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Are You On the Fast Track? The Rise of Surveillant Assemblages in a Post Industrial Age

ED ROMEIN AND MARC SCHUILENBURG

It is the contention of this article that a new subjectivity is taking shape in contemporary Western societies. This subjectivity is the effect of an ongoing transformation of power relations. Following Haggerty and Ericson, we call these emerging power relations 'surveillant assemblages.' These assemblages take shape against the background of a society with an ever-increasing emphasis on speed, flux, mobility, and flows. Taking the work of Michel Foucault on the disciplinary society as a point of departure, this article will set out to describe, following Gilles Deleuze and David Garland, the transformation of the current social order into a society of control. In light of such a transformation we will reassess the notion of flow that captures these changes. This article will, therefore, deal with the inherent connection of flow and (the society of) control. In such an analysis we leave the traditional view of control behind. That is, control as the opposite of flow. In the society that is taking shape, control has become an immanent part of flows. Or in short: there is no flow without control.

Introduction

It is our contention that a new subjectivity is taking shape in contemporary Western societies. This subjectivity is the effect of an ongoing transformation of power relations. Following Haggerty and Ericson, we call these emerging power relations 'surveillant assemblages.'¹ These assemblages take shape against the background of a society with an ever-increasing emphasis on speed, flux, mobility, and flows. Taking the work of Michel Foucault on the disciplinary society as a point of departure, this article sets out to describe, following Gilles Deleuze² and David Garland,³ the transformation of the current social order into a society of control. With the emergence of such a society, the normalization

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inherent to Foucault's conception of institutions as disciplinary disperses with the fragmentation of these institutions into an infinitesimal disciplinization. In light of such a transformation it becomes imperative to reassess the notions that seem to capture or describe these changes. We will take the notion of flows as the start of such an evaluation. Our main concern will be to investigate the inherent connection of flow and (the society of) control. That is, how flows open up spaces of control and how spaces of control sustain flows. In such an analysis we leave behind the traditional view of control, that is, control as the opposite of flow, meaning stopping, hampering, or diminishing a movement. In the society that is taking shape, control has become an immanent part of flows. The perfect flow then, is totally under control. In terms of security this means that the faster the flow, the greater the control. In the following paragraphs we will first describe the transformation from a disciplinary society to a society of control as witnessed in the work of Foucault and Deleuze. Furthermore, we will give an outline on how normalization takes place in the society of control through the installation of surveillant assemblages. Finally, we will deal with the transformation of the notion of flow as immanently containing control and the implications it has for the production of subjectivity.

The Architecture of a Disciplinary Society: Fixed Routes and Absolute Spaces

If there is something we can learn from the work of Michel Foucault, it is that power is of all ages and all pervasive. From the brute power of an army to the imperceptible power of the placement of windows in a classroom, power comes in many (dis)guises, intimately connected to mechanisms of control. Over time different types of society emerge with different constellations of power relations. It is in this sense that Foucault distinguishes a sovereign society from a disciplinary society. He associates the absolute power of the monarch—the dominant form of rule in Europe from the Middle Ages up to the sixteenth century—with the sovereign society. In such a social order a breach of the law was regarded as an attack on the sovereign in person. “In every offence there was a *crimen majestatis* and in the least criminal a potential regicide.”⁴ Under the watchful eye of the monarch, corporal punishment was carried out in public to bear witness to the dual offence to the sovereign and to society. It was not justice or prevention, but taking revenge for the tarnished honour of the sovereign that formed the objective of the punishment. Punishment varied from using branding irons, public lashing with a bullwhip, or being put on the pillory.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century saw the rise of a different type of society. In this disciplinary society the functioning of power moved away from a model of sovereignty, that is, away from a centralized, identifiable, and absolute will that operates through law, coercion, and vengeance. This did not mean that sovereign power ceased to exist; it was rather superimposed by a new way of organizing society. The disciplinary power was not to be constructed around a public ritual, but behind the walls of closed and secluded institutions. It was a specific technique that regarded individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.⁵ This form of power was exercised in different structures of confinement or what Foucault calls disciplinary practices, such as the family, the school, the army, the factory, the hospital, etc. In these different institutions the disciplinary operation turned out to be similar. They

