

**Beyond Surveillance Capacity:
Surveillance and Social Control
in the Information Society**

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1.INTRODUCTION	1
2. PANOPTICISM	2
2.1. Foucault's analysis of Bentham's prison building	4
3. THE RISE OF SURVEILLANCE IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY	8
4. SURVEILLANCE IN PUBLIC SPACE - THE RISE OF CCTV	13
5. SURVEILLANCE IN CONSUMER SPACE: THE MODERN SUPERMARKET	19
6. SURVEILLANCE IN THE LIVING ROOM: DIGITAL TELEVISION	21
7. BEYOND SURVEILLANCE CAPACITY: NEW SUBJECT CONSTITUTION IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY	28
8. CONCLUSION	31
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY	35
10. APPENDIX:	38

1.Introduction

**Every breath you take
Every move you make
Every bond you make
Every single day
I'll be watching you.
(Police)**

In this paper I would like to discuss the development of surveillance from the beginning of this century to the information society of today. I would like to show that a variety of surveillance mechanisms and practices have become very ordinary features of every day life. Therefore I intend to conceptualise surveillance from various perspectives. I will start my discussion with Foucault's notion of Panopticism. Then I would like to outline surveillance and its relation to the increasing bureaucratisation of modern life, which I will do on the basis of social and liberal traditions of thought. After that I intend to show the increase of surveillance with the development of the information society and the rise of information technologies. From there I shall move to surveillance practices as an integral part of modern capitalism and the state.

On this background I would like to outline the effects on the conception of privacy in the information society. At the end of my argument I will turn to postmodern and poststructuralist thought, which is particularly

interesting in the context of surveillance and new subject constitution. This paper is to a large extent based on secondary literature. Nevertheless I have also included some case studies in to my argument. These should help to illustrate the working of surveillance mechanisms in our contemporary world. In my conclusion I intend to discuss important effects of the new rise of surveillance in the information society.

2. Panopticism

A powerful contribution to the conceptualisation of surveillance has been given by Michael Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison* (1979). Michael Foucault analyses the rise of the disciplinary society from the 17th to the 19th century. By looking at different modes of punishment in different historical contexts he argues that modern societies have developed highly effective mechanisms of social control which to a great extent are based on surveillance techniques. Especially since the 19th century these new forms of social control have become integrated in the very foundations of European society in order to cope with the huge increase in population, urbanization and industrialization.

In this context the urban explosion taking place since the early 19th century marked the beginning of a complete transformation in the way people organise and experience everyday life. The movement of thousands of people, especially young and single, from the rural areas

to the new developing metropolises like London and Paris pushed their infrastructure to an absolute limit. Richard Sennett has outlined this development in his book *The Fall of Public Man* (1976). The new strangers emerging in the cities were described as „motley“, „questionable“ and „unformed“ (Sennett 1976:51). Because of the large increase in population the early cities were characterised by the insufficiency of housing, transportation, and food. Furthermore, the lack of a functioning sewage system led to the spreading of diseases like the plague or typhoid. Because thousands of people were living in these horrible conditions rebellions and demonstrations destabilised the early metropolis. For these reasons a radical expansion of the public infrastructure took place in most of the urban centres in the western world in the 19th century. At the same time the whole economic sphere faced a radical change. The new urban environments demanded new commodities and at the same time produced new needs, which again resulted in the introduction of modern and ever more rationalized means of production. These shifts in the economic and cultural sphere laid the foundations for new relations of power, which are still inherent in today's societies. On this background Foucault describes how modern societies have developed highly rational means to control the enormous social changes. New forms of surveillance play a crucial role in this process. This becomes particularly apparent in Foucault's study of the modern prison, as it is outlined in the following chapter.

2.1. Foucault's analysis of Bentham's prison building

In his chapter about panopticism Foucault makes extensive use of the „Panopticon“, a prison building that was planned and designed at the end of the 18th century by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham. The architectural principles of the institution consist of a circular building that is arranged around a central tower. The prison cells are located on different levels in the circular building and are isolated from each other by thick walls that disallow any communication in between the inmates of the different cells. Through a well-calculated mechanism of architecture and lighting the cells are always illuminated and on the other hand this mechanism leaves the tower in darkness. Whereas the cells can be observed at all times the combination of architecture and lighting does not allow the person in the cell to find out whether he or she is being watched or not. The panopticon establishes a principle of permanent surveillance, which ensures the working of a mechanism of absolute power and control (Foucault 1979: 200).

