Dis/organising visibilities: Governmentalisation and counter-transparency

Richard Weiskopf
University of Innsbruck, Austria

Abstract
This paper situates organisational transparency in an agonistic space that is shaped by the interplay of ‘mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth’ and critical practices that come from below in a movement of ‘not being governed like that and at that cost’ (Foucault, 2003: 265). This positioning involves an understanding of transparency as a practice that is historically contingent and multiple, and thus negotiable and contested. By illustrating the entanglement of ‘power through transparency’ and ‘counter-transparency’ with reference to the example of Edward Snowden’s whistleblowing, the paper contributes to the critique of transparency and to debates on the use of Foucauldian concepts in post-panoptic contexts of organising. By introducing the notion of ‘counter-transparency’, the paper expands the conceptual vocabulary for understanding the politics and ethics of managing and organising visibility.

Keywords
Counter-conduct, Parrhesia, Snowden, surveillance, transparency, visibility, whistleblowing

Introduction
Today, ‘transparency’ appears as a panacea for all sorts of social and organisational problems (securing trust in government, promoting accountability, fighting corruption, improving efficiency, enabling rational or at least informed choices of consumers and decisions of various stakeholders, etc.). It has also become ‘one of the great themes in management theory today’ (Bernstein, 2017: 228; Heimstädt and Dobusch, 2020; Schnackenberg and Tomlinson, 2016). As Albu and Flyverbom (2019) have shown, in this context, transparency is mainly seen as a matter of information disclosure and of accurately representing pre-existing organisational realities. There is also an important
critical discussion of transparency and its value in the context of governing and managing indi-
viduals, organisations and societies. It has focused on the unfulfilled promises of enhancing
democracy and responsibility (Fenster, 2017; Fiorini, 2007; Neyland, 2007), on the unintended
consequences and (unwanted) performative effects (Fung et al., 2007; Roberts, 2009, 2018), on the
totalitarian implications of the doctrine of transparency (Han, 2015; Shore and Wright, 2000;
Tsoukas, 1997) and on the one-sidedness which neglects secrecy (Birchall, 2011a; Costas and
Grey, 2016; Ringel, 2018), privacy (Bernstein, 2017) or ‘ignorance’ (Roberts, 2018).

This paper builds on these discussions and contributes to the development of a critical approach
to transparency (Christensen and Cheney, 2015; Christensen and Cornelissen, 2015; Flyverbom
et al., 2015; Hansen and Flyverbom, 2015; Roberts, 2009, 2018). It proposes a Foucauldian frame-
work that situates transparency in an agonistic space shaped by the interplay of ‘mechanism of
power that adhere(s) to a truth’ and critical practices that come from below in a movement of ‘not
being governed like that and at that cost’ (Foucault, 2003: 265). This involves an understanding of
transparency as a historically contingent practice that is negotiable and contested. Transparency is
seen as a ‘wide-ranging principle of organising that dramatically influences social behaviour, while
potentially eliciting new forms of closure, manipulation, control and surveillance’ (Christensen
and Cheney, 2015: 85). As such, it must not be taken for granted.

Transparency literally means ‘shining through’. Etymologically, the term derives from the Latin
trans (‘through’) and parere (‘come in sight; appear’). Something appears or shines through and so
is visible on a surface. Any form of transparency is selective, technological (mediated), performa-
tive and governed by a historically specific normative order. The selectivity of transparency results
from observation, as a systematic way of seeing, which necessarily implies a not-seeing (Bernstein,
2017). The technological aspect refers to the mediation of seeing by various devices (Thompson,
2005). Seeing and observation is enabled and mediated by technologies, such as cameras, micro-
scopes, telescopes or X-ray technologies or by ‘disclosure devices’ (Flyverbom, 2016; Hansen and
Flyverbom, 2015), such as the quantifying measurements, statistics or data-processing systems
shaping the ‘data gaze’ more recently (Ananny and Crawford, 2018; Beer, 2019; Leonardi and
Treem, 2020). The performative aspect refers to the fact that any form of visibility that is created
in the name of transparency will influence and shape reality. Seeing and disclosure devices do not
simply ‘reveal’ what is already there, lying hidden behind some opaque surface; rather, they con-
struct and make objects of knowledge. Such objects ‘loop back’ to socio-material practices and
shape subjectivities and relations (Espeland and Saunder, 2007; Hacking, 2007; Roberts, 2009).
That transparency is governed refers to the fact that it is organised within normative matrix that
regulates how and what we see. Such ‘regimes of visibility’ (Brighenti, 2010) are social and technical
arrangements that establish an order of observation and of being observed, governing gazes and
directing attention, bringing certain things to light while obscuring others. They are not independ-
ent from what can be said and articulated since ‘[t]here is no visible without ways of seeing, which
are socially and interactionally crafted’ (Brighenti, 2010: 329). What becomes visible is inter-
twined with modes of expression and categories used. Thus, there is an inherent tension between
what is seen, experienced and what is said or written down.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, I will trace the modification of regimes of
visibility and thereby map a line of force that starts from Bentham’s ‘panopticon’ as a precursor
of transparency in its modern political and organisational context and continues to the modifications
of this project in the current context. Following this line suggests both an intensification and exten-
sification of ‘power through transparency’ (Foucault, 1980: 154). In the second section, I introduce
the notion of ‘counter-conduct’, which is linked, both historically and conceptually, to processes of
governmentalisation (Davidson, 2011; Foucault, 2007). This provides the basis for developing the
concept of counter-transparency, which includes not only various forms of resistance against
imposed visibility but also practices of managing visibility in ways that potentially modify force relations and counter normalised ways of seeing. In the subsequent section, I take the example of Edward Snowden’s whistleblowing as a ‘critical case’ in Flyvbjerg’s (2006) sense. It is located at the intersection of governmental transparency and counter-transparency and allows for a demonstration of the interplay of various forms of transparency in constituting a dynamic understanding of transparency. After discussing implications, I conclude by explicating the contribution the paper makes to the development of a critical approach to transparency that is intrinsically linked to an ethical–political space of managing visibilities.

‘Transparency from above’: The panopticon and its development

Hood evoked Jeremy Bentham as the ‘grandfather of transparency in its modern political context’ (Hood, 2006: 5). Bentham suggested that (hierarchical) visibility enhances both economic productivity and morality. For him, it was an ‘indispensable truth’ that ‘the more closely we are watched, the better we behave’ (Bentham, 2001: 277). Bentham’s ‘dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts’ (Foucault, 1980: 152) is embodied in his plan of the ‘inspection house’ or ‘panopticon’. Bentham proposed it as a ‘simple architectural solution’ to the problem of surveilling a multiplicity of individuals. This simple solution would reduce the costs of surveilling prisoners, workers, pupils and others and improve the morality of inmates of various institutions. It would avoid destroying and wasting ‘human resources’ (as we would say today) and instead would make them ‘productive’.

We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends to whole width of the building; the two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell form one end to the other. All that is needed then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of blacklighting, one can observe form the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. (Foucault, 1977: 200)

‘To see constantly and to recognise immediately’ expresses the ‘impossible fantasy’ (Roberts, 2009: 958) of a fully transparent space, where there is no reminder and no shadow, no dark places to hide. Foucault has identified the panopticon as an emblem of modern disciplinary power. For him, it is not just a ‘dream building’, but ‘the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form’ (Foucault, 1977: 205). Functioning as a ‘machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad’ (Foucault, 1977: 202), it divides those who are constantly seen, without being able to see, from those – in the central tower – who are able to see everything, without ever being seen. As a regime of visibility, it organises the gaze around a central perspective. A central observer (ideally) overlooks the whole field. The panoptic gaze divides the field into unities and fixes and objectivises them (it classifies and sorts, names and registers, puts a number on them). Driven by the fear of ‘disorder and confusion’ it seeks to transform the messy and disorderly space into a ‘house of certainty’ (Foucault, 1977: 202). It embodies an idea of abstract knowledge that imposes its own categories and rationality on the objects it observes.

