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This paper deals with the issue of surveillance as it applies to recent technological advancements. Specifically, advancements in video capturing and social media have made public events into spectacles that are observed and shared online by the public. Public protest and discourse loosens itself from the bounds of state authority and enters the arena of the public. This phenomenon reconsiders Foucault's conception of the panopticon. Foucault's panopticon is useful as a tool for understanding the way power operates through surveillance in a state-to-public direction, but technological advancements have allowed for a reversal of this surveillance. With real examples like the pepper spraying of student protesters at UC Davis, the public now has surveillance over the state (in this example police officers) from its multitude of citizen perspectives that can be shared and disseminated online. This is an important development because it increases the autonomy and safe power of individuals who wish to speak out against excessive use of power by the state over the public. People can do so without fear of greater police suppression of real events. Issues with this development are discussed, like the chance for the state, or other sites of power (like corporations) to develop the copyrighting of public space, making any event the property of power structures. This would be a problem, as it would lessen the autonomy of individuals in public spaces.

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This paper deals with the issue of surveillance as it applies to recent technological advancements. Specifically, advancements in video capturing and social media have made public events into spectacles that are observed and shared online by the public. Public protest and discourse loosens itself from the bounds of state authority and enters the arena of the public. This phenomenon reconsiders Foucault's conception of the panopticon. Foucault's panopticon is useful as a tool for understanding the way power operates through surveillance in a state-to-public direction, but technological advancements have allowed for a reversal of this surveillance. With real examples like the pepper spraying of student protesters at UC Davis, the public now has surveillance over the state (in this example police officers) from its multitude of citizen perspectives that can be shared and disseminated online. This is an important development because it increases the autonomy and safe power of individuals who wish to speak out against excessive use of power by the state over the public. People can do so without fear of greater police suppression of real events. Issues with this development are discussed, like the chance for the state, or other sites of power (like corporations) to develop the copyrighting of public space, making any event the property of power structures. This would be a problem, as it would lessen the autonomy of individuals in public spaces.

On November 18th, 2011, students at the University of California, Davis, were pepper sprayed while sitting on campus grounds with arms interlocked in a peaceful protest (Raspal, 2011). As this horrific incident unfolded, hundreds of fellow students watched and videotaped the scene, ensuring its documentation and widespread publication in the media. This event provides an excellent example of how access to camera technology, whether in the form of smartphones or digital cameras, has allowed for the idea of surveillance to expand beyond the simple notion of state observation of the public. In this paper, I will argue that as camera technology has become increasingly accessible to the public, powers of surveillance have continually shifted from the state into the hands of individual citizens, creating a new kind of panopticon. I will demonstrate how widespread public access to surveillance has developed in conjunction with forums for sharing and discussing observations. I will examine this using Cass R. Sunstein's article

“Many Working Minds” which explores the ability of wikis and blogs to bring together a wide variety of minds to cultivate effective dialogue. The public panopticon is created and sustained by simple, democratized access to the variety of internet media that proliferate video surveillance taken by everyday citizens. This paper will argue that improved camera technology does not only lead to greater surveillance of the public by the state; it can also generate increased surveillance of the state itself, increase the safe power of ordinary citizens, and therefore improve the state’s accountability to the public.

The filming of the students at UC Davis exemplifies how new technology has changed the way in which surveillance occurs in public space. Although the students were engaging in a protest that appeared to all as entirely peaceful in nature, one officer used his pepper spray in an excessive fashion over the seated students. These protests took place in conjunction with the broader “Occupy Movement”, a global, anti-capitalist protest that has expanded out of a demonstration called “Occupy Wall Street”. The reasons for the protest are not relevant within the context of this paper; it is technology’s role in the international dissemination of a harmful display of police brutality that will be examined. The use of excessive force by police is not a new phenomenon, and has often been the impetus for other major protests. An example that comes to mind is the beating of Rodney King by police, an act that happened to be videotaped by a bystander. The release of the footage of this incident caused a media sensation and sparked the Los Angeles riots of 1992 (BBC News, 2002). It is clear that citizen surveillance has become a meaningful element in public access to knowledge and in the way we hold the state accountable for its treatment of citizens.