85 installed a regime of normalization, of repetitively influencing the human body until it had internalized the normative objectives of the regime to finally become a subject: the ideal citizen, the hard working employee, the healthy human. A whole new arsenal of detailed and interchangeable techniques was developed: classificatory tables, training exercises, examination, timetables, hierarchical observation, micropenalties. These instruments were built around a series of rewards and deprivations for every facet of time keeping, behaviour, movement, activity, and so on.

90 In their collaborative work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Felix Guattari call this process the production of a striated space.⁶ A striated space appears wherever the qualitative and non-metric aspects of a space are reconfigured into quantitative and metric characteristics, and as such are measurable from an external perspective. Deleuze and Guattari call the former type of space a smooth space, since there is nothing external to the space that would be its measure. To them the sea, for example, would be the smooth space par excellence, until it got striated through the introduction of navigational tools, which divided the sea up in longitudes and latitudes. Before astronomical tools became available, navigation was a matter of following the continuous variations of the sea itself, the currents, the colour of the water and the wind. Deleuze and Guattari, however, always uphold a double movement whereby the process of striation also gives rise to new smooth spaces. In the case of the sea they give the example of the perpetual motion of the strategic submarine, which stays submerged for weeks at a time, disappearing totally from the grid and in a particular way creates its own smooth space. In this process they see a strange paradox arise. In their words: “The sea, then the air and the stratosphere, becomes smooth spaces again, but in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely.”⁷ From this perspective, a disciplinary society was all about the constitution of normalized subjects in confined and enclosed spaces. Control found its specific power within the enclosed segments (walls, boundaries, enclosures); it was an element of the interior of the separated spaces in themselves. Because of its segmented parts, a flow had a beginning and an end. It was a question of going from one point to another. These enclosures, separations between the inside and the outside, defined the striations of social space.⁸ It was a matter of fixed routes, relative movements, and absolute spaces (like the school or the hospital). So, while the working day once followed the rhythm of the day and the season (from sunrise until sunset), the disciplinary society saw a process of striation within the space of the institutions of work by the instalment of a new arsenal of techniques (time-registers, production lines, lunch hour, and so on).

115 **The Rise of a Society of Control**

120 It has been noticed that the disciplinary society is waning and that we are witnessing the rise of a different type of society. The traditional sites of confinement of the disciplinary society are in the midst of a crisis or general breakdown. And although it would be unlikely that they disappear completely, they transform and are superseded by a different way of organizing their primary function. In his seminal short essay, “Postscript on Control Societies,” Deleuze suggests that, “It’s simply a matter of nursing them through their death throes and keeping people busy until the new forces knocking at the door take over.”⁹ The crisis is felt in every form of custody. The walls of closed institutions are slowly crumbling.

The consequences of the changes are visible in all kinds of practices, such as prisons, hospitals, schools, and the working environment. This is most obvious in the rise of the practice of house arrests, where the inmate is more and more put under electronic supervision at a distance, a clear example of how prison walls are being replaced by a different type of social organization. Such forms of dispersal can be witnessed widely throughout society. By means of domestic care, the hospital relocates its activities to the living environment of the patient. Furthermore, education is no longer confined to schools, or to the adolescent period in an individual's life. It has become a lifelong programme, where it is all about learning new skills, updating old knowledge, and refreshing memory, all the time. The institution of work has also become diffuse. The factory is no longer the working place you leave behind after working hours. With the rise of immaterial labour it has become customary to take work home, to finish a report at the weekend, and to check emails during vacation. At the same time, the work place has changed into a feel-good environment, with cosy coffee corners and comfortable lounge areas; all of this to make your time at work as enjoyable as possible and, maybe, make it feel a little bit like home.