Foucault’s analysis of the panopticon has been prominent in various fields of study and has inspired the understanding of transparency as a technology of power and control (governmental strategy). It has become ‘the leading scholarly model or metaphor for analyzing surveillance’
(Caluya, 2009; Lyon, 2007, 2011) and served as a paradigm for deciphering the power effects of ‘hierarchical systems of accountability’ (Roberts, 2009). It has also been used as a concept for problematising the powerful role of human resources management (HRM), systems of HR accounting (Townley, 1998) and of information systems (Zuboff, 1988). In the wider field of organisation studies, the normalising function and the (self-)disciplining effects of the panoptic gaze have been stressed (Collinson, 2003; Sewell et al., 2006). In the interdisciplinary field of transparency studies, Foucault’s analysis of the panoptic has been used to illuminate the ‘transparency power nexus’ and has informed the understanding of transparency as a ‘regularising control’ (Flyverbom et al., 2015: 8–9). These studies are characterised by heterogeneous backgrounds and academic traditions. What they share is a concern with how ‘power is exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people being seen’ (Foucault, 1980: 154).

Recent discussions in organisation studies (e.g. Munro, 2012; Raffnsøe et al., 2016) and in the wider field of social theory have focused on the modifications of the panoptic diagram in the ‘post-panoptic’ (Bauman, 2001) age. Concepts like the ‘Panspectron’ (DeLanda, 2001), ‘Ban-opticon’ (Bigo, 2006), ‘Synopticon’ (Mathiesen, 1997) or ‘Society of control’ (Deleuze, 1995) indicate significant modifications in the regime of visibility and the forms of transparency it generates. Bauman and Lyon (Bauman and Lyon, 2013) have discussed a range of implications of them. They coined the term ‘liquid surveillance’ to capture the changing nature of surveillance and the ‘new transparency’ in post-disciplinary contexts. Lyon (in Bauman and Lyon, 2013) summarises:

Put very simply, new surveillance practices, based on information processing . . ., permit a new transparency in which not just citizens but all of us, across a range of roles we play in everyday life, are constantly checked, monitored, tested, assessed, valued and judged. But the converse is clearly not true. As the details of our daily life become more transparent to the organizations surveilling us, their own activities become less and less easy to discern. As power moves with the speed of electronic signals in the fluidity of liquid modernity, transparency is simultaneously increased for some and decreased for others (Bauman and Lyon, 2013: 12, emphasis added).

**Intensification and extensification of ‘power through transparency’**

Based on these discussions, I suggest that there is both intensification and extensification of ‘power through transparency’ (Foucault, 1980: 154). In this movement of governmentalisation, the ‘centripetal’ logic of discipline is combined with the ‘centrifugal’ logic of security (Foucault, 2007). While the former directs the gaze inwards (intensification), the latter directs it outwards (extensification).

**Intensification**

In organisational contexts, the intensification of power through transparency refers to the proliferation of technologies that seek to increase the potential of organisations to see and to know what is going on inside the organisation. This is illustrated by the institutionalisation of hierarchical systems of visibility and the power of ‘accounting and its capacities to allow us to see behind or within the corporate entity’ (Roberts, 2009: 962). Scholars in the field of accounting and management have observed an explosion of measurements and audits (Power, 1997), particularly since the 1980s when transparency was increasingly framed in neoliberal terms (Dean, 2010; Pozen, 2018).

This is paralleled by the creation of an exhaustively detailed knowledge of employees, both on the level of individuals and on the level of the organisational population (Ball, 2012; Townley, 1998). New developments in human capital management illustrate the expansion of power through transparency into greater depths. Using a wide range of data and algorithmic procedures for ‘predictive analytics’, human capital management seeks to ‘drill down into the workforce to uncover
subgroups around given characteristics’ (Fizenz, 2009: 5). As Beer (2019) has demonstrated, it is often suggested that the ‘data gaze’ is able to look into the blind-spots of the social world and illuminate the shadows’ (p. 9). He argues that the widespread ‘data imaginary’ in which data analytics are presented as speedy, accessible, revealing, panoramic and prophetic spurs and affords the expansion of data-driven processes of judgement, evaluation and decision-making in organisational contexts. The proliferation of data-driven profiling of employees and customers (Hildebrandt, 2013; Weiskopf, 2020) and algorithmic decision-making in all areas of managing employment relations (Kellogg et al., 2020) illustrate the intensification of the regulatory power of transparency. As an example, consider ‘people analytics’ (Pentland, 2014; Waber, 2013), a popular approach promoted by major corporations such as McKinsey, Amazon and Google to generate ‘predictive insights’ for managing ‘human resource flows’ and for optimising the composition of the workforce in the context of a dynamic market environment.

The approach exemplifies the generation of an organisational ‘panspectrum’ (DeLanda, 2001) that surrounds individual bodies with a multiplicity of ‘sensors’ – from company ID badges to cell phones and environmental sensors – that collect employee data from a wide variety of sources. The ‘sensible organisation’ is thus a transparency machine, which generates a visibility of interaction patterns, speaking patterns, motion, location and more based on algorithms.

**Extensification**

The extensification of organisational transparency refers to the process of including ever-wider circles of social life into the scope of the organisation’s vision. The making-up of the environment in organisational categories entails, among other things, the visibilisation of ‘customer preferences’ and ‘behaviour’ and the strategic segmentation of ‘target groups’ (Gandy, 1993; Zwick and Knott, 2009). Sophisticated observational technologies, such as computer-based ‘remote sensing’ (Gandy, 2012) and algorithmic profiling and classification (Hildebrandt, 2013), expand the organisational gaze both in temporal and spatial terms. With the expansion of the ‘data gaze’ and the urge to ‘datafy anything’ (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier, 2013: 94), the focus in seeing is narrowed to ‘pieces of information’ (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier, 2013: 94). They are extracted from the vast ‘ocean of data’ and assembled from the point of view of a specific (organisational) purpose. Zuboff has made this extensification central to ‘surveillance capitalism’ (Zuboff, 2015, 2019). Driven by the economic ‘imperatives of prediction’ and ‘extraction’, organisations such as Google are paradigmatic in their attempt at ‘reaching beyond the old institutional and geographic boundaries in a kind of hunting and gathering and sharing information for every purpose or none at all’ (Zuboff, 2015: 79).

In summary, the simultaneous intensification and extensification point to the emergence of heterogeneous assemblages of technologies and practices that form a strategic apparatus that seeks to ‘transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured and thus control and “include” them within its scope of vision’ (de Certeau, 1984: 36). In contrast to ‘postpanoptic’ perspectives, that posit a clear-cut distinction between panoptic and ‘postpanoptic’ forms,¹ the preceding analysis suggests that contemporary regimes of visibility integrate and combine heterogeneous practices and technologies of transparency, without, however, constituting a closed system that follows a unitary logic.

**‘Transparency from below’: Counter-transparency, *parrhesia* and the fragility of the ‘glass cage’**

In the previous section, I have described the governmentality of visibility and the intensification of ‘power through transparency’ (Foucault, 1980: 154) that this involves. This, however,
should not be seen as a linear process of ‘subjection by “illumination”’ (Foucault, 1980: 154). Rather, it describes the formation of a strategic assemblage of practices that is inherently unstable and evolving. Historically, there have been ‘revolts against the gaze’ (Foucault, 1980: 162) that resisted the governmentality of visibility. Many of these forms resisted power through transparency by making themselves invisible (Scott, 1998).