Foucault argues that the geometry and architecture of the panopticon establishes a powerful and hierarchical system of power relations in which individuals are constantly under surveillance and therefore also constantly „normalized“ and adjusted. Besides, the prisoners themselves play an important role in this process. Foucault argues:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the

surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers. (Foucault 1979: 201)

This paragraph explains the well balanced mechanism of the de-individualised power relations, which the panoptic machine creates through a system of constant surveillance. As Foucault points out power becomes integrated into the social relations as a function of its own. As a result of this the actual exercise of power becomes needless. It is this mechanism that Foucault translates into a wider concept of society, which results in a system of absolute discipline. Foucault argues that this mechanism is usable in every institution of society:

It [the Panopticon] is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to another, of hierarchical organisation, of disposition of centres and channels of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Wherever one is dealing with multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. (Foucault 1979: 205)

In this sense the panoptic scheme becomes a general principle to structure all social relations between individuals. It not only establishes the subject through constant surveillance, but it also constantly accumulates information about this subject. This knowledge is used to

determine whether the subject is functioning in accordance to the norms. Thus the Panopticon exercises constant social control through different practices of surveillance. An important point made by Foucault in this context is that power and knowledge cannot be separated. Instead Foucault argues that power produces knowledge. Through the implementation of panoptic relations in a variety of institutions individuals are related to knowledge and a set of norms.

If the subject deviates from a norm the deviant is treated through a "set of assessing, diagnostic, prognostic and normative knowledges"(McNay 1994: 94). The doctor, the teacher, the social worker all become part of these panoptic relations. Their function is to normalize deviant behaviour through their relation to the subject and not through the direct exercise of power against the body. The variety of these panoptic relations results in the disciplinary society. Discipline turns into a power which "aims to strengthen the social forces – to increase production, to develop economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality, to increase and multiply" (Foucault 1979: 208).

We can perceive that Foucault has not only a negative but also a positive understanding of the power mechanism. To him this functionalized power, which is exercised through the disciplinary society, represents an achievement of modernism. By referring to pre-modern ways of punishment Foucault makes clear how brutal and 'inefficient' the exertion of power was in earlier days. By contrast

Foucault sketches out three criteria for the disciplinary society which “assure the ordering of human multiplicities” in the most efficient way (Foucault 1979: 218): First, the criterion of lowest possible cost, which also stands for the highest level of discretion and relative invisibility; second, the criterion of the maximization of intensity of power, and third, a system of discipline that should increase the docility and utility of every element of society (Foucault 1979: 218). In this sense the panoptic scheme improves and advances in the course of time. For the conceptualisation of surveillance this notion is absolutely crucial. Foucault shows that panoptic power relations have not only negative effects on individuals and on society in general but can also be seen as very effective mechanisms of social control that ensure the ordering of a complex society. The disciplinary society brings a multiplicity of people in accord to the norms, rules and discourses of a particular social structure.

As a conclusion from this brief discussion of Foucault’s ideas it can be said that panopticism provides us with an interesting general theory of the development of surveillance techniques in modern societies.

Foucault’s notion of panopticism has been increasingly integrated into the context of the ever changing organization of modern society. The total restructuring of industrial production in the western world and the rise of information technologies enabled through computerisation have had a huge impact on the restructuring of social relations in western societies. On this background it has been argued that we are entering a

new era, in which information has become the key element of our society.

3. The rise of surveillance in the information society

In the following chapter I will try to outline the development of the rise of surveillance in relation to the concept of the information society. I will do so by referring in particular to social and liberal traditions of thought. The main reason for this is that the whole discourse about surveillance is strongly determined and shaped by this theoretical tradition. Without doubt, as will be shown in the following, we can find important assumptions in this way of theorizing the issue of surveillance in a contemporary context.

The conception of surveillance in social theory as a means of social control is something relatively new. David Lyon has argued "until a decade ago, surveillance occupied no distinct place in the sociological lexicon (Lyon 1994: 6). This has dramatically changed in recent times. Today surveillance has become a new field of research, which is attracting increasingly more interest. The roots of the study of surveillance can be found in Foucault's study of panopticism, which I have discussed in the previous chapter. As we have seen, in the centre of his argument stands the notion of panoptic power, which classifies, monitors and normalises individuals through constant visibility and surveillance practices within the disciplinary society. As I have

mentioned Foucault's conception of surveillance has to be understood as a central feature of modern societies in general. This idea becomes more elucidated by the work of Anthony Giddens. In his study of the National State he has made the linkage between surveillance and the bureaucratic and administrative agencies of modern societies. Giddens argues:

Surveillance as the mobilisation of administrative power – through the storage and control of information – is the primary means of the concentration of authoritative recourses involved in the formation of the national state. (Giddens, 1985: 181)

For a proper understanding of surveillance the notion of the gathering of information as a means of social control is absolutely crucial. Christopher Dandeker has adopted this idea as the starting point of his book *Surveillance, Power and Modernity: Bureaucracy and Social Control and Discipline from 1700 to the Present Day* (1990). He has made the linkage between bureaucracy and surveillance much more explicit by pointing out that modern life is to a large extent based on bureaucracy as the central means of social organization.

