The Rationalization of the Surveillance: From the ‘Society of Normalization’ to the Digital Society and Beyond*

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ABSTRACT

The authors show that the liberal biopolitics gave a birth to the development of the rationalized surveillance based on power-knowledge as a complex of force relations. Due to formal pragmatism, rational knowledge and the disciplinary technology the ‘society of normalization’ arose. Its influence spread not only to concrete individuals, but to all the people and was only limited by the nation-state sovereignty and historic time (up to the end of the 20th century). But nowadays there appear such factors as globalization, the rise of the network society, the digitalization that mark the evidence of complexity, non-linear development and the emergence of multiple risks, vulnerabilities, and uncertainties. Under these conditions the traditional biopolitics as the dominant ‘life-administrating power’ is not suited for controlling and rationalizing the society. The new realities foster the passover to the digital society and working out innovative approaches to the rationalization of the surveillance. So, there appear new types of surveillance that are analyzed in the article. Among them: a new version of Panopticon as a viewer society in the form of Synopticon, digital and ‘liquid’ surveillance, ‘green Orwellism’, practice of surveillance based on post-anthropocentric technologies. All new types of surveillance are ambivalent in their consequences, bringing as advantages as well unpredictable dangers for life-worlds of people and human spirit. The authors argue that the process of ‘metamorphization of the world’ (U. Beck) potentially produces possible hopes, creating unthinkable earlier alternative preconditions for establishing a humanely oriented system of surveillance which is aimed at preventing different catastrophes and crimes.

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INTRODUCTION

The digitalization is being successfully implemented in all spheres of society: economy, science, business, education, politics, and private life. State leaders of many countries have already realized the importance of the digitalization. Farsighted governments seek for serious changes in societies in order to transit to new socioeconomic structures of the so-called “smart city”, “smart villages”, and “smart homes”. Some countries like Japan or Singapore have already implemented state programs for such digital shifts in economy and governance. Thus, Japan Institute for Promotion of Digital Economy and Community (JIPDEC) declares the appearance of Society 5.0.

On their official web page there is a motto of their agency: “We are promoting a new society” (Official website of Japan Institute for Promotion of Digital Economy and Community). The essence of this society is that the surveillance on economy and social life is rationalized and conducted through a high-level of the integration of cyber and social space. To achieve this goal, many stakeholders from industries, academia, and government consider legal and governance frameworks. In principal, the “Digital First Bill” restricts the use of paper and constrains surveillance and administrative procedures to electronic applications. In addition, a new platform called the “Information Bank” enables individual and collective actors to receive various credits as a compensation for allowing their personal data, including behavioral and purchasing history, to be stored “in the bank” and analyzed by participating companies (Official website of Japan Institute for Promotion of Digital Economy and Community).

Society 5.0 is being created as a data-driven society: the better rationalization of the production of more data gives a value-added social and economic capital and means linking digitalization to governance. This manifests a historical transition from the ‘society of normalization’ [Foucault, 1980, p. 107] to the digital, data-driven society and, consequently, to the digital surveillance. On the one hand, this creates enormous opportunities for the effective reflexivity of social actors, but, on the other hand, most intentional acts including digital practices lead to unanticipated consequences [Merton, 1936; Boudon, 1982] and unintended subjugations of culture and nature that very often take the forms of bifurcations and cascade innovations, expressed in new challenges to economy, life-worlds of people, and humanism.

1. THE BIRTH OF THE BIOPOLITICS AS A RATIONALIZED SURVEILLANCE

M. Foucault was one of the first scholars who put under the question the linear development of social control and stability, achieved by the direct supervision of individuals. According to him, the process of rationalization dines the efficiency of earlier forms of government by fostering the ‘society of normalization’ based on the liberal biopolitics which is “the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize problems represented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race” (Foucault, 1997, p. 73). The biopolitics presupposes a new type of power-knowledge as a complex of force relations, social practices, ‘rituals of truth’ that exercise surveillance, the administration of life and, consequently, the normalization of people in an indirect way that they use freedoms mainly in disciplined manners. So, free subjects can act in many ways but responsibly in accordance with the rationality of the dominant ‘true’ knowledge, which exerts power over other forms of knowledge and thereby affirms the social control in society.