Here, the analytical distinction between discipline and control becomes more critical. With the emerging society of control, power is no longer exerted primarily *within* forms of enclosure—the separate physical shells of the most important social institutions of modernity (schools, factories, prisons, hospitals)—but is superimposed through networked flows and free-floating control. As Deleuze noticed,

Control is not discipline. You don't confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people can travel infinitely and 'freely' without being confined while being perfectly controlled.¹⁰

In this transformation, the fixed spaces of the disciplinary society, assigned to their specific function, will have made way for, that "strangest of reversals," the smooth space of the control society with the purpose of controlling space even more completely. In smooth or vectorial space, movement or flow is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival.¹¹ It distributes people in an open field. This does not mean that there is less or no control. There are stops in both the smooth and striated space. However, in contrast to the absolute spaces of the disciplinary society, one can say that control has become immanent to the flow.

The Transformations of Control

In the sovereign society, control took shape in the form of city walls and gatekeepers who checked everyone entering a city at specific points of entry. This fortified city functioned as a military camp. In the words of Paul Virilio, "Before it became the throne of totality, the Christian sanctuary was a stronghold, a bunker, a fortified church for those who remained within it; all their powers and capacities were deployed and strengthened in, through and as combat."¹² The disciplinary society saw the rise of the architectural figure of the Panopticon. The round shape of the building with a tower in the middle, from which the guards could watch the cells on the inside of the ring, was sufficient to impose coercive behavioural codes on the inmates. From the perspective of the guard this type of architecture made it

165 possible to observe everything constantly and to recognize problems immediately (“to see without being
 seen”). From the perspective of the inmate one never knew if one was being watched, so one presumed
 (and internalized) that one was always being watched. It also meant that the surveillance turned
 inwards. It was bound to particular spaces, installed from a fixed position, and based on a system of
 170 permanent registration. On the other hand, the surveillance functioned as a political technology,
 detached from any specific use, as from any specified substance. Abstracted from any obstacle, resistance
 or friction, the surveillance mechanism functioned throughout a unified social field and a single
 national culture. It functioned in all kinds of capsulation, through which the individual passed in his
 life. As Deleuze points out, “In the disciplinary societies one was always starting again, from school to
 the barracks, from the barracks to the factory.”¹³ Each was equipped with its own Panopticon.

175 In the control society, the techniques of discipline have merged with, and in some ways have been
 overtaken by, approaches that adopt a different type of surveillance. These transformations adhere to a
 strategy that David Garland refers to as ‘responsibilization.’¹⁴ Surveillance has been decentralized and
 made into a shared responsibility of multiple actors. Security has become a wide and shared liability, no
 180 longer the primary responsibility of an administration or the police authorities. In the new regimes of
 control, the private sector and individual citizens are mobilized as an integral part of surveillance. It
 materializes in arrangements that carry slogans like ‘partnership,’ ‘public-private cooperation,’ and
 ‘active citizenship.’ It is these types of heterogeneous apparatus of control that Haggerty and Ericson call
 ‘surveillant assemblages.’¹⁵ To better predict disturbance or harm before it occurs, they are deployed as a
 185 strategy to identify, predict, and manage risks and uncertainties. In this transformation, as Ericson
 points out, surveillant assemblages erode or eliminate traditional standards, principles, and procedures
 of criminal law that get in the way of pre-empting imagined sources of harm.¹⁶