In Foucault’s theory, the concept of ‘counter-conduct’ (Foucault, 2007: 196, 201–202, 389–390) serves as an empirical and conceptual supplement to processes of governmentality (Davidson, 2011). It maintains the view that actors are continually appropriating and repurposing practices that seek to govern them. ‘Counter-conduct’ encompasses individual and collective movements that critically relate to established normative orders and seek to develop modes of conducting oneself and others differently, towards other objects and through other procedures and methods (Foucault, 2007: 194–195). Importantly, the concept leads beyond practices of resistance against established orders and includes practices in and through which subjects remake themselves and (re)constitute their relations to self and others. It is thus intrinsically linked to the possibilities of ethical self-formation that emerge in response to normative demands. I take this as inspiration for developing ‘counter-transparency’ as a concept that refers to a broad spectrum of countervailing visibility practices in organisations in which subjects creatively respond to regimes of visibility and contest the norm of transparency. This includes various forms of resistance against imposed forms of visibility (Arellano-Gault and Lepore, 2011), the production of ‘strategic opacity’ in which actors bound by transparency regulations purposefully make so much information ‘visible that unimportant pieces of information will take so much time and effort to sift through that receivers will be distracted from the central information the actor wishes to conceal’ (Stohl et al., 2016: 133–134), processes of defining and creating secrets and secrecy in organisations (Costas and Grey, 2016; Ringel, 2018), active and strategic forms of self-presentation and impression management (Abraham and Bamber, 2017; Brivot and Gendron, 2011) or critical practices that seek to challenge and interrupt established power-relations and the visibility regime that supports them. These include both ‘counterveillant tactics’ (Welch, 2011) and ‘parrhesiastic exposures’ (Walters, 2014).

Counterveillance is a form or ‘optical activism’ that turns the organisation (e.g. the prison) inside out to make (inhuman) conditions, which are deliberately hidden from public view visible. By ‘reversing the optics’ (Welch, 2011: 310) and exposing malpractices to the public, this practice seeks to create pressure for organisational change and greater accountability by ‘watching the watchers’. Parrhesiastic exposures as one specific modality of counter-transparency will be discussed in the following.

**Parrhesiastic exposure as counter-transparency**

Looking at the democratic tradition, ‘transparency’ has its roots in Enlightenment thought. It concerns the creation of a public space for debate and the constitution of a counter-power to the state, which demands disclosure of information and transparency on decision-making processes within government (Fung, 2013). It is here, in the tradition of questioning traditional authorities, that I would position Foucault’s notion of ‘parrhesia’ (Foucault, 2001, 2010, 2011). The term *parrhesia* refers to the ancient practice of courageous and often dangerous or risky truth-telling, where the paradigmatic case was the truth-telling of the philosopher vis-à-vis the tyrant. It articulates the ‘critical attitude’ that predates the Enlightenment (Folks, 2015). Foucault analysed the problematisation of this practice in Greek antiquity. There, the term *parrhesia* referred to

... a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relationship to himself or other people through
criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. (Foucault, 2001: 19)

I take Foucault’s notion of parrhesia as paradigm case for a form of counter-transparency that *interrupts* the working of a dominating regime of truth and the normalised ways of seeing. Parrhesia ‘comes from below’, but not – like the confession – as a compliant, ‘obligatory act of speech’ (Foucault, 1981: 62) in the service of a regulatory power but as *courageous* speech that *intervenes in relations of power* and articulates a *perspectival truth* that is grounded in the embodied experience of the speaker.

Foucault (2011: 15–30) conceptualised *parrhesia* as a specific modality of truth-telling that is distinguished from the truth-telling of the prophet, from the truth-telling of wisdom and, most importantly in our context, from the technical modality of truth-telling. The latter has become dominant in contemporary numerical and algorithmic forms of transparency, which are often attributed an objectivity in the sense of ‘insight and true knowledge’ (Beer, 2019; Hansen, 2015: 204; Kitchin, 2014). The parrhesiastic modality of truth-telling displays a *perspectival truth* that emerges in a specific field of experience and is contingent on the subjective disposition of courage of the speaker. *Parrhesia* literally means to ‘say anything’ (*pan rema*). Yet, in our context, it is important to note that the concept of *parrhesia* does not simply imply saying anything without regard for the consequences or the context in which it takes place. Parrhesia depends on the *kairos* (the right moment), and involves a knowledge about the context (the circumstances and the situation). It requires an ethical–political judgment, since the parrhesiast must be able to draw a distinction between ‘those occasions when you should speak from those when you should remain silent; or that which must be said from that which must remain unsaid; or the circumstances and situations where speech is required from those where one ought to remain silent’ (Foucault, 2011: 11). Therefore, *parrhesia* is also characterised by an ethical self-relation, which is linked to the ‘care for the truth’. ‘What is at stake is the relation of the self to truth or some rational principles’ (Foucault, 2001: 165). The relevant question here is ‘Am I able to react to any kind of representation which shows itself to me in conformity with my adopted rational rules’ (Foucault, 2001: 165).

Parrhesia changes historically. In the context of modern (formal) organisations and with the rise of ‘mediated visibilities’ (Thompson, 2005) and digital technologies (Flyverbom, 2016), it is modified significantly. Walters (2014) has usefully expanded the concept and speaks of ‘parrhesiastic exposures’. This concept considers, that today ‘we speak, hear and see in the midst of distributed technological assemblages that far exceed the agora’ (Walters, 2014: 286). Truth-telling today goes beyond ‘verbal activities’ which are stressed in Foucault’s definition, and can include diverse media (sound, images, speech). It is enabled and constrained by technological, communicative and organisational mediation (Olesen, 2019; Weiskopf et al., 2019).

**The truth-telling of the whistleblower**

A number of studies have theorised whistleblowing as a contemporary expression of parrhesia (Contu, 2014; Kenny, 2019; Mansbach, 2009; Munro, 2017; Vandekerckhove and Langenberg, 2012; Weiskopf and Tobias-Miersch, 2016). In the contemporary organisational context, truth-telling is (increasingly) institutionalised and regulated in the form of whistleblowing policies and regulations (Vandekerckhove, 2006; Vandekerckhove and Tsahuridu, 2010). It is also mediated by ‘intermediary organisations’ (Fung, 2013: 13) that use, (re)package, disseminate, (re)interpret or connect the perspectival truths that are generated in the local context or seek to influence and shape the conditions for truth-telling in local contexts.
Organisations such as Transparency International (TI), the Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and WikiLeaks mobilise transparency in an ethico-political struggle that questions and problematises established organisational practices and the rules governing them. TI affirms neoliberal management tools and seeks to use them (e.g. in the form of the corruption perception index) in the ‘fight against corruption’. ICIJ coordinates a global network of more than 190 reporters in more than 65 countries and seeks ‘to make nonprofit investigative journalism a powerful voice for justice around the globe’ (as in the case of the Panama Papers). WikiLeaks promotes a radical form of transparency, deploying transparency as an ‘almost revolutionary weapon’ (Brevini, 2017; de Lagasnerie, 2017; Fenster, 2017: 53; Heemsbergen, 2016; Munro, 2017).

In this section, I have discussed some of the counter-transparency that can be seen as contemporary forms of the practice of parrhesia. In the next section, I illustrate the interplay of governmental transparency and counter-transparency.

The interplay of transparencies

Governmental transparency (‘transparency from above’) might be called ‘strategical’ in de Certeau’s (1984: 34–39) sense. It depends on its ability to ‘transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and “include” them within its scope of vision’ (de Certeau, 1984: 36). On the other hand, practices of counter-transparency can be called ‘tactical’. Tactics are contextual and relational. They cannot be autonomous of or independent from the normative order in which they operate. They affirm, support, question, criticise or transform governmental transparency. Tactics are immanent to an established regime and depend on ‘the clever utilisation of time, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power’ (de Certeau, 1984: 39). They are not merely reactive, but inventive and creative. ‘Above’ and ‘below’ thus should not be understood in a spatial terms but rather as different and opposing vectors of force that constitute an agonistic relation in which various forms interplay.