The have-nots and have-nots, free and prisoners, mentally healthy and crazy people speak different languages, have different forms of knowledge, between which in there is no constant dialogue. And there is no unitary process of rationalization – different rationalities oppose one another. Ultimately, one form of knowledge begins to dominate over others, which is specifically manifested in the approval and development of the institutions of biopolitics producing a certain type of the surveillance and social control – moral obligations and civil laws were combined in the functioning of
state, work houses, mental hospitals and prisons. The last mentioned was realized in Foucault’s narrative through the metaphor of Panopticon, the architectural concept of the ideal prison proposed by the 18th century English philosopher J. Bentham. It is organized as the tower with the guard located in the center which is surrounded by wards with prisoners.

Remaining invisible to prisoners the guard can simultaneously monitor their actions fostering them to be responsible, reasonable, and disciplined. In Foucault’s opinion, the nature of the punishment is determined not by rulers, but mainly by the discourse (spoken or written statements and the corresponding social practices obeying certain rules) of a particular episteme as the system of thinking and making knowledge in a concrete historic period. So, each episteme produces power-knowledge relations with certain types of surveillance. It was a particular episteme that determined the ceremonies of public executions of the guilty. Then, in the European culture, during the formation of the bourgeois order, the executions of criminals were replaced by control over them with the help of certain prison rules.

The emergence of the rational episteme based mainly on the scientific knowledge led, respectively, to the rationalization and bureaucratization of the punishment system, which became less severe and more lenient but not humane. The biopolitical type of prison suggested "not less, but better punishment", which became more universal, and the rationalized surveillance penetrated deeper into the social body (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). In contrast to the previous one, the new surveillance manifested itself much more often, became more effective, impersonal and spread not only to criminals, but to the whole society, from schools and universities to homes and work-place settings.

Thus, on the basis of new rational knowledge and the disciplinary technology the ‘society of normalization’ arose. It is characterized by three features: a) hierarchical observation – the ability of officials to exercise control over areas within their area of influence; b) normative judgments – the power of officials to make judgments about violations of behavioral norms and, accordingly, punish violators; c) examination of those who are observed entities. The power-knowledge assumed a specific type of surveillance – to control all people so that they could not even try to behave badly, otherwise they would feel immersed, thrown into an environment of complete visibility. As a result, a manifest and latent Panopticon arises – structures with automatically functioning power where the observables know that they are being controlled, but they do not know exactly the time when officials control them. In other words, this is some kind of a ‘perfect surveillance tool’ which presumes the power of minority over majority. But however that type of surveillance was limited by nation-state sovereignty and historic time (since the 18th up to the end of the 20th century).

2. THEORIZING THE COMPLICATED DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEILLANCE CAPACITIES

With globalization and the rise of the network society, people begin to function in the ‘space of contiguity’ and in the ‘timeless time’ (Castells, 2010, pp. xxxi, xl). As a result, the world has entered into “turbulent times”, marking evidence of non-linear development and the emergence of new complex uncertainties that facilitates the re-discovery of social realities (Kravchenko, 2014). In particular, these uncertainties manifest themselves, in the following: social gaps and ‘cultural traumas’ (Alexander et al., 2014), fake news as alternative truths, staged, culturally constructed risks that might seem to be real, and non-knowledge. U. Beck (2010, p. 116) argues: “What used to count as knowing is becoming non-knowing, and non-knowing is acquiring the status of knowledge”. Even more unpredictable changes are produced by the rhizomorphic development, any point of which “can be connected to anything other, and must be.
This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 7). There has also appeared the ‘metamorphosis of the world’, the possible consequences of which may be for the worse or the better: “The theory of metamorphosis goes beyond theory of world risk society; it is not about the negative side effects of goods but about the positive side effects of the bads” (Beck, 2016, p. 4). All this, presupposing multiple uncertainties and hardly predictable side effects, influences the character of functioning of both people’s agency and actants, i.e. objects (machine, computer network, etc.). As A. Giddens (1984, p. 9) states, the rationalization and reflexivity are permanently involved in modern social actions, but their results may be unpredictable: “agency concerns events of which an individual is a perpetrator”. At the same time, due to the potential ability to self-reflexion, some actants begin to act as actant rhizomes (Latour, 1988). In fact, agencies and actants overlap. Nowadays it isn’t seen anymore as a dystopia the news about the creation of a cyberman with a computer chip embedded under the skin, performing the functions of a personal assistant – a prototype of a passport and bank cards. Their patterns of functioning are based on collecting data about human’s everyday personal activities, discourses, modes of life.