However, it must be recognized that the filming of the Rodney King beating, given the technology of the time, was a fortunate but unlikely occurrence. The actions of the police that night were observed and videotaped simply because one person was in the right place at the right time. One can imagine that if the event had instead been recorded by government surveillance, the state would not have been nearly so willing to turn the footage over to the media. Evidence of this phenomenon is found in the aftermath of Wikileaks, in which video footage of horrific injustice done by American soldiers was kept secret from the public, until a soldier who rejected the institutionalized concealment of American wrongdoing sent the footage to Wikileaks.

In comparing the UC Davis event with the Rodney King beating and other, earlier incidents of protest, one notices two distinct ways in which technological advancements and increased access to internet dialogue have affected the gathering of surveillance and the publication of information about protests. First, with technological advancement in the capturing of video, most phones or personal cameras have the ability to record for lengthy periods without difficulty. If one wishes to observe the actions of the protest at UC Davis, there are countless different angles and lengths of

footage available on publicly accessed sites like Youtube. Rather than just seeing one, “first person” video perspective, anyone can now gain a more three-dimensional understanding of a moment that they did not experience in person. Some videos zoom in on the pepper spraying of the protestors, while others show the scene long before the actual event, and still others provide images of the uproar that broke out in the aftermath of the police brutality. All of this footage was visible within hours of the incident and was presented in its raw form. Given the many different angles and perspectives on the situation, it is unreasonable for claims of bias, or media sensation, to be leveled against the video footage.

It is in this way that the public, with their wide access to video capturing technology, now have a panopticon effect of surveillance on the state. The panopticon is a concept developed by Bentham, which Foucault uses in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. The concept is based on a disciplinary structure introduced in prisons that acted as a way to effectively maintain surveillance over prisoners. In its physical form, the panopticon is an institution in which a centralized tower allows for constant surveillance of surrounding cells, so that individual prisoners are under continuous observation. This gives the awareness of a disciplinary gaze to prisoners at all times, even if there is actually no one watching them from within the structure. The physical presence of the panopticon works to create a perception of perpetual observation, so that “the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action.” (Foucault, 1975) The panopticon is always there to provide surveillance, and as a concept is easily attributable to the effectiveness of various disciplinary structures within our society.

The concept of the panopticon applies to the state of surveillance and technology today, and I claim that citizens now have the ability to constantly observe each other and those in positions of institutional authority, such as the police. The development of camera technology has enacted a kind of panopticon in which the classic central structure is now inhabited by anyone with access to surveillance of public spaces. One might argue that this only accounts for situations that occur in broad daylight in areas that are publicly accessible, since not just any individual is allowed to monitor the private recesses of government institutions. However, the surveillance of public space still increases the accountability of the enactors of the will of the governing bodies, such as the police force. A police officer at an event like the UC Davis protest now must be made aware that a public gaze is constantly able to record his or her actions, creating a new form of surveillance that puts some control back in the hands of the public. According to Foucault, “The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately.” (1975) At present, public space is seen constantly and is recorded by a magnitude of technological instruments; all that occurs is recognized immediately and presented to the rest of society via the Internet.

Foucault's panopticon is often used as an example of the way in which governmental surveillance exercises its power over the public. Foucault uses the concept as a way of analyzing surveillance by governing structures, by stating:

There is no risk, therefore, that the increase of power created by the panoptic machine may degenerate into tyranny; the disciplinary mechanism will be democratically controlled, since it will be constantly accessible 'to the great tribunal committee of the world'. (Foucault, 1975)

This "tribunal" refers to the democratic introduction of surveillance into our everyday lives, making the public a site of constant observation where it is accepted that all of our actions are monitored by a disciplinary structure. The installation of cameras in the United Kingdom has reached a point where levels of surveillance are well understood by the public and entire cities are observable through the Closed Circuit Television system (BBC News, 2006). Government surveillance is certainly a reality, and is one that might be seen as intrusive and undesirable for reasons of privacy for citizens living under such surveillance.