Without it, few of the routine features of contemporary life in modern societies would be possible: the collection of taxes, the provision of welfare services, the provision of external defence, internal policing and welfare services, the production and distribution of goods and services, [...]. (Dandeker 1990: 2)

In this understanding surveillance becomes an ordinary feature of modern life. Based on James Rule's (1973) writings Dandeker has also developed the term of "surveillance capacity" (Dandeker 1990: 40), which establishes an empirical framework to identify and compare surveillance in different social organizations:

1. The size of the files held in a surveillance system
2. The centralization of those files
3. The speed of information flow
4. The number of points of contact between the system and its subject population (Dandeker 1990: 40)

This framework can be seen as an important contribution to the study of surveillance and has been used in different contexts for a more accurate distinction between different surveillance systems. In this connection Dandeker has also argued that the "age of bureaucracy is also the era of the information society. (Dandeker 1990: 4).

The interest in surveillance as a form of social control has increased with the rise of new information technologies in the "developed" countries. The restructuring of industrial production on a large scale in the western world and the rise of new means of production strongly shaped through computerized technologies have had a huge impact on the restructuring of social relations in "developed" societies.

If we look at today's society we can see that information technologies have invaded our contemporary world at such a dramatic speed over the last decades that it is difficult to grasp where this development is leading us. The rise of the information age accompanied by the development of the Internet has made information a central component of the social organization of modern societies. On this background new possibilities of surveillance have become an important and very worrying issue, which has been increasingly debated in the general public and in the social sciences over the past years. The rise of the "information society" certainly brought about great cultural, political, economic and spatial changes. The development of technologies such as the computer, the satellite and the information "superhighway" has had a strong impact on our society. In the domain of mass communications, for example, we can examine how this development has enabled the rise of the new global media economy strongly controlled by US corporations. The so-called "information revolution" can be seen as the birth of a new economic structure in which information has become the central means for profit maximization.

In this new economy information is digital-based, wired and decentralised, as opposed to the old economy where information was paper-based, centralised and isolated. Digital-based information is gaining value, allowing businesses to reorganise and merge to form multi-functional, multi-product corporations spreading across all continents and enabling increasingly competitive markets. (Kitchin 1998: 131)

At the beginning of this development commentators like Marshall McLuhan argued that the newly emerging information technologies could bring about a potential democratization of life and would lead to the dream of the "global village", in which people could freely participate beyond all national and geographical boundaries (McLuhan: 1967). With the ongoing implementation of information technology in the public and the private spheres, however, this positive notion has been replaced by a more sceptical one in recent times. The concern that the new information technologies can be seen as a new means for surveillance and social control has been increasingly brought to the foreground.

The development of the computer made it possible to process, analyze and store information in large databases. At first this technology was used especially by the military, by major corporations and by science. With the ongoing technological development computers became smaller, cheaper and more and more affordable as an effective instrument for data processing. In the wake of this the rise of the "information superhighway" made it possible to connect different computers; i. e. data could be sent back and forth from one computer to another. In due course the computer has been introduced to a great number of different contexts and our daily routines have become increasingly dependent on it. Over the last couple of years we have become so much used to club, debit and credit cards, mobile phones, CCTV cameras that we perceive them as very ordinary features of living

in an advanced society. A major effect of this technological development is that today more and more people are engaged in computer-based devices on a daily basis. Through this technical development more and more personal information is in circulation and stored in various computerised databases, as David Lyon has pointed out:

Participating in just every aspect of modern life depends upon our relationship with computer databases; and to process our personal details we rely not only upon professional experts and bureaucratic systems, which increasingly become a feature of modern life in the twentieth century, but upon electronic storage and communication devices. (Lyon, 1994:6)

Especially the convergence of different technologies has enabled new surveillance scenarios which are based on participation. This becomes particularly clear by looking at the rise of CCTV cameras in Great Britain, which I would like to discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

4. Surveillance in public space - The rise of CCTV

Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) have become a very ordinary component of the public and private realms of today's society. Surveillance cameras are increasingly installed in public spaces especially in the inner cities. At the same time more and more private companies make use of CCTV to monitor their customers and their staff.