Under these conditions the traditional biopolitics as the dominant ‘life-administrating power’ will not suit for controlling and rationalizing these processes. So, the essence of biopolitics and the principles of Panopticon began to undergo radical transformations. A. Giddens argues that “surveillance refers to the supervision of the activities of subject population” and speaks about the dispersion of the social control under the influence of the effects caused by the ‘juggernaut of modernity’ moving through time and over space: “a runaway engine of enormous power which, collectively as human beings, we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of our control and which could rend itself asunder… we shall never be able to control completely either the path or the pace of the journey. In turn, we shall never be able to feel entirely secure” (Giddens, 1990, pp. 58, 139).

Thus, there was established quite a new version of Panopticon as a viewer society in the form of Synopticon where “the many watch the few” instead of “the few watch the many” (Mathiesen, 1997, pp. 215-232). This neologism is important for the further studying of the complicated development of the surveillance under the extension of the network realities. At the beginning of 90th the internet was born and that was referred to as Web 1.0. The vast majority of users were content consumers. Personal web pages were common, consisting mainly of static pages hosted on web servers managed by the provider or on free web hosting services. The middle of the 2000-s was marked by the transition to Web 2.0 which refers to a worldwide website that highlights user content, usability, and interoperability for end users. Web 2.0 is now called as a social network with participation. It allows interacting and collaborating with each other in a dialogue on social networks as a creator of user-generated content in a virtual community. The connections to the internet are possible in almost any location through such media platforms as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and YouTube.

The modern social network includes the internet, avatar-interaction in three-dimensional virtual space, connecting locally and globally at any time. All that made the foundations for the appearance of Synopticon as a radically new surveillance which functions due to the rise of a societal communication which M. Castells conceptualizes as ‘mass self-communication’ that reaches a potentially global audience. “It also is self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many who communicate with many. This is a new communication realm, and ultimately a new medium, whose backbone is made of computer networks, whose language is digital” ([Castells, 2010, pp. xxx-xxxi]). Due to it Synopticon is based on mechanisms of seductive spying on someone else’s life – users are driven by the thirst for information about their online or offline idol. Practically anyone who has the opportunity to create and upload content, link to other audio-visual material, comment on preferable personal data, becoming such an idol.
New expressions of the complicated development of the surveillance are determined by the basic features of the ‘liquid modernity’: “liqıuds, unlike solids, cannot easily hold their shapes” (Bauman, 2000, p. 1). The becoming new form of the surveillance undergoes permanent changes of shape, what is analyzed by Z. Bauman and D. Lyon, the last also directs the Surveillance Studies Centre. Summing up all the world trends in studying the latest surveillance practices they have put forward the concept of the ‘liquid surveillance’. The scholars explain its essence, expressed in the unlimited access even to the intimate spheres it never concerned before, through the story about a young girl. The largest retail American company Target had sent a 15-year-old girl flyers and coupons with advertisements for bottles, diapers and cots two weeks before she told her parents about her pregnancy. It turns out that Target has a purchase history of hundreds of thousands of consumers, and its employees calculate the so-called pregnancy index which shows whether a woman is pregnant or no, and when she has to give a birth. They figure it out by looking at obvious things like buying a crib or clothes, seeing that the girl began to buy at the online shop more vitamins than she usually had done, or googled for a bag in which diapers are placed. The case with Target and a pregnant teenager proves that according to their people’s purchasing habits retailers propose their costumers functional loyalty programs, coupons and discounts. Other companies encourage people to upload their body and physical characteristics such as physical activity data generated by wearable devices. Underpinning these initiatives is the notion that personal information is valuable today.