190 Surveillant assemblages operate on an individual and on a global scale (for entities and phenomena).
 In his book, *Modernity at Large*, the Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai distinguishes five flows or
 ‘scapes’ that are a part of this globalization process: mediascapes (newspapers, television, Internet, films,
 etc.), ethnoscapes (worldwide ethnic networks), technoscapes (worldwide technological infrastructures),
 195 financescapes (networks of capital flows), and ideoscapes (ideologies of national states and action
 groups).¹⁷ In Appadurai’s opinion, these flows cross, influence, and reinforce one another at a global
 level. For example, the communication possibilities of the technoscapes made it possible for people to be
 far away from their native country while still being in close contact. But, the images and stories of the
 mediascapes also influence the movements of immigrants, tourists and foreign workers.¹⁸ Almost in sync
 with the breakthrough of a neo-liberal ideology and the transformation of the welfare state into a
 200 market state, we are witnessing a bewildering variety of developments in regimes of control. Different
 forms of control are used to designate the process of mobilizing. This view is in contrast with the
 position adopted by classic theories on liberalism that envision a society that is radically open and
 indeterminate and that is characterized by terms such as ‘freedom of choice,’ ‘individual liberty,’ and
 the ‘free market.’ Instead of a unitary domain (more or less coexistent with the institutions of the nation
 205 state), control circuits are territorialized in new ways. Governmental bodies no longer play a dominant
 role in these practices.

Surveillant Assemblages: From Big Brother to Little Sisters

As Ericson describes in his work, *Crime in an Insecure World*, surveillant assemblages are a means of addressing the uncertainty in our society.¹⁹ They do so either by making suitable enemies uncomfortable to the point that they go elsewhere, or by making their suspicious signs and harmful behaviour visible in ways that make exclusion and punishment seem obvious and necessary.²⁰ Techniques to systematically monitor the actions or communications of one or more persons involve the use of biometrics; physical attributes such as fingerprints, DNA, iris patterns, and facial expressions are used to collect, process, and store biometric samples in a database for subsequent usage during the ‘recognition phase,’ in which these data are matched against the real-time data input in order to verify a person’s identity. These technical devices identify certain people as possible perpetrators before they have actually committed an offence. The organized use of personal data systems in the investigation or monitoring of the actions or communications of one or more persons, is, following Clarke, called ‘dataveillance.’²¹ These types of security technique can be distinguished from the detailed forms of discipline, as Foucault described them in *Discipline and Punish*. They are not aimed at normalization through a process of enclosure that re-establishes the status quo. Through these new techniques, disturbances of the flows can be anticipated. Their purpose is to make the future more certain. In contrast to a ‘punishment mentality,’ in which a person is punished because he has committed a wrongful act in the past, this future-oriented approach is based on a ‘risk mentality.’²²

Risk mentality is associated with the potential for loss, harm, injury or destruction. Therefore, security is increasingly oriented towards risk, anticipation and prevention. With the emergence of a multiplicity of surveillant assemblages in a society of control, a distinctive type of ‘infrastructure’ is installed on multiple levels, not only on the scale of global flows of people, goods and capital, but also on the scale of streets, shops and homes, all in order to create a sense of security. To understand what this infrastructure or assemblage means, we can refer to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in particular to their books *Kafka* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.²³ Deleuze and Guattari use the French word *agencement*, which is translated into English as ‘assemblage.’ This translation obscures an important element of Deleuze’s and Guattari’s use of the term *agencement*, since it refers in French to the Latin word *agens*, which means ‘to drive, lead, act, do.’ It expresses a process of ‘organizing,’ ‘putting together,’ ‘laying out,’ or ‘fitting.’ Although it designates a collection of things, ‘assemblage,’ as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, has a more social meaning. It can be defined as a collection of heterogeneous elements, among which are counted humans, technologies and machines that have created a coherence for themselves and thus claimed a specific ‘territory.’ In doing so, assemblage operates in two dimensions. Each assemblage has a means of expression, a regime of signs or a semiotic system.²⁴ At the same time, an assemblage moves between making and unmaking, doing and undoing. It defines the spatial boundaries of a specific territory or non-discursive formation, for instance an institute (school), a political event (May ‘68), an economical practice (insurance) and (social) processes (exclusion). In this sense the expression “they are my enemies” also defines a unique territory. But territories are not fixed for eternity. They are always being made and unmade, permanently and on different spatiotemporal scales.²⁵ This process may be engaged via the Deleuzian notions of

territorialization: deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Appadurai's concept of 'scapes' particularly resonates with such terms. 'Scapes' unmake the spatial boundaries of a given entity, such as the nation state, and create new assemblages in which people "act and speak," and are reassembled together.