According to the civil rights organization 'Liberty' approximately 300 000 CCTV cameras were in use in the UK in 1998, a number being increased by over 500 every week. According to the same source the public invests approximately 150 to 350 million Pounds every year in the new technology. The installed cameras are highly sophisticated machines originally developed by the military. They not only can produce excellent pictures but are also equipped with high-quality sound recording, infrared and motion-capture sensors. The London Borough of Newham has equipped their CCTV network with a software called "Mandrake", produced by a British company called Software and Systems International Ltd.. Mandrake analyzes the filmed information and is able to detect faces and compare them to pictures of a central database of the police. If a suspicious face is detected it automatically sets alarm. According to the Newham police the success rate lies at 80 percent and has helped to detect criminals (Schulzki-Haddouti 1998: 86).

When we examine the purpose of CCTV in a contemporary context we can also make very import consideration for the future developments in the urban context. The main reason for CCTV is the increasing fear of crime and disorder in the inner cities. (see Fyfe and Banninger 1998:255) The main agenda of the CCTV network in contemporary cities is to tackle these issues of crime and to establish an ordered and safe inner city space in which people are able to spend their leisure time and are able to consume as they wish. Through the implementation of

CCTV cameras in public and private spaces these places become secure consumer ghettos. Hence public space is in the process of commodification. Mike Davis (1992) has described this process in his essay "Fortress Los Angeles: the militarization of urban space". The mayor problem with CCTV today is that there is very little public debate about this issue. This is very frightening because the regulation of CCTV is not existent, as Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong (1999) argue in their book *The Maximum Surveillance Society – The Rise of CCTV:*

"At present the regulatory system in the United Kingdom is both weak and ineffective. Indeed, at present there is no general statutory control over the use of CCTV systems and, for most intents and purposes, their operation remains outside of the law."
(Norris and Armstrong 1999:228)

In a way it seems that this new form of surveillance brings Foucault's vision of the panopticon to another level. These new forms of technology which are currently introduced are completely automated systems. The individual plays an even less significant role than in Foucault's disciplinary machinery. People can now be monitored at any time and anywhere in the city, from the time when they leave home and enter the streets. If the software becomes even more sophisticated, the result could be that not a single policeman is necessary for the whole process of monitoring. The guard in the tower of the panopticon becomes replaced by a high-tech machinery which is able to make decisions on its own, 24 hours a day without holiday needs, no family to go home to and no wage to claim for.

Foucault's writings on the panopticon have increasingly been used to explain the new shift towards the information society, which is currently under way in advanced societies. Mark Poster (1995), David Lyon (1994), Oscar Gandy (1995), and Frank Webster (1995) have used Foucault's theory of panopticism as a framework for their studies in one way or another. Most of these writers have focused on different aspects of modern life, which can be reduced to three distinctive areas of interest. The first area is concerned with the rise of large computerised data collections through data bases. The second field deals with the increasing implementation of surveillance practices in the workplace. The third interest area is that of consumer surveillance as a new means of increasing productivity within modern capitalism (Lyon 1997: 1).

On this background "Big Brother is watching you" has become a phrase that is heavily used by a great number of people in different contexts to express a certain discomfort with a form of social organization in which people's lives and thoughts become increasingly transparent to different institutions of our society. This concern reaches back to the early seventies when government agencies started to store large amounts of demographic information on computerized databases. In 1978 Sir Norman Lindop, Chairman of the Data Protection Committee in the UK, commented on this, after having concluded a two year report on the threats of computer databases to personal privacy:

We did not fear that Orwell's 1984 was just around the corner, but we did feel that some pretty frightening developments could come about quite quickly and without most people being aware of what was happening. (Lindop 1978: 20)

The concern that more and more personal information about people's lives is stored on computerized databases in bureaucratic organizations, which could be used without someone's consent and even against someone's interest has been the focus of many studies. The new term "Dataveillance" has been coined to "describe the surveillance practices that the massive collection and storage of vast quantities of personal data have facilitated" (Bennett 1996: 237). For example Duncan Campbell's and Steve Connor's study *On the Record – Surveillance, Computers and Privacy*, conducted in Britain in the 1980s, "reveals a startling spectrum of threats to privacy posed by personal records on computers.(Campell, Connors 1988: 15). The whole issue of surveillance and databases has been of major interest since then. Today as medical, educational, criminal, tax, and employment records are all stored on bureaucratic databases the question of what happens when all this information is linked has become very urgent.