The interruption of the ‘NSA complex’ by Snowden’s whistleblowing

An exemplary case for studying the interplay of governmental transparency and counter-transparency is the interruption of the NSA complex by Edward Snowden’s whistleblowing in 2013 (Harding, 2014; Hertsgaard, 2016; Snowden, 2019). The ‘NSA complex’ (Greenwald, 2014; Rosenbach and Stark, 2014) represents, in a prototypical form, a strategic ‘transparency from above’. As a ‘system of near-universal surveillance’ (Snowden, 2019: 6), it illustrates how a multiplicity of practices (of surveillance, knowledge, transparency) are connected and interlinked, forming a complex strategic apparatus that ‘transforms foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured’ and ‘includes them within its scope of vision’. While collecting, storing and managing of data and information of strategic relevance to the state, of course, has always been the business of secret service, it has arguably qualitatively changed, starting with the technical revolution of Personal Computers in the late 1970s, the invention of the internet (in 1989) and the ongoing development of digital technologies. The urge ‘to see through’ and to establish a regime of visibility dramatically intensified after 9/11. The NSA programmes are intended, first of all, to harvest data from (submarine) internet cables (Upstream, Quantuminsert), to intercept data on their flow (Tempora3) and to acquire personal data of consumers collected by private companies (such as Google, Skype, Microsoft, Apple, etc.) as well as phone calls, text messages, Skype communications and the like (PRISM4). In addition, there is XKEYSCORE, ‘a search engine that lets an analyst search through all the records of your life’ (Snowden, 2019: 276). All these practices are interconnected and designed to secretly process personal data and generate predictive and
anticipatory forms of transparency that allow screening, remote tracking, biometric identification and algorithmic profiling of citizens (Amoore, 2013; Bauman et al., 2014; Leese, 2014). As a military branch of the Pentagon, the NSA was founded during the Cold War, in 1952, based on a directive of President Truman. It is currently the world’s largest intelligence agency. The NSA is officially a public agency but has countless ‘partnerships’ with private corporations. Many of its core functions are outsourced to private corporations and contractors (Sharrock, 2008). The NSA is part of a large international network that traverses national boundaries, in which various ‘strategic partners’ cooperate. It was, in particular, the NSA’s failure to predict 9/11, as well as the fear and insecurity associated with the (imagined or real) possibility of further threats against ‘national security’, that triggered a dramatic expansion of strategic transparency in the years after 2001. Shortly after 9/11 the Bush administration initiated the Total Information Awareness programme, which aimed at the automatic surveillance of information and communication flows and the establishment of a mega-database including profiles of US citizens. In October 2001, the Metadata Analysis Centre was established, which allowed the storage and analysis of ‘metadata’. The cooperation with private corporations such as the major internet companies has led to a dramatic increase of available data, both on individuals and on populations (Ball and Snider, 2013). In particular, ‘databrokers’ (Crain, 2018; Zuboff, 2019) play an important role in collecting and analysing data and transforming them into profiles generating predictions and ‘anticipatory transparency’ (Hansen, 2015: 205).

Understanding the intensification of ‘power through transparency’ also necessitates the consideration of the active participation of subjects (of us all) in establishing such transparency. As we participate in practices such as buying from Amazon, uploading our documents to Dropbox, using smartphones, reading e-books, we actively contribute in making ourselves visible and transparent. It is not only that ‘we carry personal panopticons on our own bodies’ (Bauman and Lyon, 2013: 59) and become ‘self-watchers’ but also that we form ourselves as governable subjects who respond to the ‘incentives’ imbedded in these technologies in a predictable way. It is precisely as we make our ‘autonomous’ choices as consumers or ‘enterprising selves’ who seek to maximise or optimise their lives with the help of these technologies that we become ‘the correlate of a governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables’ (Foucault, 2008: 271). Governmental visibility thus is not simply imposed from above, but rather, composed by the interplay of tactics and technologies that work both from above and from below. The strategic effect may result from them ‘becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base support and their condition elsewhere’ (Foucault, 1980: 95).

Strong forms of organisational retaliation tend to prevent the emergence of counter-transparency, particularly so in the context of national security whistleblowing (Ellsberg, 2010). A number of NSA whistleblowers before Snowden were severely punished (e.g. Thomas Drake was indicted under the Espionage Act, threatened with long prison sentences, fired and vilified publicly). This certainly constituted a warning example that prevents others from speaking out. Yet, at the same time, it triggered Snowden’s decision to bypass official procedures and channels. ‘In organisations like the NSA’, he concluded ‘proper channels can only become a trap, to catch the heretics and disfavours’ (Hertsgaard, 2016: 99; Snowden, 2019: 235). Snowden initiated a ‘parrhesiastic chain’ (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg, 2012) that goes beyond the boundaries of the organisation by involving others such as the filmmaker Laura Poitras, the journalist Glenn Greenwald and various media organisations (starting with The Guardian).5

In general, economic imperatives of datafication – extracting data for the purpose of predicting and influencing behaviour – tends to intensify surveillance (Zuboff, 2019). On the other hand, economic imperatives and digital infrastructures have also created new conditions of possibility for counter-transparency (see also Olesen, 2019). Paradoxically, whistleblowing may be the ‘perfect
accompaniment to an Information Economy’ (Rothschild, 2008). Digital transformations have made organisations ‘leaky containers’, and economisation and outsourcing of central functions modifies the structure of jobs in the ‘information economy’. Technical specialists are required (often from contractors), the number of people who are in a position to see things and practices that may contradict their personal or professional values is multiplied, and the conditions of loyalty to the organisation are weakened. Snowden, for example, ‘was one of around 1000 NSA “systemad-mins” allowed to look at many parts of this system. He could open a file without leaving an electronic trace. He was, in the words of one intelligence source, a “ghost user”, able to haunt the agency’s hollowed places’ (The Guardian Feb. 1: 2014). In addition, organisations in the ‘information age’ are typically characterised by contingent employment, which again typically weakens the loyalty of employees on which the classical disciplinary organisation could rely. As Daniel Ellsberg, leaker of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 and predecessor of Snowden explained, in such organisations, an ‘internalised commitment to keep official secrets from outsiders’ (Ellsberg, 2010: 773) often prevents speaking out. In such organisations, he says, ‘trust “has to be earned” before being conferred, by a long history of secret keeping, building habits that are hard to break, that form part of one’s character’ (Ellsberg, 2010: 774). In contrast, Snowden has been working for the NSA for about 4 years as an employee of various outside contractors, such as, among others, Booz Allen Hamilton. He describes this position as that of a ‘Homo contractus’, a ‘creature (that) was not a sworn servant, but a transient worker, whose patriotism was incentivised by a better paycheck’ (Snowden, 2019: 111–112) Even though he reports that various organisational practices such as the ‘Indoc’ (indoctrination programme) or ‘monitoring agreements’, in which contractors ‘agree that everything you do is being recorded’ (p. 132) were installed, one can assume, that in Snowden’s case, the ‘internalised commitment’ that disciplines members of an organisation and prevents them from transgressing rules such as keeping official secrets was perhaps less strong. A comparison with the Ellsberg case reveals another important aspect. When Ellsberg was leaking the Pentagon Papers in 1971, he relied on technologies such as the Xerox copy machine. In his book, Secrets, he describes vividly how he struggled with ‘the new technology’ and worked for weeks and long nights to photocopy the 5000 pages (Ellsberg, 2003: 302). By contrast, Snowden had access to digital technologies that allowed him to copy masses of documents in a very short period of time.