250 While the model of surveillance in the disciplinary society, the Panopticon, was confined to absolute or enclosed spaces, we are now witnessing the emergence of multiple and mobile surveillant assemblages in an open space, presented as a means to anticipate danger and avoid injury. This regime of surveillant assemblages is no longer meant to keep one inside a closed and striated space, but is installed in order
 255 to create a smooth space, which allows 'free' movement, while being perfectly controlled. It wants to preempt potential sources of 'violence' or 'upheaval,' defined as anything that provides or assures harm. Far in advance of the crime being committed, individuals or groups are identified as potential criminals on the basis of their behaviour. Therefore, as a person moves from one point to another, the emphasis is on tracing or discovering his potential risks. The clearest example of the endless possibilities of tracing
 260 movements of persons is the use of video surveillance. Since the early 1990s, cities in the Western world have employed detection and pattern recognition cameras on a large scale in public space. According to the latest studies, Britain has a staggering 4.2 million CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) cameras, one for every 14 people in the country.²⁶ In London, the use of systems such as CCTV has led to the Underground being equipped with a network of thousands of cameras. The software program Mandrake
 265 matches faces with photos of recidivists. Within 60 seconds the faces of 15 million people are compared. It has been calculated that each person in London is caught on camera an average of 400 times daily. Another advanced system of cameras has been put into operation in the public space of Chicago. The system combines Chicago's existing network of surveillance cameras with 'intelligent' software that can detect a person's suspicious behaviour. Simply walking around with your friends is no longer treated as
 270 an innocent activity. Sophisticated computer programs will immediately alert the police whenever anyone is seen wandering aimlessly in circles, lingering outside a public building, pulling a car onto the shoulder of a highway, or leaving a package and walking away from it. If the software detects a suspicious action, the images will be flagged for immediate attention at the city's central command centre. Images of these people will be highlighted in colour at the city's central monitoring station,
 275 allowing dispatchers to send police officers to the scene immediately.²⁷

The control of flows leads to a great deal of speculation about whether we have entered George Orwell's world of "*Big Brother* is watching you." Such a dystopian view, however, has not been realized the way
 280 George Orwell imagined. The metaphor of *Big Brother* or the 'electronic Panopticon'²⁸ suggests that everything is watched and observed from one single point. In a society of control, however, law enforcement is not only the task of the police. All kinds of identity control practice are proliferating in everyday life. This is intensified by the fact that the 'national state' is neither the only force engaged in the government of conduct, nor the hidden hand orchestrating the strategies and techniques for forms of
 285 government.²⁹ A whole variety of practices—tax offices, supermarkets, banks, neighbourhoods, hospitals, and insurance companies—have been set up to make it possible for people to anonymously report their neighbours on issues varying from social benefit fraud to domestic violence, to report suspicious behaviour of people hanging around in your street, or to alert the authorities when someone

witnesses an actual crime being committed. Instead of *Big Brother*, it is better to speak of *Little Sisters*,³⁰ numerous dispersed surveillant assemblages that are playing an important role in the control of our behaviour.

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Creating a Perpetual Alibi

In 2002, the Bangladeshi-born American Hasan Elahi arrived at Detroit Airport after a visit to Amsterdam. During the routine passport control, it turned out that Elahi was (mistakenly) listed as a suspected terrorist. It appeared that in the wake of the 9/11 scare, the owners of a storage area in Tampa, Florida, had notified the officials that an 'Arab' man had fled on September 12, allegedly leaving explosives in his locker. It was the locker that Elahi had been using in Tampa while teaching there. But there were, of course, no explosives, nor did he flee. Luckily, Elahi could retrace all of his whereabouts thanks to the entries in his Blackberry, and he was hopeful that this would explain matters. This was not an easy task because Elahi was and continues to be an artist and a professor at Rutgers University, and a more-than-frequent flyer with an average of 70,000 air miles per year. However, it took another few months and dozens of interviews with the FBI culminating in nine back-to-back polygraphs, before the FBI finally 'cleared' him of any suspicion. That day in Detroit, Elahi was definitely not on the fast track.