The current situation becomes even more worrying when we take into account that it is not only the state that has introduced these forms of surveillance practices. The collection of personal data and the screening of computer-mediated information has also been utilized by a great number of private corporations. Especially the workplace of a large

percentage of employees has become an intense surveillance environment. A recent report of the British Institute of Employment Rights has argued that surveillance has become "more widespread, more continuous, more intense and more secretive" (Ford 1999: 1). According to this report the interception of e-mails, the recording of telephone calls and even the counting of computer keystrokes have become very common surveillance techniques. The same source also claims that 8% of all employees, approximately 250.000 people, are subjected to drug testing on a regular basis.

In the context of corporate capitalism we also have to consider that surveillance techniques have been incorporated into the context of consumption. More and more data is gathered about consumers, their lifestyles and consumption patterns. In the corporate world marketing and information gathering has become one of the biggest and most important industries over the past few decades. More and more companies are trying to target specific groups of customers. To do so companies are increasingly using demographic information. In this context personal information about consumers has become a very valuable commodity. Oscar Gandy argues: "The collection and processing of personal information is directed towards the reduction of uncertainty about the average response of a group. The goal is strategic and rational (Gandy 1995:39). New information technologies play a crucial role in this process. For example the supermarket chain Tesco has recently been withheld to sell the gathered data of its 14 million

club-card holders (Waterhouse 2001: 29). Store and club cards are perfect examples for the implementation of surveillance practices in modern societies. I would like to talk about these surveillance practices in more detail in the following chapter.

5. Surveillance in consumer space: The modern supermarket

Modern supermarkets, "Super Food Stores" like Tesco's or Safeway's have risen to temples of consumerism in today's every day's life. Over the past few decades supermarkets have grown to enormous building complexes that usually include great parking areas in their surroundings. These places store ten thousands of different products, mainly food and household articles. Supermarkets attract millions of people on a regular basis, who go shopping for their daily necessities. A few of these shops are open 24 hours everyday except for Sunday night. These "super-stores" are extraordinary places because they deal with a constant flow of a multiplicity of people and products. Because of this supermarkets are highly organized. In order to control this continual flow they have to function as very effective and efficient machineries. On this background club-cards play a very important role in the consumption process, because they make people and their consumption patterns "visible". Through club cards superstores get a precise insight into what people eat, how much money they spend, how often they go shopping. These data can also be linked to the place

where the club card-holder lives, because the address has been provided by the consumer when he filled out the club card application form. The effect of this is an accurate data-image of the individual consumer. For the consumer these club cards seem to bring the advantage that he or she can accumulate "points" for saving small amounts of money over a given period. Also other companies are increasingly accumulating data about people's life. Oscar Gandy has differentiated between eleven different categories of personal information that is held in public and private databases:

1. Personal information for identification and qualification
2. Financial information
3. Insurance information
4. Social services information
5. Utility service information
6. Real estate information
7. Entertainment/Leisure information
8. Consumer information
9. Employment information
10. Educational information
11. Legal information (Gandy in Whitaker 1999:126)

With the rise of the "communication superhighway" surveillance practices have been implemented to monitor the daily "information traffic" on the Internet. For example the Internet Service Provider AOL cancelled accounts of some of its customers, because it did not appreciate the language these people were using in their e-mails (Johnson, 1995). In the context of the Internet another software technology has been highly criticised over the last couple of years - the

so-called "cookies". They are small "bits" of information that can be automatically put on the hard drive of an Internet user when he or she accesses a particular web page. This information can be used to determine which Internet pages a user visits on a regular basis. The convergence of the Internet with other communication devices has also raised a great deal of concern in recent years. Especially the development of Digital TV has been questioned because of the new possibilities of surveillance practices.

6. Surveillance in the Living Room: Digital Television

According to a news report on Channel 4 eight to ten million households in the UK will have Digital Television by the end of the year (Rowan, 2001: 1). The arrival of Digital TV has been praised during the last two years because it will provide consumers not only with a better picture and sound quality but also with a variety of different programs to choose from. Furthermore, the convergence of the digital standard and the Internet will transform TV into an interactive tool. From writing e-mails, shopping, or playing games everything seems to be possible. Beside these favourable effects for the consumer the new format will also bring with it new surveillance capacities. With the digital format it will be very easy for the broadcasters to monitor the individual TV-watching habits of connected households. This possibility will create

huge benefits for advertisers because they can create advertisements for very specific target audiences:

Interactive TV advertising in the future means broadcasters will know what you are watching, when you are watching, how long you are watching for. Which means that they can create advertising that is designed specifically for you. (Rowan 2001: 1)