Parrhesiastic exposures not only depend on possibilities of the situation, on the occasion (kai-ros) and on the possibilities of ‘tactical reversal’ (Foucault, 1981: 157) of certain elements (e.g. technologies) in the discourse and practice of surveillance and governmental transparency but also on the subjective disposition of courage. Snowden was very aware that ‘[y]ou can’t come forward against the world’s most powerful intelligence agencies and be completely free from risk because they’re such powerful adversaries’. (Snowden, 2013) It is not only the risk-taking and tremendous courage that qualifies Snowden’s exposures as parrhesiastic, but also the intrinsic link to ethical subjectivity and its formation. In many studies of whistleblowing, a sense of ‘duty’ or ‘moral obligation’ has been shown as an important condition for articulating alternative perspectives (Alford, 2001; Scheuerman, 2014). On many occasions Snowden expressed, that he regarded truth-telling as a duty towards the public. I quote Snowden at some length from the first interview that he gave to the journalist Glenn Greenwald and the filmmaker Laura Poitras. The Guardian posted the 12-minute interview on June 6, 2013. When asked by Greenwald about his motivation to blow the whistle, he replied:

When you are in positions of privileged access like a systems administrator for these sorts of intelligence community agencies, you are exposed to a lot more information on a broader scale than the average employee and because of that, you see things that may be disturbing, but over the course of a normal person’s career, you’d only see one or two of these instances. When you see everything, you see them on
a more frequent basis and you recognize that some of these things are actually abuses, and when you talk to people about them in a place like this, where this is the normal state of business, people tend not to take them very seriously and move on from them. But over time that awareness of wrongdoing sort of builds up, and you feel compelled to talk about it, and the more you talk about it, the more you are ignored, the more you are told “It’s not a problem” until eventually you realized that these things need to be determined by the public and not by somebody who was simply hired by the government. (Snowden, 2013)

What is remarkable about this interview is not only that Snowden gives an account of himself and the formation of his ethical self-relation, but also that he openly reveals his identity and makes himself visible as an ethical subject. In his reasoning he follows the principles of the parrhesiastic speaker, which are ‘grounded in general statements about the world, human life, necessity, happiness, freedom and so on, and, on the other, practical rules of behaviour’ (Foucault, 2001: 166). He said that ‘(he) think(s) that the public is owed an explanation of the motivations behind the people who make these disclosures that are outside of the democratic model’ (Snowden, 2013). Snowden speaks the truth in his own name with reference to the public good and a democratic form of transparency. Importantly, he presents his act not as result of a spontaneous outburst of some moral impulse, but as a considered act informed by reflection. He posits that he had ‘carefully evaluated every single document I [Snowden] disclosed to ensure that each was legitimately in the public interest. There are all sorts of documents that would have made a big impact that I didn’t turn over, because harming people isn’t my goal. Transparency is’ (Snowden, 2013; emphasis added).

**Discussion**

The emergence of the ‘NSA complex’ illustrates the simultaneous intensification and extensification of ‘power through transparency’, in particular enabled by multiplicity of new technologies of surveillance and the intense strategic cooperation of the NSA with private corporations (Ball and Snider, 2013; Lyon, 2014, 2018). While the example shows the gradual formation of a strategic apparatus that ‘transforms foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured’ (de Certeau, 1984: 36), it also reveals the fragility of emergent regimes of visibility created by the co-emergence of counter-transparency practices.

Digital technologies and datafied forms of transparency in particular have facilitated the creation and establishment of a system which affords the ‘exercise of limitless power’ (Greenwald, 2014: 437). However, the very same arrangement makes the system vulnerable: it allows a single employee of a contractor – such as Edward Snowden – to interrupt the smooth working of the ‘machine’ by *shining a light* on the system, its modus operandi and the infrastructures of generating knowledge on individuals and populations. For some commentators, the proliferation and systematic interconnection of technologies of surveillance clearly point to a ‘world of no escape’ where the ‘chilling effects of anticipatory conformity’ (Zuboff, 2015: 82) generate a quasi-automatic functioning of ‘the system’. Such accounts are supported by empirical studies that demonstrate how individual citizens, journalists (Lashmar, 2017; Pen American Center, 2013), social media users and others change their (online) behaviour in a self-censoring and self-disciplining way. This points to the inherent dangers and demonstrates how panoptic principles survive or revive in (so-called post-panoptic) digital contexts (Manhoka, 2020). Yet, in light of the above, we may also note that ‘the ambiguities, complexities and unpredictability of human institutions, especially in digitalised environments’ (Brivot and Gendron, 2011: 135) are often underestimated in such accounts. Snowden’s whistleblowing is a case in point: while it made the repressive and totalising potential of systems of mass surveillance visible, his very act of speaking out demonstrates the incompleteness and fragility of such systems and brought counter-transparency into play.
A statement from Snowden’s memoirs illustrates this ambivalence:

Almost everything you do on a computer, on any device, leaves a record. Nowhere is this more true than at the NSA. Each log-in and log-out creates a log entry. Each permission I used left its own forensic trace. Every time I opened a file, every time I copied a file, that action was recorded. . . . Luckily, the strength of these systems was also their weakness: their complexity meant that not even the people running them necessarily knew how they worked. Nobody actually understood where they overlapped and where their gaps were. Nobody, that is, except the systems administrators. (Snowden, 2019: 256)

Iedema and Rhodes (2010) have argued, there is a ‘space of ethics’ within organisational systems of surveillance, which bears the potential for new relations to self, others and events in the world. Snowden’s parrhesiastic act illustrates not only the presence of this space of ethics within systems of surveillance but also the ‘double ethical and political scope’ (Davidson, 2011: 30) of this form of counter-transparency. It shows that even in strictly regulated organisational spaces (as exemplified by the NSA), there is a range of possibilities for organisational members to relate to institutionalised expectations and prescriptions. Depending on the ‘mode of subjection’—that is, ‘the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule’ (Foucault, 1992: 27)– they can confirm, problematise (internally), resist or – as in Snowden’s case – engage in parrhesiastic exposures that disrupt normalised ways of seeing and rendering aspects of reality in/visible. Such exposures open a ‘space of potential transformation’, both in the ethical and in the political sense. In the ethical sense, this refers to the potential of ‘transform(ing) oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behaviour’ (Foucault, 1992: 27). On various occasions, Snowden has presented his whistleblowing as an act that cares for the self and others, and allows acting in accordance with one’s own sense of identity and moral principles. Repeatedly he reflected in the sense of the parrhesiastes: ‘Am I able to react to any kind of representation which shows itself to me in conformity with my adopted rational rules’ (Foucault, 2001: 165). This self-transformative potential is also reflected in Snowden’s own definition of the whistleblower as ‘a person who through hard experience has concluded that their life inside an institution has become incompatible with the principles developed in – and the loyalty owed to – the greater society outside it, to which that institution should become accountable’ (Snowden, 2019: 238).

The political dimension refers to the ‘critical opening’ that ‘calls into question the limits of established regimes of truth’ (Butler, 2005: 24). In the Snowden case, this is illustrated by disrupting the ‘surveillance normalism’ (Dencik and Cable, 2017; Wahl-Jorgensen and Bennett, 2017), which takes for granted that mass surveillance is the (only) legitimate answer to threats of terrorism. By exposing the machine’s modus operandi and by revealing practices of control and surveillance that harbour the potential for ‘the exercise of limitless power with no transparency or accountability’ (Greenwald, 2014: 437), this act created a space for a worldwide public debate that harbours the potential to redefine or renegotiate the normative matrix that organises visibility. While some argue that Snowden’s influence on mass consciousness and conduct ‘was fundamental enough to qualify as epoch-making’ (Hertsgaard, 2016: 17), critical observers argue that Snowden’s exposures provided opportunities for reflection and substantial reforms in data collection but did not lead to a substantial change of the surveillance infrastructure. Wahl-Jorgensen and Bennett, (2017) have studied how Snowden’s exposures were discussed in newspapers and blogs. According to their analysis, many mainstream newspapers contributed to justification and normalisation of (mass) surveillance in the interest of national security, while the contestation of practices of mass surveillance and questions of ‘digital citizenship’ more often emerged from the blogosphere.

