibilities involving three types of synoptic surveillance techniques: 1) the ability to see everything ('syn-opticism'); 2) the ability to make everything visible ('syn-omorphism'); and 3) the ability to communicate information ('syn-noetics'). When these elements are combined, he argued, power can be produced, diffused, and obtained in unexpected ways.

[6] Price, David. 2000. "Anthropologists as spies." *The Nation*, November 2. https://www.thenation.com/article/world/anthropologists-spies/