According to David Rowan (2001: 1) some software companies even claim that they are able to build "psychographic profiles" of individual consumers by monitoring their program and web page choices. In the USA the company TIVO has developed a hardware-based program that automatically records TV-programs which match the profile of a particular user. The same company has been accused of breaking privacy laws and has to face an inquiry into their services. David Burke, the author of the book *Spy TV* has commented on the development of Digital TV as follows:

Interactive television creates experimental conditions in the home. Your television is going to be able to show you something, and then monitor how you respond, and then show you something else, and just keep working on you, over time, in a sort of loop. They are very excited about the way that your television is going to be able to play you, like a little laboratory rat. (Rowan 2001:1)

We can see that surveillance practices in the form of personal data gathering has extremely increased over the past few years. A lot of

questions have been raised concerning the impact of these new surveillance scenarios on us as citizens or consumers and on our life in general. Is this development leading us into a dystopian future in which there is no guarantee any more for personal privacy? How do these new techniques affect us as citizens or consumers? Have we reached a state of maximum surveillance capacity that threatens our dignity and independence as individuals? These are some of the major concerns that have been discussed in the general public and have also been publicised in the media. There is no doubt that the social organization is going through quite astonishing changes. A number of writers such as Reg Whitaker claim that privacy has come to an end. In his recent book *The End of Privacy: How Total Control is Becoming a Reality* (1999) he asks the question " what happens when there is nowhere to hide? (Whitaker 1999: 158).

On this background George Orwell's dystopian vision of a future society in *1984* (1954) has often been used as a warning in recent times. "Big Brother" has become an icon with a special connotation and meaning representing the omnipresent leader of a totalitarian regime with ultimate power and control. The surveillance society in the year 1984 is characterized by a regime that constantly spies on its people, assessing their behaviour and thoughts. Every personal expression or thought can potentially be a deviation from the norm and trigger off action on the part of the 'Thought Police'. An extremely oppressive mode of surveillance by way of omnipresent tele-screens is the central means of

social control, subjecting individuals to its totalitarian power. At first sight Orwell's conception seems to be very close to our own current situation today - the threatening aspects of surveillance in an advanced society. Nevertheless we have to consider that Orwell uses only a very crude concept of technology in his book, which is far too simplistic to be applied to the current situation. Moreover, in *1984* totalitarian control is exclusively used against individuals, whereas surveillance techniques today have collectively moved into the very centre of modern life, offering also a number of advantages and conveniences. To put too much emphasis on the negative effects only would be misleading because it does not take into account and sufficiently reflect the social reality of today. N. H. Abercrombie has commented on this in the following way:

Rather than seeing passports, insurance numbers, consumer-credit-cards and other forms of surveillance and domination, we can see such standardisation of persons in a more positive light: namely as unavoidable consequences of the requirement to treat people equally. (Abercrombie, N 1986:154)

Also David Lyon has taken up a more differentiated position, when he recognises that "surveillance has two faces"(Lyon, 1994: 201). Therefore, the accusation of total technological determinism in connection with the emerging issues of information technology is rather problematic and does not really recognize the complexity of today's social organization. The new surveillance technologies have risen in the wake of this increasing complexity; they could only develop because

they have gained an indispensable social and also cultural significance. What is often ignored in the critical discussion, for example, is the fact that the consumers themselves enjoy much more control over their own lives as well. Itemised billing, for example, with credit cards and debit cards, or the telephone caller ID's are technologies that make it much easier for consumers to monitor their own consumption habits to the smallest detail. It is important to reflect all these issues in a rational and complex way, as dystopian paranoia will not improve our current situation. Concerning the protection of privacy there have already been some improvements. Some governments, for example, have developed data protection policies which define more clearly how personal data have to be treated by both government and corporations. Recently the European Union has brought into force the EU Data Protection Directive (EU 1999:1). These are important guidelines, which will probably bring back some important privacy rights to citizens. Progress of this kind, however, can only happen when people make use of their privacy rights and recognize the fact that their privacy is invaded by surveillance technology without their knowing and consent. Discriminatory effects are basically the result of the lack of recognition on the part of individual subjects.

Reg Whitaker (1999) and Oscar Gandy (1994) have shown some important effects of the new surveillance practices. Both of them emphasise the exclusionary and inclusionary effects of „panoptic“ forms of surveillance which tend to strengthen and extend the inequalities

that have developed over the past century. They claim that the new information technologies enforce our unjust social structure by defining and separating the rich from the poor in a much more effective manner than ever before. Moreover, the panoptic mechanisms increasingly exclude certain groups from society altogether, particularly the "losers" and "victims" of our post-industrial world, sometimes referred to as the „new underclass". The other side of the coin is that those people who can afford to use these new forms of technologies are included into the new consumption process. Reg Withaker explains the possible effect of databases as follows:

The data is usually designed for one or both of two broad objectives: (1) risk evaluation and exclusion, and (2) consumer identification and inclusion. Databases provide an informational structure that is inferential and predictive. That is why they are so useful to governments and corporations. They can tell them who to exclude as risks and who to target as customers or clients.