Parrhesiastic exposures work as a ‘disorganising’ force (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg, 2012: 40) that disrupts established ways of seeing and normalised procedures for generating visibility. They
potentially open the ‘organisational complex’ (Beyes, 2019) as a contingent stabilisation of practices of managing and organising visibility and initiate processes of re-organising. In the Snowden case, the ‘parrhesiastic chain’ (Vandekerckhove and Langenberg, 2012: 39) goes far beyond a specific organisation (NSA) and transgresses organisational boundaries. In particular, digital technologies afford new forms of collaboration with journalists, media and activists that disrupt the organisational complex. Thus, the ‘parrhesiastic chain’ is not limited to organisational membership. Critique might not only have to ‘travel upwards’ but also sideward, along transversal lines, building connections that go beyond specific organisations and organisational positions. It not only depends on contingent and risky encounters with others but also ‘requires all manner of props, mediators, technological prosthetics and social connections’ (Walters, 2014: 293).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have proposed a Foucauldian framework for studying transparency as a practice that is negotiable and contested. In developing this approach, the paper makes several contributions. First, it contributes to the literature that explores the ‘transparency-power nexus’ (Flyverbom et al., 2015). Situating transparency in the agonistic space that is constituted by the opposing vectors of governmental transparency and counter-transparency thereby contributes to a dynamic understanding of transparency as a contingent stabilisation of the flux of competing forms of managing and organising visibility. While some critical writers have pointed to the totalitarian dangers and implications of the discourse and practice of transparency (Birchall, 2011b; Han, 2015; Shore and Wright, 2000), the approach taken here emphasises its ‘tactical polyvalence’ (Foucault, 1981: 100). Accordingly, transparency can be mobilised both as a technology of power and as a force of critique and transformation.

Second, the paper contributes to the debate on the use of Foucauldian concepts for studying ‘post-panoptic’ (Bauman, 2001) forms of transparency and ‘post-disciplinary’ forms of managing and organising more generally (Munro, 2012; Raffnsøe et al., 2016, 2019). In demonstrating the double process of intensification and extensification in the organisational context of ‘new transparency’, the paper has not only further problematised the claim of a clear-cut distinction between panoptic and post-panoptic regimes of power. Instead it has provided substantive arguments for transparency as a heterogeneous and complex regime of visibility, that is neither unitary nor fixed, but multiple and open to transformation (see also Hansen and Weiskopf, 2019).

Third, by introducing ‘counter-transparency’, the paper contributes to expanding the conceptual vocabulary for studying processes of managing and organising visibility in organisations. The double ethical and political scope of counter-transparency links the ‘intensification of behavioural visibility’ in organisations (Leonardi and Treem, 2020: 4) to a wide range of critical practices that supplement them, ranging from resistance to imposed visibility to parrhesiastic exposures. They are not alternatives to governmental forms of transparency rather they work ‘as both partner and adversary to the arts of governing, as an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them’ (Foucault, 2003: 265). While the paper has taken whistleblowing as one specific example for demonstrating the interplay of governmental forms of visibility and counter-transparency, it seeks to inspire further work that explores experiences, effects and consequences of specific forms and modalities of organising visibility and the ways of countering them.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.
Notes

1. This claim often builds on Deleuze’s (1995) *Postscriptum on Control Societies*, in which Deleuze – problematically – argues, that we have ‘left discipline behind’. This is reflected, for example, in Bauman’s notion of a ‘post-panoptic’ society and ‘fluid’ forms of organisation and surveillance. In *Liquid Modernity* (2001), he speaks of ‘the end of Panopticon’ (p. 11) and says: ‘Whatever else the present stage in the history of modernity is, it is also, perhaps above all, post-Panoptical’ (p. 11). Later, in his conversations with David Lyon on contemporary surveillance, he says ‘the panopticon is alive and well’ (p. 55), ‘but is has been shifted and confined to the ‘unmanageable parts of society, such as prisons, camps, psychiatric clinics and other “total institutions”’ (p. 56). For a detailed and balanced critique of ‘post-panoptic’ positions in surveillance studies, see, for example, Caluya (2010) and, more generally for a critique of periodisation of Foucault’s prototypical dispositives of law, discipline and security, see Raffnsøe et al. (2016).

2. In the historical context of the Christian pastorate in the Middle Ages Foucault identifies five main forms of counter-conduct ‘that were able to put in question, work on, elaborate and erode the pastoral power’ (Foucault, 2007: 202): *ascesis* as a practice of the self, that allows a distance from seductions, the search for communities, mysticism as an experience that contested the truth claims of the pastorate, the return to the scriptures or eschatological belief systems for questioning the authority of the pastorate. He states that ‘these counter-conducts are clearly not absolutely external Christianity, but are actually border-elements, if you like, which have been continually re-utilised, re-implanted and taken up again in one or another dimension or another direction’ (Foucault, 2007: 215). All of these forms are about different forms of conduct within a specific regime of visibility, not necessarily a resistance against the gaze.

3. *The Guardian* reported that under the programme name ‘Tempora’, the ‘ability to tap into and store huge volumes of data drawn from fibre-optic cables for up to 30 days so that they can be sifted and analysed’ was developed (Greenwald, 2014: 335).

4. The Planning Tool for Resource Integration, Synchronisation and Management (PRISM) has been in operation since 2007.

5. Within a short period of time, media organisations worldwide followed, including *Der Spiegel* (Germany), *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, (US), *O Globo* (Brazil) and similar outlets in Sweden, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Australia published stories based on Snowden’s exposures.

6. The investigative journalist Shorrock (2008) has shown through the example of the US how intelligence tasks that have traditionally been performed by government officials are increasingly outsourced to private corporations (such as Booz Allen Hamilton). According to Shorrock, the reliance on outsourcing dates back to the late 1990s, when commercial advances in computer software and communications began to outpace the lead US intelligence once had in encryption and other technologies.

References

Abraham, S. and Bamber, M. (2017) ‘The Q&A: Under Surveillance’, *Accounting, Organization and Society* 58: 15–31.

Albu, B. O. and Flyverbom, M. (2019) ‘Organizational Transparency: Conceptualizations, Conditions, and Consequences’, *Business and Society* 58(2): 268–97.

Alford, C. F. (2001) *Whistleblowers: Broken Lives and Organizational Power*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Amoore, L. (2013) *The Politics of Possibility*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ananny, M. and Crawford, K. (2018) ‘Seeing Without Knowing: Limitations of the Transparency Ideal and Its Application to Algorithmic Accountability’, *New Media & Society* 20(3): 973–89.

