



SESSION ABSTRACT

Portable panopticons: (in)visibility, intimacy and exposure in the age of democratized surveillance

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Mercilessly dissolving dreams and promises of freedom through universal access to information, technological advances including biometrics, digital recognition (and the concurrent spread of CCTV cameras), data management, and the ubiquity of mobile connectivity, are making Foucauldian dystopias of total visibility very real. While new technologies are facilitating the acquisition and management of personal data on the part of states and corporations, providing these institutions with unprecedented power to assess and direct individual political and market choices, a defining feature of these processes is the democratization of surveillance – the transfer of responsibility for the policing of behaviour from political and economic institutions, to individual consumers themselves.

At the same time new technologies provide fresh opportunities for the anonymous self-fashioning of identities and the development of virtual 'communities of complicity' (Steinmüller 2014). The present ubiquity of social networks and apps capable of recording and storing video and audio files in portable communication devices threatens us with the spilling over of the private into the public sphere, in the form of compromising images, sounds and written words. This risk of exposure of individual and group 'cultural intimacies' (Herzfeld 1996) has provoked an unprecedented crisis of visibility concerning spaces previously sealed off from the public (student dorms, monastic cells, military barracks, karaoke rooms, etc.), defined in turn by a rising awareness of the self and self-presentation, and an ever-present policing of political and moral personae.

This panel calls for contributions aiming at exploring this rapidly evolving landscape, defined by the ambiguous and fluid dynamics between the offline and the online, the public and the private, the visible and the invisible. We would like to look at the ways in which refined instruments of (self-)control and the general expectation to be not only connected and available, but *visible* at all times, are forcing unwitting individuals around the world (including anthropologists themselves) to participate in the endlessly creative patrolling, evaluating, and regulating of behaviour and discourse, in the process supporting a de-politicization of (public) morality through the immediate consumption of intimacies.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Thursday, September 20, 2018 | Slot 3 | Room 2

Roger Casas: *Monastic intimacies: new technologies, visibility, and trans-local hierarchies among the Tai Lue of southwest China*

Hannah Klepeis: *Buddhism on display: social networks and transformations in lay-monk relations amongst Tibetans in China*

Ozgu Hazal Ertaş: *Transparency for all: a case study of "The Circle" (2013)*

Thursday, September 20, 2018 | Slot 4 | Room 2

Veronika Nagy: *The risks of digital governance - How the algorithm literate elites design future crime politics?*

Ch. Schirmer & Moritz Engel: *From Portable Panopticons to Societies of Control - The Emancipatory Potential of Radical*

Progressive Movements in times of Surveillance

Karim Gherab: *Rear (digital) windows: algorithms of the unconscious*

SESSION PAPERS

Monastic intimacies: new technologies, visibility and cultural defectiveness among the Tai Lue of southwest China

Casas, Roger (Institute for Social Anthropology (ÖWA), Vienna, AUT)

Once the convoluted times of the Maoist era were over, the political and economic reforms implemented by the Chinese government at the end of the 1970s paved the way for the integration of Sipsong Panna, a small frontier region in southwestern Yunnan Province, into national and regional economic and cultural networks. Putting an end to the overt repression of the previous decades, the reforms facilitated at the same time a strong revival of Buddhist practice among the Tai Lue, a minority group usually identified as the largest community of Theravada Buddhists in China. While the revival also meant the recovery of the traditional patterns of cross-border mobility of Tai Lue monastics, this movement expanded its target destinations to include monastic centres of learning in places such as Bangkok, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. The enhanced visibility that this participation of Tai Lue monastics in trans-local Buddhist 'imagined communities' has brought, has provoked unintended consequences. In particular, the engagement of these religious specialists in practices usually considered as incompatible with the pursuit of religious goals, but which nevertheless provide Tai Lue monks and novices with a common identity, such as having food in the afternoons, drinking alcohol, or playing basketball, has become problematized and questioned by local and non-local observers – and with it, the whole of Sipsong Panna monastic culture.

The unstoppable spread of mobile phones and phone-based social networks in China has compromised even more the hitherto intimate realms of Tai Lue monastic life, as ubiquitous webcams and other apps have made previously sealed-off spaces such as the living quarters of a monastery, or the karaoke room, exposed to the gazes of both participants and outsiders to these 'communities of complicity' (Steinmüller 2013). Beyond the risk that the spilling of sensitive images may bring to an individual's monastic career, the awareness of real or imagined, larger and external moral orders where what is appropriate, modern and civilized monastic behaviour is defined and sanctioned, plays a fundamental role in the performance of monasticism in Sipsong Panna today. Based on long-term ethnographic work among Tai Lue monastic communities in Sipsong Panna and other locations, in this presentation I will explore how the awareness of these broader hierarchies of value, together with the expansion of portable tools of communication, shapes contemporary practices and forms of self-fashioning on the part of Tai Lue monastics. Beyond understanding the apparent 'malpractices' of these minority monks and novices simply as symptoms of a degraded form of monasticism, I consider the complex negotiations between the spheres of the private and public, the seen and the unseen, as central to the tensions inherent to the contemporary transformations of vernacular imaginings of religious practice and morality among members of this minority group.