(Whitaker 1999: 125)

In this context the problematic effects of surveillance mechanisms become obvious. They make people "visible" as data-images and data decisions are made which have real world effects. I would like to give you an example for these new inclusive forms of surveillance mechanisms. During my research for this paper I have bought a book via the online bookshop amazon.co.uk. After I have placed my order I have received an email by amazon.co.uk, from which I would give you the following quote:

Instant recommendations

Once you buy from us, we can recommend other titles you might enjoy by comparing your purchases to other customers' purchases. While realizing these recommendations may not be a perfect fit (after all, we've only known you for a short time), customers keep telling us that our suggestions are helping them find new favourites. Simply go to the Welcome page and click through to your personal recommendations through the link at the top of the page. (Frazier 2001:1)

In this quote we can clearly see in which direction the relation between corporations and consumers is developing. New information technologies enable "one to one" relations between consumers and corporations. In this particular example we can see that a data image is created on the basis of my purchases that is compared with other consumers. For me this can be an advantage because I might find other interesting titles for my research on surveillance. With the increasing technological development of modern capitalism, corporations are trying to develop long term relations with their consumers. We can see the new surveillance practices have become more intense and more individualised. On this background the concept of "the right to be left alone" appears to be rather dated, as David Lyon has argued:

The inadequacy of privacy is also exposed by changed circumstances. Electronic surveillance in the context of consumer capitalism represents a different social world from the written

documents in government bureaucracies or Taylorist monitoring of employees in the workplace. In this context our very ability to participate depends upon our possession of certain coded numbers on plastic cards. (Lyon 1994:196)

As can be concluded the issue of surveillance raises a number of very difficult questions. Surveillance has become such a strong ordering force that the conventional concepts of privacy seem not to be adequate anymore to deal with the contemporary situation. An interesting and different approach to this problem can be found in postmodern and poststructuralist thought. Especially Mark Poster has developed a distinctive theory in his book *The Second Media Age* (1995). In the centre of his argument is the idea that we need to give up the notion of a centred, self-contained and autonomous subject. I would like to discuss this point in more detail in the following chapter.

7. Beyond Surveillance Capacity: New subject constitution in the information society

In *The Second Media Age* Poster starts out from the assumption that databases have to be understood as new forms of discourses which constitute the subject in new and distinctive ways.

At this point, Foucault's theory of discourse needs some explanation. In Foucault's understanding all institutions and social practices are based in and shaped through discourse. In this sense discourse enables us to give meaning to the world, but only as far as the dominant discourse

allows us to. Thus the defining feature of discourse is that it limits the possibilities of experience and knowledge. Therefore Luis McNay (1994) has argued that "rational discourse necessarily derogates and excludes the discourses and experiences of the 'other' in order to maintain the integrity of its own identity". Discourse establishes asymmetric social relations, and as we have seen in the panoptic scheme, constitutes the subject according to this hierarchy. By examining Poster's reflections on the "Super-Panopticon" I would like to show how he puts Foucault's notion of discourse in relation to computerised databases of surveillance.

Poster begins his argument by outlining the rise of computerised data collection by the government, market research companies, banks, insurance companies, etc. These databases constantly accumulate information about money transactions, phone calls and purchases without the recognition of the individual. What is essential in Poster's argument is that no previous knowledge - as for example in criminology or psychology - is needed in that process, because "the one being under surveillance provides the information necessary for the surveillance" (Poster 1995: 86). According to Poster this mechanism leads to the formation of the "super-panopticon", which works nearly without any effort.