The ‘liquid surveillance’, in fact, is “the world of monitoring, tracking, tracing, sorting, checking and systematic watching” [Bauman and Lyon, 2013, p. 8]. The basic inhuman factor of the ‘liquid surveillance’ is that a user doesn’t know of being watched because he/she has already got used to being constantly monitored by. The scopophilia as a love of being seen merges with the growing ubiquity of the surveillance practices, with several striking effects (Ibid., p. 127). Rather than asking why the counter requires our telephone number, driver’s licence and postal code, we assume that there must be a reason that will benefit us. For instance, when it comes to the use of ‘loyalty cards’ from chain stores, airlines and the like, people either don’t know or don’t care about the connections between the use of loyalty cards and profiling. The spread of scopophilia also explains the very controversial fact that many people using the digital technologies best understand that they are being watched and listened but still continue consuming smart devices. According to Edison Research Smart Audio Report (Spring 2019 survey), seven-in-ten smart speaker owners use their device daily despite common concerns around security and privacy, while those same factors are leading reasons non-owners have not acquired a device.

This report is based upon a national online survey of 909 Americans ages 18+ who indicated that they owned at least one smart speaker. They are – Alexa, Siri, Google Assistant, Amazon Echo and Google Nest – a very complex working gadget which play music, help us to control our smart home devices, and come with virtual assistants ready to answer our every question. The number of smart speakers in U.S. households has grown by 78% in one year from 66.7 million devices to 118.5 million (Smart Audio Report). Everything we blog, tweet, click, talk to our digital personal assistant becomes a public act subjected to the surveillance. The case study of that pregnant girl shows that there are hidden algorithms that decide instead of us what to look at and what to buy. With accordance to these algorithms we click on items that are inspired by the codes of signification and simulacrum of novelty which become an essential part of the modern consumption (Baudrillard, 1981). These codes are liquid in character and continuously change their shape. Living with liquidization produces quite a new need that deforms our thinking and behavior – this “need is never so much the need for a particular objects as the ‘need’ for difference (the desire for social meaning)” (Baudrillard, 1998, pp. 77-78). And every year it is getting tremendously hard to defend one’s own privacy from the ‘liquid surveillance’.

One of the newest forms of the surveillance is the ‘digital surveillance’ which “tends to obscure the constant daily assaults on privacy that take place well within the law by major businesses, em-
bedding a system best called “surveillance capitalism, and by government, which is increasingly acting like a surveillance state”. These realities give opportunities for “data-hungry businesses and governments” to “deepen tracking and control of citizen behavior and attitudes. Moreover, they provide employers with new tools to carry out and old process: controlling their employees” (Mosco, 2017, p. 161).

All the above mentioned components of the ‘digital surveillance’ manifest a response to the intensification of what has been termed the datafication of everyday lives. The datafication enrolls an expanding array of the digital technologies that are directed at recording practically all aspects of human lives and bodies and rendering them into the digitized information. That gives a birth to the so-called “data selves” that becomes the subject of a special investigation (Lupton, 2020). The scholar examines people’s modern interactions, their use of mobile and wearable devices, apps and other ‘smart’ objects, their movements in sensor-embedded spaces – all generate multiply and continual flows of personal data that is subjected to the surveillance. These data record information about the intensely personal actions, habits and preferences, social and intimate relations, body functions and movements. They can include such attributes as person’s age, gender, date of birth, telephone number, family members, friends and other contacts, email and home address, educational qualifications, race, place of work, etc.

Social media sites, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, encourage people to continually upload status updates that may include details of their recent activities and social encounters, videos of themselves, etc. The author acknowledges the importance of paying attention to practices, affects and sensory and other embodied experiences, as well as discourses, imaginaries and ideas, in identifying the ways in which people make and enact data, and data and make and enact people. In doing so, the scientist seeks to explore the onto-ethico-epistemological dimensions of living with and through lively data, generating our “data selves” (Ibid., p. 6). One more evident characteristic of the “data selves” today is its visible simplicity and easiness of all virtual actions. On the one hand, the proximity of people is intensifying while using the internet: we do not actually feel a person that presupposes that we allow him/her to be even closer.

