

CURRENT

I/A

Scaffolds I can no longer see

Reading Circle Package

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Pages 1 - 2:

Han, Byung-Chul. "Smart Power." *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. Pp 13-15. Verso, 2017.

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Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. Pp 15. Verso, 2014.

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Rossiter, Ned. "Paranoia Is Real: Algorithmic Governance and the Shadow of Control." *Media Theory*, September 18, 2017. 3–4. <http://mediatheoryjournal.org/ned-rossiter-paranoia-is-real/>

Pages 6 - 7:

Zuboff, Shoshana. "Toronto is surveillance capitalism's new frontier," *Toronto Life*, September 4, 2019, <https://torontolife.com/city/toronto-is-surveillance-capitalisms-new-frontier/>

1. Han, Byung-Chul. "Smart Power." *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*. Pp 13-15. Verso, 2017.

"Power is not limited to breaking down resistance and forcing obedience. It need not take the form of coercion. Power that relies on violence does not represent power of the highest order. The mere fact that another will manages to form and turn against the power-holder attests to the latter's weakness. Wherever power does not come into view at all, it exists without question. The greater power is, the *more quietly* it works. It just happens: it has no need to draw attention to itself.

To be sure, power can express itself as violence or repression. But it is not based on force. Power need not exclude, prohibit or censor. Nor does it stand opposed to freedom. Indeed, power can even use freedom to its own ends. Only in its negative form does power manifest itself as a violence that says 'no' by shattering the will and annulling freedom. Today, power is assuming increasingly permissive forms. In its permissibility - indeed, in its friendliness - power is shedding its negativity and presenting itself as freedom.

"... The neoliberal regime's technology of power takes on subtle, supple and smart forms; thereby, it escapes all visibility. Now the subjugated subject is not even aware of its own subjugations. The whole context of domination (Herrschafts zusammenhang) remains entirely hidden. Consequently, the subject thinks itself free.

Inasmuch as it expends a great deal of energy to force people into the straightjacket of commandments and prohibition, disciplinary power proves inefficient. A significantly more efficient technology of power makes sure that people subordinate themselves to power relations on their own. Such a dynamic seeks to activate, motivate and optimize - not to inhibit or repress. It proves so effective because it does not operate by means of forbidding and depriving, but by pleasing and fulfilling. Instead of making people compliant it seeks to make them dependant.

"...Today's crisis of freedom stems from the fact that the operative technology of power does not negate or repress freedom so much as exploit it. Free choice (Wahl) is eliminated to make way for a free selection (Auswahl) from among the items on offer.

Smart power with a liberal, friendly appearance - power that stimulates and seduces - is more compelling than power that imposes, threatens and decrees. Its signal and seal is the “Like” button. Now, people subjugate themselves to dominion by consuming and communicating - and they click “Like” all the while.”

2. Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. Pp 15. Verso, 2014.

"Contemporary infrastructure space is the secret weapons of the most powerful people in the world precisely because it orchestrates activities that can remain unstated but are nevertheless consequential. Some of the most radical changes to the globalizing world are being written, not in the language of law and diplomacy, but in these spatial infrastructural technologies - often because market promotions or prevailing political ideologies lubricate their movement through the world. These stories foreground content to disguise or distract from what the organization is actually doing.

Far removed from familiar legislative processes, dynamic systems of space, information and power generate de facto forms of polity faster than even quasi official forms of governance can legislate them. Large scale spatial organizations like infrastructure projects (eg US rail in the nineteenth century, or global submarine cable networks) have long created the need for an administrative authority comparable to that of the state, and they continue to require direction from new constellations of international, intergovernmental and nongovernmental players. As a site of multiple overlapping or nested forms of sovereignty, where domestic and transnational jurisdictions collide, infrastructure space becomes a medium of what might be called extrastatecraft- a portmanteau describing the often undisclosed activities outside of, in addition to, and sometimes even in partnership with statecraft."