The phone cables and electric circuits that minutely crisscross and envelope our world are the extremities of the super-panopticon, transforming our acts into an extensive discourse of surveillance,

our private behaviour into public announcements, our individual deeds into collective language. (Poster1995: 87)

The information collected in databases results in the creation of an additional "simulated" social subject of the individual. These "simulated" identities, however, have a "real" effect upon the individual. As I have outlined earlier, it has become very common for employers to check new employees through cross-referencing different databases. A decision may be made on the basis of the information provided by the databases and not by assessing the personal qualities of an individual. Poster argues on this connection:

The discourse of the database is a cultural force which operates in a mechanism of subject constitution that refutes the hegemonic principle of the subject as centred, rational and autonomous. (Poster 1995: 88)

This to me is an extremely important and consequential assumption. For Poster the main power the databases exercise is not oppression or discipline, but the simulated restructuring of the nature of an individual. Because of this process, so Poster argues, practices of resistance have to take this new form of subjectivity into account. Poster particularly criticises the conventional binary opposition between private and public, which underlies most of the contemporary critique of the rise of surveillance. Poster also makes clear that under these conditions the body and the notion of privacy have dramatically changed:

Since our bodies are hooked into the networks, the databases, the information highway, they no longer provide a refuge from observation or a bastion around which one can draw a line of resistance". (Poster 1995 : 93)

8. Conclusion

This conception of surveillance and its interrelationship with the constitution of new subjects is a very important starting point for the discussion of surveillance in our contemporary information society. In the following paragraphs I would like to develop Poster's argument even further.

Before I do so I would like to make a few considerations about my argument so far: In the beginning of my paper I have described Jeremy Bentham's prison building. I have shown that the Panopticon can be seen as an effective surveillance mechanism that exercises constant social control. I have also outlined Foucault's interpretation of the Panopticon, and his notion of the disciplinary society. Further on I have linked Foucault's conception with the rise of the bureaucratic organisation in modern societies, in which information gathering has become one of the central means of social control and surveillance. With the development of the information society the surveillance capacity - the speed, the file size and the centralisation of personal information - has dramatically increased. Through my own little examples of surveillance in the public space with CCTV, surveillance in the modern supermarket and surveillance in the living room with the

development of digital TV I have outlined that surveillance practices have become implemented into every day life. Today it has become very difficult to avoid contact with computer mediated information technology. On the basis of social and liberal thought I have outlined that these new surveillance practices constitute new threats to our privacy and independence as individual subjects within our society. With the never-ending development of these technologies the concept of privacy seems to be very difficult to maintain. In this sense it can be argued that information gathering has invaded the concept of privacy over the past two decades. Therefore it can also be claimed that the concept of privacy is increasingly becoming inappropriate to deal with the huge rise of surveillance practices in the information society. As Poster has argued new surveillance practices in the form of information gathering on databases create "simulated" selves of our identities as citizens and consumers. On the basis of gathered data decisions are made that exclude the poor from the consumption process. We can see that the developing information technologies and surveillance practices allow precise differentiation between rich and poor. The underclass will be increasingly excluded from participating in modern life. On the other hand wealthy consumers and people who know how to use these new technologies are more likely to profit from this development. Modern capitalism will include these people into the daily consumption process through inclusionary practices of surveillance.

Having said this we can make the assumption that the new forms of surveillance technologies enhance the existing inequalities in our modern society. It can be argued that the new surveillance practices have abstracted the class system into their databases. Our simulated identities are matched with our real identities in a constant loop. Compared to earlier methods of surveillance the new technologically enhanced surveillance practices are much more effective and efficient forms of social control because they exclude and include in "real time".

So, what are the consequences of this large increase of surveillance capacity? Does the end of privacy mean that we have lost any possibilities of resistance? I think it is necessary to overcome a too pessimistic notion of surveillance practices. Of course surveillance in the contemporary context constitutes new threats as I have shown. But only when we relate the rise of surveillance to increasing poverty do we see the full dimension of the threat. Poverty is still one of the main issues of our contemporary world. With the decline of the industrial production in the west, poverty has increased in the Information Society. On this background surveillance is the main means of social exclusion. In this sense new strategies of resistance have to reflect this development particularly in the context of surveillance. On this background the privatisation of the welfare states all over Europe is very concerning. Instead of focussing on and solving the issue of poverty the national states are increasingly concerned about security. This development needs to be challenged and new methods and

concepts for the tackling of poverty are urgently needed. On the other hand new forms of resistance need to be developed in the whole context of consumer surveillance. The surveillance practices of consumer capitalism need to become much more transparent for consumers. Therefore it is necessary to overcome the concept of privacy. I think it is necessary to look at the issue of consumer surveillance from a different perspective.

Instead of claiming our "right to be left alone" we should take a more active approach and demand that consumers have the right to check what kind of data is held on them. I think it is very important to work towards a solution that enables us to find out about our "data image". One option could be that corporations have to reveal all their personalized data. We should be able to find out what they know about us. This would make it possible to negotiate our data-image and change it if gathered information is incorrect or not appropriate. Consumers should get more control over their simulated selves. But in order to do so we have to go beyond the concept of surveillance capacity and challenge these new forms of surveillance in the 21st century.

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10. Appendix:

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