Arellano-Gault, D. and Lepore, W. (2011) ‘Transparency Reforms in the Public Sector: Beyond the New Economics of Organization’, *Organization Studies* 32(8): 1029–50.
Ball, K. (2012) ‘Workplace Surveillance: An Overview’, Labour History 51(1): 87–106.
Ball, K. and Snider, L. (2013) The Surveillance-Industrial Complex: A Political Economy of Surveillance. London: Routledge.
Bauman, Z. (2001) Liquid Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Bauman, Z., Bigo, D., Esteves, P., et al. (2014) ‘After Snowden: Rethinking the Impact of Surveillance’, International Political Sociology 8: 121–44.
Bauman, Z. and Lyon, D. (2013) The Surveillance-Industrial Complex: A Political Economy of Surveillance. London: Routledge.
Bernstein, E. S. (2017) ‘Making Transparency Transparent: The Evolution of Observation in Management Theory’, Academy of Management Annals 11(1): 217–66.
Beyes, T. (2019) ‘Organizing Media: Security and Entertainment’, in T. Beyes, L. Conrad, and R. Martin (eds) Organize. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Bigo, D. (2006) ‘Globalized (in)Security: The Field and the Ban-Opticon’, in N. Sakei and J. Solomon (eds) Traces 4: Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference, pp. 5–49. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
Birchall, C. (2011a) ‘Introduction to ‘Secrecy and Transparency’: The Politics of Opacity and Openness’, Theory, Culture and Society 28(7–8): 7–25.
Birchall, C. (2011b) ‘Transparency, Interrupted’, Theory, Culture & Society 28(7–8): 60–84.
Brevini, B. (2017) ‘WikiLeaks: Between Disclosure and Whistle-Blowing in Digital Times’, Sociology Compass 11: 1–11.
Brighenti, A. M. (2010) Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Brivot, M. and Gendron, Y. (2011) ‘Beyond Panopticism: On the Ramifications of Surveillance in a Contemporary Professional Setting’, Accounting, Organization and Society 36: 135–55.
Butler, J. (2005) Giving an Account of Oneself. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
Caluya, G. (2009) ‘The Post-Panoptic Society? Reassessing Foucault in Surveillance Studies’, Social Identities 16(5): 621–33.
Christensen, L. T. and Cheney, G. (2015) ‘Peering into Transparency: Challenging Ideals, Proxies, and Organizational Practice’, Communication Theory 25(1): 70–90.
Christensen, L. T. and Cornelissen, J. (2015) ‘Organizational Transparency as Myth and Metaphor’, European Journal of Social Theory 18(2): 132–49.
Collinson, D. (2003) ‘Identities and Insecurities: Selves at Work’, Organization 10(3): 527–47.
Contu, A. (2014) ‘Rationality and Relationality in the Process of Whistleblowing: Recasting Whistleblowing Through Readings of Antigone’, Journal of Management Inquiry 23(4): 393–406.
Costas, J. and Grey, C. (2016) Secrecy at Work: The Hidden Architecture of Organizational Life. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Crain, M. (2018) ‘The Limits of Transparency: Data Brokers and Commodification’, Media and Society 20(1): 88–104.
Davidson, A. I. (2011) ‘In Praise of Counter-Conduct’, History of the Human Sciences 24(4): 25–41.
Dean, M. (2010) Governmentality. Power and Rule in Modern Society. London: Sage.
de Certeau, M. (1984) The Practices of Everyday Life. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
de Lagasnerie, G. (2017) The Art of Revolt. Snowden, Assange, Manning. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Dencik, L. and Cable, J. (2017) ‘The Advent of Surveillance Realism: Public Attitudes and Activist Responses to the Snowden Leaks’, International Journal of Communication 11: 763–81.
DeLanda, M. (2001) War in the Age of Intelligent Machines. New York, NY: Zone Books.
Deleuze, G. (1995) Negotiations: 1972–1990. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
Ellsberg, D. (2003) Secrets. A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers. Harmondsworth, London: Penguin.
Ellsberg, D. (2010) ‘Secrecy and National Security Whistleblowing’, Social Research 77(3): 773–804.
Espeland, W. N. and Sauder, M. (2007) ‘Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds’, American Journal of Sociology 113(1): 1–40.
Fenster, M. (2017) *The Transparency Fix. Secrets, Leaks, and Uncontrollable Government Information*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Law Books.

Fiorini, A. (2007) *The Right to Know: Transparency for an Open World* Fiorini. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Fizenz, J (2009) ‘Predicting People: From Metrics to Analytics’, *Employment Relations Today* 36(3): 1–11.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) ‘Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research’, *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2): 219–45.

Flyverbom, M. (2016) ‘Transparency: Mediation and the Management of Visibilities’, *International Journal of Communication* 10: 110–22.

Flyverbom, M., Christensen, L. T. and Hansen, H. K. (2015) ‘The Transparency–Power Nexus’, *Management Communication Quarterly* 29(3): 385–410.

Folksers, A. (2015) ‘During the Truth: Foucault, Parrhesia and the Genealogy of Critique’, *Culture and Society* 33(1): 3–28.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1980) ‘The Eye of Power’, in C. Gordon (ed) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977*, pp. 146–65. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1981) *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1992) *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (2001) *Fearless Speech*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

Foucault, M. (2003) ‘What Is Critique?’, in P. Rabinow and N. Rose (eds) *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, pp. 263–78. New York, NY: New Press.

Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures as the Collège de France 1977–78*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2010) *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2011) *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983–1984*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fung, A. (2013) ‘Infotopia: Unleashing the Democratic Power of Transparency’, *Politics and Society* 41(2): 183–212.

Fung, A., Graham, M. and Weil, D. (2007) *Full Disclosure: The Perils and Promise of Transparency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gandy, O. H. (1993) *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information: Critical Studies in Communication and in the Cultural Industries*. Bolder, CO: Westview Press.

Gandy, O. H. (2012) ‘Statistical Surveillance: Remote Sensing in the Digital Age’, in K. Ball, K. D. Haggarty, and D. Lyon (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies*, pp. 125–32. London: Routledge.

Greenwald, G. (2014) *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.

Hacking, I. (2007) ‘Kinds of People: Moving Targets’, in Proceedings of the British Academy, 2006 Lectures, Vol. 151, pp. 285–318, London.

Han, B. C. (2015) *The Transparency Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hansen, H. K. (2015) ‘Numerical Operations, Transparency Illusions and the Datafication of Governance’, *European Journal of Social Theory* 18(2): 203–20.

Hansen, H. K. and Flyverbom, M. (2015) ‘The Politics of Transparency and the Calibration of Knowledge in the Digital Age’, *Organization* 22(6): 872–89.

Hansen, H. K. and Weiskopf, R. (2019) ‘From Universalizing Transparency to the Interplay of Transparency Matrices: Critical Insights from the Emerging Social Credit System in China’, *Organization Studies*, 1–10. Published online before print October 30, doi: 10.1177/0170840619878474.

Harding, L. (2014) *The Snowden Files: The Inside Story of the World’s Most Wanted Man*. London: Guardian Books.
Heemsbergen, L. (2016) ‘From Radical Transparency to Radical Disclosure: Reconfiguring (In)Voluntary Transparency Through the Management of Visibilities’, *International Journal of Communication* 10: 138–51.

Heimstädt, M. and Dobusch, L. (2020) ‘Transparency and Accountability: Causal, Critical and Constructive Perspectives’, *Organization Theory*. doi: 10.1177/2631787720964216.

Hertsgaard, M. (2016) *Bravehearts: Whistle-Blowing in the Age of Snowden*. New York, NY: Hot Books.

Hildebrandt, M. (2013) ‘Profile Transparency by Design? Re-Enabling Double Contingency’, in M. Hildebrandt and K. de Vries (eds) *Privacy, Due Process and the Computational Turn: The Philosophy of Law Meets the Philosophy of Technology*, pp. 221–46. Milton Park, London: Routledge.

Hood, C. (2006) ‘Transparency in Historical Perspective’, in C. Hood and D. Heald (eds) *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?,* pp. 3–24. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Iedema, R. and Rhodes, C. (2010) ‘The Undecided Space of Ethics in Organizational Surveillance’, *Organization Studies* 31(2): 199–217.

Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A. and Christin, A. (2020) ‘Algorithms at Work: The New Contested Terrain of Control’, *Academy of Management Annals* 14(1): 366–410.

Kenny, K. (2019) *Whistleblowing: Toward a New Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kitchin, R. (2014) *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Data Infrastructures, and Their Consequences*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Lashmar, P. (2017) ‘No More Sources?’, *Journalism Practice* 11(6): 665–88.