This can be manifested in confidential conversations on intimate topics, the exchange of personal photos, and so on. On the other hand, the intimate relationships mediated by a computer cease to be truly real. In the virtual space, an element of expression of intimacy is a system of non-verbal computerized symbols, in this case, the equivalent of a visa-a-vis rating system as likes. There appear a certain ‘likes addiction’ as a side effect of the ‘digital surveillance’. The enthusiasm for children and youth with likes acquires the characteristics of an obsession. In fact, they accept willingly the surveillance: active members of the virtual internet community seek to get as many “friends” as possible for a published photo or a statement, others can start a “cyber spying” for their partner. In short, ‘smart’ means “delivering a steady flow of details about our lives...what a user says around the home will inevitably be recorded, transcribed and stored in the Cloud... Even a sensor-equipped television can serve as a surveillance device” (Mosco, 2017, pp. 162, 165, 167).

Some internet platforms are designed in such a way that any registered user can follow the activity of a friend or relative: with whom he talked, which group he joined, which of the users he liked, “winked”, invited to enter personal correspondence, etc. No wonder that “digital surveillance is discussed in terms of users ‘being watched’” (Marres, 2017, p. 75). There grounds that the “digital surveillance” will greatly expand in the near future. Its development is especially facilitated by geopolitics – “drones do the dirty work of surveillance” legitimating the appearance of a specific “surveillance beyond borders” (Urry, 2014, pp. 143, 150).

At the same time, the ecologically oriented system of surveillance is being born that is termed as “a kind of ‘green Orwellism’” (Urry, 2011, p. 159). This system of surveillance is directed on establishing low carbon lives all over the world. Besides, humanely oriented “post-anthropocentric technologies are also re-shaping the practice of surveillance” (Braidotti, 2015, p. 127). All this may
link peoples and countries for a more effective cooperation in different spheres on the basis of cosmopolitan humanism. A good example of it: many scientists are united by a concern about the unintended consequences of the digitalization and the existing dominant types of surveillance.

3. THE AMBIVALENT INFLUENCE OF THE SURVEILLANCE: NEW ADVANTAGES AND DANGERS FOR MAN

At first sight, the new appearing forms of the surveillance promote a more rational life and a better safety. In particular, different surveillance practices are used against terrorism, deviant behavior, challenges of new epidemics. The notion ‘dataveillance’ refers to the monitoring and collecting data as well as metadata. Dataveillance is concerned with the continuous monitoring of users’ communications and actions across the various platforms or bank accounts. In most cases people are informed about how their personal data can be used, and they usually agree to terms and conditions concerning third-party use. We are used to meet with this while doing a registration on sites, booking flights, restaurants, theater tickets. This process is usually accompanied by the digital rationalization: eBayization gives customers excess to a great variety of items offered on eBay that functions due to including many elements of purchasing predictable. Thus, while searching goods, customers may use filters that are set to sort for region, country, brand, etc. Definitely, collected data can be functionally used and uploaded to the healthcare professionals in order to prevent some disease, especially epidemics.

But at the same time, there appear very serious dangers for man. The newest forms of surveillance have as manifest as well as latent side effects that are mainly interpreted in negative terms as an authoritarian restriction of autonomy and privacy of those who are being watched (Lupton, 2016, pp. 101-122). The dataveillance may be used for repressive, invasive or exploitative goals, conducted by those with power on less-powerful citizens as an inhuman component of the digitized “control society” (Andrejevic, 2013). The issue stemming from companies and other agencies which collect personal information is known as data brokering. There are many facts that data brokers collect user’s personal data and sell that information to third parties. In the contemporary digital information economies of the ‘surveillance capitalism’ personal data have become commercial commodities that can be exploited for profit (Zuboff, 2019). New means of Web 2.0 self-communication, including platforms for viewing, listening and sharing music and movies, blogs, microblogging, personal pages on social networks, instant messaging tools (instant messengers), and video conferences – they all undermine our privacy. “Protecting individual privacy means preserving personal control over this vital space” (Mosco, 2017, p. 158).

