



## Editorial. People Watching People.

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### Abstract

This editorial considers the issue of personal surveillance via Funder's *Stasiland*, the availability of surveillance services and technologies, and the culture of voyeurism in Japan, and introduces the articles in the 'People Watching People' issue.

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This editorial is probably somewhat more personal and less academic than usual. I think this is appropriate given the theme of this issue, 'People Watching People'. The Editors of *Surveillance & Society* felt that there was perhaps an over-emphasis on starting with either technologies or with institutions in surveillance studies and not enough emphasis placed on the human dimensions of surveillance. For me personally, there were several different reasons why I had been thinking about the intimate and the personal in surveillance over the past year. The first of these was reading Anna Funder's *Stasiland* (2004) an account of meetings with those involved with the highly personalised surveillance state of East Germany; the second was receiving a copy of a manual of surveillance training; and the third was work I have been doing on Japanese cities.

*Stasiland* is certainly far from the only recent work published on the subject (see, for example: Lindberger, 1998; Koehler, 1999; Miller 1999; Dennis and Brown, 2003). But this is neither an academic analysis nor is it simply another flashing-out of Hannah Arendt's oft-quoted work on the 'banality of evil' in totalitarianism (Arendt, 1963). Rather, it is one of the few works to capture the devastating emotional consequences of detailed personal surveillance. For those who haven't read it and I would strongly recommend that you do, is both a work of historical investigation and a personal journey, the result of a chance encounter between the author and another woman whilst she was studying in Germany. The story told to her was one of a life of incredible suffering resulting from the intensely personal nature of the internal surveillance apparatus operated by the East German state between the end of WW2 and before the reunification of Germany. Files were kept on everybody and kept constantly fresh and up-to-date through a system of informers that at its zenith (or nadir?) saw 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the population employed as informers in some capacity. Of course the watching was not simply bureaucratic, it

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had real consequences both politically and personally: people were turned into outcasts, lost their jobs their houses, had their friendships and relationships undermined and destroyed not just through overt persecution by the authorities but by the network of rumour and suspicion that such a system of constant fear of everyone and anyone creates. Importantly Funder went on not just to listen to the stories of the surveilled but also of ex-Stasi members. Whilst one in particular comes across as the creepy psychopathic figure one might imagine, for others the picture is not so black and white, there is even a sense of ‘care’ involved. It is at this strange juncture of care and control, that this issue. ‘People Watching People’ finds itself.

My second entry into the personal in surveillance came when the Journal was sent a book for review called *Advanced Surveillance: The Complete Manual of Surveillance Training*, by Peter Jenkins (2003). This is one of a growing number of technical manuals available to anyone on how to conduct (and counter) surveillance, covering everything from legal issues, through how to ‘tail’ someone, to the increasing sophisticated surveillance technologies readily available to the private citizen. AS the author points out in his introduction, “surveillance work is still a growing business,” but also that it is an incredibly under-regulated industry, “in the UK there is still no legal requirement to be licensed to operate as a surveillance operator or as a private investigator.” (1) As Mark Andrejevic shows in his article in this issue, such businesses are rapidly expanding on the Internet too and this is seemingly in response to a generalised insecurity and lack of trust, that ironically, the existence and advertising of such services and products only encourages. State surveillance of the kind operated in East Germany has been deregulated: we are increasingly encouraged to watch each other – spouses, children, colleagues, rival businesses etc. – or at least to pay someone else to do it for us, and care is only a minor motivation here. Increasingly it takes a darker, more voyeuristic mode, and although voyeurism is nothing new, again the wide availability of new technologies of surveillance and the acceptance of voyeurism as mainstream entertainment (through TV shows like ‘Big Brother’<sup>2</sup>) make voyeurism into almost a cultural norm. Just one example: a recent New York Times article details the growing problem of the hijacking of the proliferating numbers of webcams and wi-fi linked CCTV systems installed for personal safety, for voyeuristic purposes (Di Justo, 2005).

The culture of voyeurism is not limited to the West. Japan, where I have been conducting research on surveillance, has, even since the introduction of the mobile phone camera, experienced an apparent epidemic of illicit *appu-sukaato* – ‘upskirt’ – photography (Shimizu, 2003). This is connected to an long-standing obsession amongst some men with *panchira* – or panty-gazing – the practice of following women, especially those with short skirts to attempt to get a glimpse of underwear, or indeed a lack of underwear (Botting, 2002). The effects of this are to create a constant climate of fear of such covert surveillance amongst women. Similar trends in South Korea connected to the illicit photographing of women in changing rooms etc. using mobile phone cameras, led to the introduction of a new law in 2004 that requires all mobile telephone cameras to make a loud audible ‘click’ sound, to alert people to the fact that a photograph is being taken (Kim, 2003). There is nothing one could regard as being positive about this particular form of ‘people watching people.’