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The story of Hasan Elahi did not stop after the polygraphs. Because of investigations of the FBI into his background, Elahi concluded that although he had been 'cleared,' this might not have been the only time he would be stopped and questioned. Not a strange assumption, given his amount of travelling around the globe. He decided to voluntarily inform 'surveillant agencies' up front of his whereabouts and the schedule of his travels. But why stop there? What is the difference between informing the FBI and sharing your whereabouts with the rest of the world? Elahi transformed his predicament into a showcase of online performance art. "I've discovered," he states in an interview, "that the best way to protect your privacy is to give it away. The government monitors your movements, but it gets things wrong. You can monitor yourself much more accurately."³¹ Since then Elahi has made his life an open book. Partly to provide a future alibi and partly to raise some troubling questions, Elahi began tracking all his movements and activities using GPS and a camera, posting the real-time results on a website.³² His extreme act of self-surveillance creates a perpetual alibi for the next encounter with a 'surveillant agency.' He hacked into his cell phone and turned it into a tracking device, which posts his whereabouts on the Internet in real-time. Furthermore, he documents his life in a series of photos, which are put instantaneously on his website. It virtually shows the places he travels to, the meals he eats, the toilets he visits, and the airports he passes through. Everything is supported by a record of his purchases and his bank records.

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It might be extreme, but the case of Hasan Elahi does highlight a transformation in our human condition that we are slowly becoming aware of. In the current arrangement, control transforms from an action induced by an exterior agency to hamper the flow from outside to a self-induced control mechanism to make the fastest movement possible. As Rose puts it, surveillance is 'designed in' the

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flows of everyday existence.³³ Control thus becomes an immanent part of flows. A conscious and free decision or not, to be on the fast track means more and more to hand over information while, at the same time, control becomes part of a new mechanism of precaution. The term 'precaution' here is used in two senses. First, it applies to the prevention of the possibility of serious and irreversible damage. As Ewald points out, the precautionary principle focuses on the uncertainty of the relationship of causality between an action and its effects.³⁴ It will take everything into account one can imagine, suspect, presume, or fear.³⁵ Therefore, a surveillant assemblage's primary task is risk reduction by intervening before the actual act of disturbance takes place. All of this is under the banner of 'zero risk,' 'visibility' and 'faster circulation.' Secondly, and more importantly, 'precaution' refers to the mechanism of the flow itself. Surveillance has become self-surveillance, in which a free flow is no longer a fundamental and inalienable right of a person. In terms of responsibility, one becomes responsible not because one is absolute free by nature (and could therefore have acted differently), but because the circumstances are created to act *as if* one were free. Strictly speaking, freedom is not granted, but is something to be acquired. In the words of Elahi, "In a way, I'm completely free, if I offer everything and tell everything there's nothing left to find out."³⁶ In order to move faster, people give permission to private and public authorities to keep records on their DNA profile, fingerprints, and iris patterns. This enables them to immediately authenticate their identity and movements. Therefore, the principle enemy of a surveillant assemblage is the person who rejects an identity and consciously or unconsciously stays invisible.