Data selves force out the selves with the human spirit. In fact, in many aspects the ‘digital surveillance’ has led to “our war on ourselves” (Vanderburg, 2011). What is more challenging that a person is converted into an ‘anti-person’. “We are beginning to see glimpses of the emerging anti-person who lives if our being a symbolic species can be ignored most of the time, only to surrender ourselves to becoming homo informaticus” (Vanderburg, 2016, p. 333). From their birth, children are surrounded by items from the cyber world: smartphones, tablets, parents’ computers, which become the usual material environment for growing up a child. In the future it makes them dependent on the unique functions inherent in information and communication technologies, in particular, the Internet. The cybersocialization begins to dominate over the socialization based on values and norms taken from the real life-worlds. As a result, our brain and thinking acquire the character of functioning of the digital technology. More children are used to play not with each other but with digital items presenting a fake pseudo-liveable virtual reality. The gaming disorder is defined by scientists as a pattern of gaming behavior (“digital-gaming” or “video-gaming”) characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other social and cultural activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activi-
ties, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences (Official site World Health Organization).

As one can see, modern types of the surveillance have rather many negative side effects that produce serious challenges even to the future of mankind. The British sociologist J. Urry notes that in cyberspace the boundaries of the human body dissolve, individuals and machines interact much more intimately than in the pre-digital period. While anticipating the future the scholar develops dystopic visions as a warning to people living nowadays. According to him, the basic feature of the modern world is “greatly increased surveillance”. It is vividly expressed in the film *Alphaville* that presents a “futuristic soulless society” as an “inhuman, alienated dystopia where life is controlled by the omnipotent computer Alfa 60. There have been many subsequent representations of surveillance societies, often showing sites of escape from surveillance that are typically located far away from centers of power in society” (Urry, 2016, p. 91). In our view, the ‘escape from surveillance’ is impossible if we take into consideration the influence of effects of non-linear development that are expressed in the complicated risks and vulnerabilities. Instead, it is necessary to unite the achievements of all social, natural and human sciences (Kravchenko, 2011, pp. 11-18) and on this basis start moving towards cosmopolitan humanism and the *humanely oriented system* of surveillance that can link businesses, governments, and peoples from different nations for the sake of protection of the human inhabitants from now existing and would be coming complex dangers.

**CONCLUSION**

U. Beck in his posthumously published book “Metamorphosis of the World” proposed a theory of the nature of the modern complex metamorphosis, from which the potential possibility of transition to a different vector of development of human civilization follows. “The theory of metamorphosis goes beyond theory of world risk society: it is not about the negative side effects of goods but about the positive side effects of the bads” (Beck, 2016, p. 4). The metamorphosis means radical changes that imply a qualitative complication of natural and social realities, which are associated with a change in their structures and functions. They appear in the form of special nonlinear phenomena that initiate tears and traumas of the current being, as a result of acquiring a different and irreversible content (Kravchenko, 2017, pp. 3-14). It is very important to note that the process of metamorphization potentially produces possible hopes, creating unthinkable earlier alternative preconditions for humane thinking while organizing activities and implementing innovations. How people humanize their lives, knowledge and the environment depends largely on the choice of surveillance instruments. A kind of cosmopolitan humanism may give a start for elaborating a *humanely oriented system* of surveillance which is aimed at preventing different catastrophes and crimes. There are some grounds for it that can be seen even today. We will mark six of them as the most important:

- there appear some trends (though vague) of becoming ‘green surveillance’;
- *global epidemic surveillance* against COVID-19 is now realized practically among all the countries;
- *practices of surveillance for establishing humane manners* adequate to the complex socio-techno-natural realities is already manifested in the fetishism of modesty in behavior, lifestyles, and consumption (sharing economy is being developed);
- the *use of post-anthropocentric technologies for surveillance* that presupposes friendly relations of people, bio entities, and the digital;
- *surveillance cameras* are demanded for the sake of social order especially in cities;
- due to following scientific ethos social sciences act as a *human form of surveillance* (the results of investigations are usually directed on making people’s life-world better.
As one can see the idea about the essence of the modern metamorphoses as “positive side effects of bads” is valid and might be proper materialized in the future as far as types of surveillance are concerned.

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