Buddhism on display: social networks and transformations in lay-monk relations amongst Tibetans in China

Klepeis, Hannah (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, GER)

In the midst of post-Mao China's moral crisis, significant numbers of urban, middle-class Han Chinese have turned towards Tibetan Buddhism for spiritual guidance. While some may travel to Tibetan cultural regions to seek out religious specialists, it has also become common practice to invite monks to urban centres to perform ritual services (Smyer Yu 2008). As a result, prominent *lama* now often have a lay following that reaches far beyond their home region, heavily relying upon new forms of communication to meet their disciples' ritual needs. As donations and remunerations play a central part of monk-laity relationships, this extension of the sphere of religious influence beyond regional boundaries has contributed to the image of Tibetan monks as 'religious entrepreneurs'. In monks' relationships with local laity, mobile phones and the social app WeChat have become a key part of daily communication and integral to the organization of rituals. Whereas in the past it might have taken days or weeks for a lay person to seek out a monk and receive the requested ritual due to lack of modern transport and communication, monks and their services are now available 'on demand'.

Monks, however, are not the only ones that make use of social networks for religious purposes. Many urban, middle-class Tibetans now seek advice from *lama* residing in other regions – mainly from the Tibetan diaspora in India, where monks are considered to be more knowledgeable and less acquisitive than the those who have spent their monastic career in China.

Further, both monks and lay people have begun to use social networks to display their religious practices and to share rituals they may participate in or observe with their followers by posting photos and videos. Motivations for sharing such private, intimate moments, however, are claimed to extend beyond the self-promotion and self-fashioning taken as common features of social networks. Sharing takes on religious purposes such as the distribution of Buddhist knowledge and the merit gained through these rituals. This alters relationships amongst laity and sangha in two fundamental ways: firstly, the relationship between sangha and laity is understood to be based on distance and distinction. Whereas temple halls are open to the public, large parts of the monastery normally remain only accessible to monks. Through monks' use of WeChat the insides of the monastery have become at least virtually accessible to outsiders, allowing them to watch monks eating their meals and studying. Secondly, as lay people participate in the sharing and discussion of intimate religious knowledge and insights, they themselves in some way take on the role of teacher. Yet, as many monks' lifestyles begin to more closely resemble the lives of lay people, some monks have become concerned with affirming their distinction from lay people by displaying particularly pious online persona.

Based on 12 months of ethnographic research in Gyalthang, an urbanized Tibetan region in the southwest of China, this paper will discuss the various ways phone-based social networks effect relations amongst monastics and local laity: What new forms of intimacies and distance are being created? How are religious practices and the arrangements of ritual services changing? What are the economic dimensions of these transformations?

Transparency for all: a case study of "The Circle" (2013)

Ertas, Ozqu Hazal (Kadir Has University, Istanbul, TUR)

David Brin once wrote in "The Transparent Society" (1998) that in the future it will prove quite impossible to legislate away the surveillance tools and the real issue facing the citizens of a new century will be how mature adults choose to live in a transparent society. The world Brin enthused about is similar enough to our own societies where the accounts of daily lives of individuals are displayed constantly on social media platforms and their private lives of individuals are made visible and knowable to an unprecedented degree. In the present day circumstances, social networking sites ranging from Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, to internet related services like Google, ubiquitous cameras and IoTs (internet of things) come to function as an intensifier of panoptic reasoning. Not only these networks of socially oriented activities create new visibilities and visually mediated appearances, but also they require of the constant introduction and presentation of the self which culminates in new nets of spectatorship. That is, panopticism no longer remains fragmentary but it takes hold in every domain of our societal lives even the ones which are thought ungovernable before: the domain of one's private life. This paper suggest, then, to improve our understanding of the present day parameters of the debate concerning the relation between panopticism and telecommunication technologies. It draws our attention to the ideologies informing the design of these new technologies, what kind of subjectivities they produce and finally what the future holds for non-adopters of these technologies. In order to show the new disciplinary structures at work, this paper prefers a theoretical/ conceptual approach and the analysis of Dave Egger's techno-satire book "The Circle" (2013) is used as a resource for theorizing.

The risks of digital governance - How the algorithm literate elites design future crime politics?

Nagy, Veronika (Utrecht University, Amsterdam)

One of the pressing issues in the field of online data surveillance is how far the powers of the police in cyberspace might reach. According to the proposed jurisdiction in The Netherlands (Artikel 2.8.2.4.1) new digital detection methods will be facilitated for online police surveillance to enable the 'systematic recording of personal data from open sources'. Extending digital investigative power for the police without clear preliminary defined boundaries of surveillance might create disproportional authority for data collection and data mining without any indication. Such wide discretionary surveillance powers facilitated by an 'iColumbo system' can not only lead to legal errors, but it is also a threat to the social cohesion by raising distrust in internet users. Based on a discourse analyses, this paper critically reflects on the boundaries of police accountability in the digital investigation domain of the Dutch Internet Monitoring service.