Producing a New Subjectivity

Does one choose the fast track or the slow track? Does one wish to be transparent or remain elusive? Henri Lefebvre's studies of everyday urban space and Michel Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary society show that spatiality is primarily a social phenomenon.³⁷ To a certain extent, it 'governs' our behaviour. However, what has received little attention is the fact that a different (self-)consciousness is created among the inhabitants of every confinement through a microphysics of power. Thus, surveillance serves not only the negative purposes of control (preventing harm, breaking communications), but is also about the production of a self-understanding. In this way, surveillance serves a positive function; it puts forward a new relationship between a person and his environment. Take the example of the factory in the disciplinary society; a specific subjectivity unfolds by organizing working time through time registration, lunch hour, setting up production lines in a specific order, and standardizing work procedures. The microphysical organization of space and time in this separate confinement made the workers function as incubators or 'interiors' of subjectivity. In this context, Norbert Elias calls the psychological state of a single individual the *homo clausus*,³⁸ indicating that he or she lives in a little world that ultimately exists quite independently from the great world outside.³⁹

But if the confinements of the disciplinary society are breaking down in the face of the rise of a society of control, what will become of the *homo clausus*? What will capture the state of mind of a contemporary individual? Would the person, who slowly but surely hands over the most intimate details of his human existence in order to sustain the flow, not best be characterized as a *homo transparentus*? The characterization of a *homo transparentus* marks those persons who have

'revealed themselves.' To a large extent, the described technologies are trying to reinforce their grasp on the movements of persons by deploying new monitoring devices and codes of conduct. Once identified, they can be continuously monitored and followed through different surveillant assemblages, and the integration of computer systems and databases. At the same time, the new technologies are continuously mapping the 'factors of risk' of an individual person. His body has become pure information. We no longer find ourselves dealing with a universal or general category of mankind. Individuals have become 'dividuals,' Deleuze and Guattari write.⁴⁰ In this way, surveillant assemblages are continuously decoding and recoding the risk factors of a person. We have become informants on ourselves. The implications are that uncertain elements or 'risk-persons' are set apart and become 'neutralized.' With self-surveillance being installed as an intricate control mechanism of flows, there appears a phenomenon of selection and differentiation. The speed of flow becomes an object of choice. The more self-control, the faster the flow. 370 375 380

With self-surveillance being installed as an intricate control mechanism of flows, there appears a second problem. The notion of control becomes intertwined with a notion of permission. Instead of (a society of) control, one could as easily speak of 'permission.' The term 'permission' is proposed by Lawrence Lessig to describe a culture in which the use of copyrighted work requires the permission of the copyright owner.⁴¹ While the copyright system was designed to encourage innovation, it now has become more and more apparent that it might also stifle it. Whereas one used to own the CD one bought, in the permission culture one will lease a song, and even then only under restrictive conditions; read one's e-book, but do not copy and paste any selections; listen to music on one's MP3 player, but do not burn it onto a CD or transfer it to one's stereo.⁴² In the light of emerging surveillant assemblages its meaning can be extended. In our view, permission should not be misunderstood as being a one-way traffic, nor as a conscious 'free choice.' It refers to a configuration of interrelatedness of flows and control on the scale of society. It is about granting access and being granted access to a multitude of domains. From the physical right of entry to space to being listed on all types of lists, from social security codes to being registered in databases. It is a constant haggling of information where different surveillant assemblages have to decide which permission is mutually granted at what risks and costs. 385 390 395 400

Conclusion

The novelty of the situation, in which control has become an immanent part of flows, lies in the fact that a 'risk mentality' is replacing a 'punishment mentality.' First, security is no longer regarded as the sole, or even the primary, task of the national state. All kinds of surveillant assemblages are emerging. Although these assemblages work within the legal framework of a nation state, they define their own order, they develop their own strategies and provide their own resources for securing that order. Therefore, it is not a question of socializing and disciplining the subject in absolute spaces. Conduct is continually monitored and reshaped by logics immanent within the movements of people. Second, an important characteristic of surveillant assemblages is the precautionary principle. Decisions are not made in the context of certainty or on the basis of available knowledge, but in the context of doubt, 405 410

suspicion, premonition, foreboding, challenge, mistrust, fear, and anxiety.⁴³ With an acknowledgement to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, we can say that what appears is *safe*, what is *safe* appears. It is from this point that a critical analysis of our current human condition has to start.

Endnotes

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- 5 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 170.
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