However, some have argued that government surveillance may not necessarily be a negative concept. James Stacey Taylor argues that this kind of government observation is actually something to be praised, because, among other reasons, it could provide an epistemically responsible way of providing testimony in court cases, thereby reducing the need for witness testimony that is often subject to conscious or unconscious biases (2005). Surveillance could have a similar effect in situations of public disturbance by providing impartial, accurate testimony of the events that transpire. There is no need for a written account of what happened at UC Davis, which could easily be seen as exaggerated or biased according to the author's opinion. The ability for the public to present events in a concrete and easily observable way, such as through the countless video recordings of the pepper spraying at UC Davis, make attempts at disproving the incidents based on bias or political desires very difficult.

Another important technological example to stem from the occupy movement has been constant "livestreaming" of events and protests. Livestreams are live video feeds of a given area where a camera runs continuously, providing coverage of a specific area that many can observe in real-time online. This is another example of a gaze that is accessible by the public through the internet, allowing for surveillance of what is happening worldwide to be seen from any computer with internet access. Even recent events and protests around the world, like the Egyptian Revolution, have been captured on livestream, giving surveillance access to the world to observe world events from the third person perspective of a fixed camera. During the occupy movement, protests in almost every city featured accessible livestreams of their events as they unfolded.

It is the ability to share and communicate the events captured by personal video devices that must be present, however, in order for this kind of surveillance to have any effect on society as a whole. It is at this point that the internet, a space where many different sources of information can congregate, becomes equally as necessary as video recording technology. In constructing the public panopticon of surveillance of the state, the access of the public works because "...if thousands of people are in a position to make small additions and improvements, an initial skeleton can rapidly become a full body." (Sunstein, 2006) In the way a website like Wikipedia becomes fully formed as a result of the efforts of many different agents to shape a self-editing and constantly evolving structure, the dissemination of recorded video gains its panopticon form once the footage is uploaded by many different agents who work together to develop strong public perception of events.

In Sunstein's article, he discusses the way websites like ohmynews.com desires to make "every citizen a reporter" (2006). Anyone who wishes to supply a written article is most likely given a space to publish it, as about 70 percent of submissions are published (Sunstein, 2006). This is just one example of internet technology allowing for a more democratized dissemination of information and first-person experience. The goal of a website like ohmynews.com is to provide an alternative from the elitist journalistic culture, but it also has the effect of giving a voice to all with internet access. This is a trend that is apparent in almost all innovations in Internet technology, and the more that individual voices are given room to share their opinions, the more surveillance will be inevitable. As Sunstein predicts, "the diversity of views, along with a widespread desire to cooperate, will ensure many successes" (2006), and it is apparent that along with the diversity of personal perspectives, widespread recorded videos coming together on internet sites will continually be useful as a tool of surveillance of the state by the public.

It is clear that bringing together many different points of view has been a useful and fruitful experiment, allowing for the construction of an ever-present ability of the public to provide surveillance over public spaces, representing the panopticon effect. However, the spreading of information can only be seen as useful if it is proven to actually influence real world events, rather than simply record them. One of the ways blogs and similar websites have influenced real world events has been in their ability to refute untruths that typically occur in the older, more mainstream forms of media. Sunstein gives the example of a group of bloggers finding the reality behind a document that Dan Rather presented in 2004, supposedly proving that George W. Bush failed to do his duty and obey orders during his military service in 1972 (2006). The document was falsified with surprising speed by many bloggers who refuted its validity, and the untruth was not allowed to gain political momentum (Sunstein, 2006).