From Portable Panopticons to Societies of Control - The Emancipatory Potential of Radical Progressive Movements in times of Surveillance

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The following paper considers the societal transformations brought about by neoliberal capitalism and its intimate connection with the creation of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'Societies of Control'. It argues that to truly reach an understanding of what could be called a 'Portable Panopticon', anthropological understandings of the movements that seek to resist the techniques of neoliberal interpellation are necessary. It is not enough anymore to think surveillance solely through the 'gaze' of the panopticon. As the panopticon becomes portable in our times, we are witnessing the confluence of two ideas of society. Namely, the society of discipline and the society of control. The theoretical framework of 'Societies of Control' that Deleuze and Guattari put forward is according to this paper the one most suitable to reach a deeper recognition of the newly emerging subjectivities and repressive state techniques used by neoliberal capitalism. However, an anthropological engagement with the contemporary transformation of society is necessary to avoid the imposition of a universal theory of societal change.

It is argued that ethnographic examinations of radical progressive movements which aim to resist these new techniques of interpellation and the creations of what could be called 'neoliberal subjectivities' are necessary. Following Judith Butlers theses on establishing 'practices of translation' between above mentioned movements could lead us to a new understanding of what it means to position oneself in a 'Culture of Surveillance'.

This paper puts forward the thesis that the current anthropological research on radical progressive movements sheds light on the fact that they are among other things marked by specificities that have the potential to pose insurmountable hurdles for the techniques of interpellation and surveillance that neoliberal capitalism presents us with. These specificities are among others namely: The potential to de- and reterritorialize during an ongoing struggle, the diversity of the movements, solidarity between the subjects, and the multiple forms of visualizations of neoliberal repression.

Reconsidering the potential of different radical emancipatory movements that emerge despite of the techniques of self-censorship and state repression brought about by panopticons becoming portable, we will be able to provide a framework of theory and practice that might enable us to resist the bondages of 'Cultures of Surveillance' and may lead to a conjunction of Althusser's theory on interpellation and the conceptualizations of society put forth by Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari.

Rear (digital) windows: algorithms of the unconscious

Gherab, Karim (King Juan Carlos University, Madrid, ESP)

This communication reviews the philosophy of mind of French philosopher René Descartes from the perspective of modern digital technologies and the Internet. The thesis is clear: digital technology and Internet are diluting the classic Cartesian separation between mind and matter, and the new algorithms of high-tech companies are being built as rear windows to our unconscious thoughts. Moreover, these algorithms may also have indirect access to the unconscious of our friends and relatives.

Starting from his famous methodological doubt, Descartes (1637, 1641, 1644) arrived at conclusions that influenced Western societies, even centuries after him. Among these conclusions, the most interesting for us are the following: the radical separation between the private (mental) and the public (material), the extolling of rationality as the method of investigation for reaching truth, the recourse of doubt and therefore the critical spirit, and the analytical method (including analytic geometry).

All these concepts must be reviewed in the light of current technologies because the new digital environment offers us fertile tools for philosophical analysis. I am talking about digital humanities applied to the philosophical, namely, the application of digital conceptual tools to rethink philosophy. More specifically, my interest focuses on the implications of the design and development of algorithms by cutting-edge technology companies aiming to access the unconscious thoughts of their users so that to offer them more and more customized advertising (Lindstrom, 2011).

In this presentation, we will analyze the dichotomy between the sphere of the private and the sphere of the public. The strict border between both spheres proposed by Descartes is being diluted with the emergence of new digital tools, among which we can mention the following: folksonomies (also called "social tagging"), social networks, big data, free software, open access, third-person photos, videogames, the so-called second screens, etc. I will analyze this process of conversion of the mental/private into the material/public by presenting examples that describe in detail this phenomenon, which is more subtle than it seems at first sight.

For instance, I will show how the Web is able to capture some emotions and intentions (Brentano, 1874; Searle, 1983; Dennett, 1987) of users who surf the Internet and interact on social networks.

- In the case of the emotions, I will give some examples of techniques used by the platforms of large software applications: Facebook's emoticons, tags or keywords used by Flickr and Twitter, among others.
- And in the case of the intentions, I will briefly analyze the algorithms of Google's algorithm *PageRank* and Facebook's *EdgeRank*, both designed to capture the intentions (of purchase, social inclinations, political preferences, hobbies, etc.) their users.

To capture emotions and intentions means to convert into public something that was private, because it materializes, so to speak, what we conceive as mental and private. In other words, many thoughts, whether conscious or unconscious, cease to belong to the strictly private sphere and become part of the databases of the large multinationals, and perhaps of the governmental apparatuses (USA, EU, Russia, China), that may be allied with them (Lyon, 2015).

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