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<sup>2</sup> There will be further consideration of TV and surveillance in the next issue of *Surveillance & Society*, 3(1).

It is with these kinds of themes in mind that the original call for papers specified work that reflects on everyday experience and, contributions that move beyond conventional Foucauldian theoretical perspectives. We suggested we would be interested in the everyday practices of surveillance; the attitudes and behaviour of watchers / the watched, and the psychology of watching / being watched; reactions and resistance to surveillance; personal surveillance, including 'human intelligence' (HUMINT), police surveillance, tailing, voyeurism, stalking etc.; the body under surveillance; and surveillance before modern technologies.

As usual we received a large number of proposals and papers. Inevitably many do involve technologies and institutions (as if we could get away from either!), but all centred on the personal, started with the human. What is always mildly disappointing, for an editor, is the contributions we didn't get: we didn't get anything on voyeurism (which as mentioned above, is a huge and understudied issue in the social sciences); we got nothing about espionage and HUMINT; and we received nothing historical. These deficiencies may reflect the present readership, reach and reputation of *Surveillance & Society*, or the focus of research in the disciplines like Anthropology, History and International Relations which cover those areas. Certainly, to take historical accounts as one example, there have been many good studies done of surveillance before modern technologies from as far back as the 5th Century (Gradowicz-Pancer, 1999) to the Colonial era, both in the colonized lands (e.g.: Major, 1999; De Almeida Santos, 2001; Singelton, 2001) and the colonizing states (e.g.: Gillis, 1989; Ogborn, 1993; Kneale, 1999; Black, 2001; Higgs, 2001). Sometimes these do cross over into issues of sexuality and voyeurism, and studies of homosexuality in historical context have been fruitful in this regard (e.g.: Maynard 1994; Merrick, 2002). And there are many more.

But we have a fine selection of papers on a wide range of issues. They are divided into two uneven categories; first longer refereed academic pieces; and secondly, moderated more personal pieces.

In the first category, the initial piece by Mark Andrejevic, I have already mentioned. His take on how to conceive of personal surveillance and the culture of voyeurism as 'lateral surveillance' was one of a number of papers that proved controversial with our referees. In the second paper we are in even more dangerous terrain, specifically the ongoing powder-keg of Northern Ireland. Nils Zurawski has been conducting fieldwork there for a number of years, and this paper sees him reflecting on the kind of intimidatory personal surveillance that we can also see in *Stasiland*, but here not necessarily with the backing of a strong state: this is personal surveillance that emerges out of communal, religious and political divisions and which appears to persist beyond the time when overt violence is over. Next, Diane Lister tackles the nexus of care and control, mentioned earlier, in a consideration of the relationship of landlords to young tenants in Britain. There has been plenty written on 'landlordism' in a wider sense, but relatively little on the role of landlords as agents of surveillance in a very personal way, a role which has a major impact on the life experiences of their tenants, so this is a most welcome piece. Alison Wakefield considers the public functions of private security guards. With Town-Centre Management (TCM), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the general corporate takeover of public space, largely unregulated private security is increasingly many people's first point of interaction in the policing of urban spaces. Finally in this section, two pieces on the relationship of individuals with

the social infrastructures of surveillance: Lynsey Dubbeld's measured consideration of the rights of those under surveillance by CCTV, and Mark Patton's piece on how the self-reporting of drug use (self-surveillance) measures up against drug testing.

In the second section, we have three contrasting pictures of the experience of surveillance. It is particularly interesting to have Adrian Jones' tale of his life as a electronic tagging Monitoring Officer. Too often, those involved in surveillance practices are abstracted out of the picture (whether it is a picture of social care or social control), and here we get the chance to hear the story directly and personally. The next writer, Kathy Jones, shares a surname, but the piece is as different as one could imagine: this is a very critical opinion on the rights of women under intense surveillance, in this case in Afghanistan. Finally, we welcome the irrepressible Steve Mann back to our pages, with a characteristically quirky but also angry and thought-provoking illustrated personal essay on he and his young daughter's experience of personal surveillance and harassment and his attempt to fight back.

Finally it is a great pleasure to have the poet, Giles Goodland, contributing one of his trademark collage-poems from a new sequence called, Capital. 'Surveillance Capital seems to sum up the combination of technological, personal and institutional, the uneasy combinations of work, sex and control found in the phenomenon of surveillance better than I can manage in prose, and provides a fine and intriguing coda to 'People Watching People'. I hope you will agree.

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