The usefulness of blogs in conjunction with video technology was also present in refuting untruth during the events at UC Davis. Shortly after the pepper spraying of the protesters, the University released statements in accordance with this news story that states “According to university officials, police were authorized to use pepper spray after they were surrounded and threatened by students.” (Raspal, 2011) This definition of the events presents a clear bias in favor of the state and the behaviour of the police, as if police were somehow at risk and therefore such drastic action was necessary. This blatant misrepresentation of events is par for the course for institutions that have an interest in maintaining their ability to use the state apparatus against the police, and to misinform the the general public by presenting protestors as dangerous. This misinformation was easily refuted using the surveillance power of the public who witnessed the event. In the ensuing video footage, there was no evidence showing police being subjected to any risk at the time of the spraying, bringing the University’s official description of events into question. In fact, “official statements” like these begin to appear ridiculous due to their refutability, and I claim that it has become widespread knowledge that beneath any statement like this, somewhere the ‘real’ truth of the circumstance can be found on the Internet. Due to the usefulness of video and blog technology, this untruth was perpetuated for less than a day, and soon afterward the Chancellor of UC Davis, Linda B.P. Katehi, released apologetic statements, recognizing the wrongness of her actions (Raspal, 2011). It is clear that recording technologies have legitimate effects on real world events, and that surveillance of incidents by the public can hold those in power accountable for their actions.

Arguments against surveillance, typically leveled against government observation of the public, are also applicable to the surveillance described in this paper. The contention that surveillance compromises personal privacy applies to all types of surveillance, including observation performed by individual citizens. It is possible that the panopticon effect of a democratized, technologically advanced society may potentially infringe on the ability of individuals to live life without being constantly monitored. Taylor discusses the fears of a Big Brother effect, like that described in the novel *1984*, in which full surveillance of the public removes citizen’s ability to act autonomously (2005). In this scenario, when citizens become aware that they are constantly being watched, they adjust their actions to match the desires of the State in order to avoid disciplinary action. This behaviour modification is similar to the panopticon effect originally discussed by Foucault, and would therefore appear to be similar in nature to the way in which the democratized panopticon operates.

In response to this criticism, it can be said that removal of autonomy does not occur given public observation of the State. Although all forms of surveillance seem to have an effect on autonomy, the public panopticon described in this paper does not attempt to infiltrate all the elements of citizens’ lives. Instead, it places its gaze on the events in which the public intersects with the State, and in which the power of those in authority

is made fully observable to all. It shows what occurs when the public reasserts power in the presence of the State, ensuring that all that occurs is visible to all who wish to see.

The gaze of the panopticon is democratized and disseminated to all who can access it. The gaze of State surveillance has been in effect to keep the public in line with the will of the State. In this way, comparisons to Big Brother are not entirely misguided. When one approaches a store that has signs stating, “This area is being filmed”, immediately people become aware of their own actions, and their conjunction with the laws of the State. In the case of the public panopticon, this experience is redirected towards those in power. The protestor sitting on the ground, feeling the sting of pepper spray need not worry that their experience of injustice will go unnoticed. One must imagine that they knew their action would provoke an outcry of accountability for the upholding of principles by those in power. Their autonomy was already infringed upon by the actions of the police in this event, and rather than reduce their autonomy to an even greater degree, public surveillance provides the reconciliation that such events will not occur without consequence for the State.

In conclusion, greater surveillance of the State by the public, made possible by technological advancements, has been effective in holding the State accountable to the public. Foucault’s conception of the panopticon as a tool of surveillance is useful in describing the way video capturing technology and social forums on the internet have, in equal measure, allowed for new forms of surveillance. These new forms of surveillance have placed the ability to hold the State accountable in the hands of the public and has redistributed power so that it is not solely held by the State, as is commonly conceived. The events of the Occupy Movement, and especially the pepper spraying of protestors at UC Davis, serve as an excellent example of the way that technological advancements have increased the state’s accountability to the public by decentralizing powers of surveillance.

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