3. Rossiter, Ned. "Paranoia Is Real: Algorithmic Governance and the Shadow of Control." *Media Theory*, September 18, 2017. <http://mediatheoryjournal.org/ned-rossiter-paranoia-is-real/>

"For German media philosopher, Erich Hörl, the "general ecology" of the technosphere analyses the contemporary condition of governance and cybernetic control in a technical world. Hörl maintains that we are in an:

...environmental culture of control that, thanks to the radical environmental distribution of agency by environmental media technologies, ranging from sensorial to algorithmic environments, from bio- to nano- and geotechnologies, renders environmentality visible and prioritizes it like never before.

Yet environmentality, understood as a new idiom of control, is only visible inasmuch as it manifests on a scale of perceptible transformation.

If we adopt the paranoid precept that everything is open to inspection, then our next move would be to ask what, then, is made visible and knowable? And, who cares? The infrastructural and technical components of environmental media are more often highly secluded and inaccessible data facilities, or computational systems operating in the background of routine transactions, processes and practices. The political question of power goes beyond a philosophical politics of sense, theory and concepts. To attribute a politics to such struggles of thought, we would need to identify the institutional and geocultural terrains in which conceptual dispute is materialized. And that's when paranoia begins to set in."

"As Noortje Marres observes in her recently published book, Digital Sociology:

... when social researchers take up online instruments of data collection, analysis and visualization they enter into highly troubling relations of dependency with the infrastructures and

organizations that make them available. As social researchers take up online tools, we too sign up to the terms of use stipulated by digital industries, whether we are aware of it or not.

So what's to be afraid of here? Data extraction and financialization are central to the economies spawned by digital infrastructures of communication. Noortje's focus is on the ethical implications that attend the generation of data and knowledge from online tools that are integrated with technologies of capture that seek to extract value from populations under scrutiny. There is also the political question of how to organize in ways not dependent on the digital infrastructures of platform capitalism. But who's got a plan?"

4. Zuboff, Shoshana. “Toronto is surveillance capitalism’s new frontier,” *Toronto Life*, September 4, 2019, <https://torontolife.com/city/toronto-is-surveillance-capitalisms-new-frontier/>

“However, the most predictive data come from intervening in the state of play to modify behaviour in ways that serve the bottom line. Data scientists call this the shift from “monitoring” to “actuation,” where a critical mass of data can be used to impose programmed control. Surveillance capitalists operate through the digital infrastructure to achieve this power: automated systems are designed to modify human behaviour in the direction of preferred outcomes. The ability to know gives way to the power to control.

Sidewalk Labs and the “Google city” represent the next phase, adapting these methodologies to real life in the real city: the next experimental laboratory. This evolution tracks the advice of the scholar who perfected the theory and practice of behavioural modification, B.F. Skinner, who wrote in 1947: “It is not a matter of bringing the world into the laboratory, but of extending the practices of an experimental science to the world at large.”

Toronto now stands first in line to become surveillance capitalism’s real-world petri dish. Sidewalk’s proposals reveal the full arc of the new logic. With astonishing audacity, it claims the city as its laboratory and the lives of citizens as its free raw material for data creation, ownership, computation and monetization. Sidewalk Labs celebrates the Toronto waterfront as its “meaningful test bed and product/service trial venue...” To this end, the company unilaterally declares that all public and private experience occurring within this experimental zone would be deemed “urban data” available for monitoring and actuation. In these endeavours, Sidewalk can be confident in its dominance as it rides the wave of Google’s leading position in machine intelligence.

The real outcome here is the privatization of the city. In this version of our digital future, algorithms replace laws, as the computational truths that expand private capital’s revenue streams replace democratic municipal governance. The city is no longer a crucible of creativity, which is innately unpredictable. Instead it becomes a zone of certainty for the sake of profit. Fall to this anti-democratic juggernaut, surveillance capitalism will be emboldened to keep on taking.

Without laws to protect democratic freedoms and governance, more cities, then regions, then countries will be reborn as private data flows that yearn toward totality for the sake of profits, until “privacy,” “self-determination,” and “democracy” read like ancient words on faded parchment.”