Leese, M. (2014) ‘The New Profiling: Algorithms, Black Boxes, and the Failure of Anti-Discriminatory Safeguards in the European Union’, *Security Dialogue* 45(5): 494–511.

Leonardi, P. and Treem, J. (2020) ‘Behavioral Visibility: A New Paradigm for Organization Studies in the Age of Digitization, Digitalization, and Datafication’, *Organization Studies*. Published online before print December 09, doi: 10.1177/0170840620970728.

Lyon, D. (2007) *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyon, D. (2011) *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*. London: Routledge.

Lyon, D. (2014) ‘Surveillance, Snowden, and Big Data: Capacities, Consequences, Critique’, *Big Data & Society*: 1–13. Published online before print July–December, doi: 10.1177/2053951714541861.

Lyon, D. (2018) *The Culture of Surveillance: Watching as a Way of Life*. London: Polity Press.

Manhoka, I. (2020) ‘Surveillance, Panopticism, and Self-Discipline in the Digital Age’, *Surveillance & Society* 16(2): 219–37.

Mansbach, A. (2009) ‘Keeping Democracy Vibrant: Whistleblowing as Truth-Telling in the Workplace’, *Constellations* 16(3): 363–76.

Mathiesen, D. (1997) ‘The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault’s Panopticon Revisited’, *Theoretical Criminology* 1(2): 215–34.

Mayer-Schönberger, V. and Cukier, K. (2013) *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think*. London: John Murray Publishers.

Munro, I. (2012) ‘The Management of Circulations: Biopolitical Variations After Foucault’, *International Journal of Management Review* 14(3): 345–62.

Munro, I. (2017) ‘Whistleblowing and the Politics of Truth: Mobilizing ‘Truth Games’ in the WikiLeaks Case’, *Human Relations* 70(5): 519–43.

Neyland, D. (2007) ‘Achieving Transparency: The Visible, Invisible and Divisible in Academic Accountability Networks’, *Organization* 14(4): 499–516.

Olesen, T. (2019) ‘The Politics of Whistleblowing in Digitalized Societies’, *Politics and Society*. Published online before print April, doi: 10.1177/003329219844140.

Pen American Center (2013) *Chilling Effects: NSA Surveillance Drives Writers to Self-Censor*. New York, NY: Pen American Center.

Pentland, A. S. (2014) *Social Physics: How Good Ideas Spread the Lessons from a New Science*. London: Penguin.

Power, M. (1997) *The Audit Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pozen, D. (2018) ‘Transparency’s Ideological Drift’, *Yale Law Journal* 100: 128–65.
Weiskopf

Raffnsøe, S., Gudmand-Høyer, M. and Thaning, M. S. (2016) ‘Foucault’s Dispositive: The Perspicacity of Dispositive Analytics in Organizational Research’, *Organization* 23(2): 272–98.

Raffnsøe, S., Menniken, A. and Miller, P. (2019) ‘The Foucault Effect in Organization Studies’, *Organization Studies* 40(2): 155–82.

Ringel, L. (2018) ‘Unpacking the Transparency-Secrecy Nexus: Frontstage and Backstage Behaviour in a Political Party’, *Organization Studies* 40(5): 705–23.

Roberts, J. (2009) ‘No One Is Perfect: The Limits of Transparency and an Ethic for “Intelligent Accountability”’, *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 34: 957–70.

Roberts, J. (2018) ‘Managing Only with Transparency: The Strategic Functions of Ignorance’, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 55: 53–60.

Rosenbach, M. and Stark, H. (2014) *Der NSA Komplex. Edward Snowden und der Weg in die Totale Überwachung*. München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt.

Rothschild, J. (2008) ‘Freedom of Speech Denied, Dignity Assaulted: What the Whistleblowers Experience in the US’, *Current Sociology* 56: 884–903.

Scheuerman, W. E. (2014) ‘Whistleblowing as Civil Disobedience’, *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40(7): 609–28.

Schnackenberg, A. K. and Tomlinson, E. C. (2016) ‘Organizational Transparency’, *Journal of Management* 42(7): 1784–810.

Scott, J. C. (1998) *Seeing Like the State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sewell, G., Barker, J. and Nyberg, D. (2006) ‘Working Under Intensive Surveillance: When Does ‘Measuring Everything That Moves’ Become Intolerable?’, *Human Relations* 65(2): 189–215.

Sharrock, T. (2008) *Spies for Hire: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Shore, C. and Wright, S. (2000) ‘The Tyranny of Transparency’, in M. Strathern (ed) *Audit Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Snowden, E. (2013) ‘NSA Whistleblower Edward Snowden: ‘I Don’t Want to Live in a Society That Does These Sort of Things’ (Interview with G. Greenwald)’. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2013/jun/09/nsa-whistleblower-edward-snowden-interview-video

Snowden, E. (2019) *Permanent Record*. London: Macmillan.

Stohl, C., Stohl, M. and Leonard, P. M. (2016) ‘Digital Age and Managing Opacity: Information Visibility and the Paradox of Transparency in the Digital Age’, *International Journal of Communication* 10: 123–137.

Thompson, J. B. (2005) ‘The New Visibility’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 22(6): 31–51.

Townley, B. (1998) ‘Beyond Good and Evil: Depth and Division in the Management of Human Resources’, in A. McKinlay and K. Starkey (eds) *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory*, pp. 191–210. London: Sage.

Tsoukas, H. (1997) ‘The Tyranny of Light’, *Futures* 29(9): 827–43.

Vandekerckhove, W. (2006) *Whistleblowing and Organizational Social Responsibility: A Global Assessment*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Vandekerckhove, W. and Langenberg, S. (2012) ‘Can We Organize Courage? Implications of Foucault’s Parrhesia’, *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics (EJBO)* 17(2): 35–44.

Vandekerckhove, W. and Tsahuridu, E. E. (2010) ‘Risky Rescues and the Duty to Blow the Whistle’, *Journal of Business Ethics* 97: 365–80.

Waber, B. N. (2013) *People Analytics: How Social Sensing Technology Will Transform Business and What It Tells Us About the Future of Work*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press.

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. and Bennett, L. (2017) ‘The Normalization of Surveillance and the Invisibility of Digital Citizenship: Media debates after the Snowden revelations’, *International Journal of Communication* 11: 740–62.

Walters, W. (2014) ‘Parrhēsia Today: Drone Strikes, Fearless Speech and the Contentious Politics of Security’, *Global Society* 28(3): 277–99.

Weiskopf, R. (2020) ‘Algorithmic Decision-Making, Spectrogenic Profiling, and Hyper-Facticity in the Age of Post-Truth’, *Le foucaldien* 6(1): 1–37.
Weiskopf, R., Heinrichs, R. and Loacker, B. (2019) ‘The Ethico-Politics of Whistleblowing: Mediated Truth-Telling in Digital Cultures’, Ephemera. Critical Dialogs on Organization 19(4): 671–96.

Weiskopf, R. and Tobias-Miersch, Y. (2016) ‘Whistleblowing, Parrhesia and the Contestation of Truth in the Workplace’, Organization Studies 37(11): 1621−40.

Welch, M. (2011) ‘Counterveillance: How Foucault and the Groupe d’Information sur les Prisons Reversed the Optics’, Theoretical Criminology 15(3): 301–13.

Zuboff, S. (1988) In the Age of the Smart Machine. The Future of Work and Power. Oxford: Heinemann.

Zuboff, S. (2015) ‘Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization’, Journal of Information Technology 30(1): 75–89.

Zuboff, S. (2019) The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Author biography

Richard Weiskopf is professor of Organization Theory at the University of Innsbruck. His research focuses on ethical and political dimension of organizational practices. He is particularly interested in transparency and surveillance, whistleblowing and truth(telling) in organizations.