

Chapter 9

Looking to the Future

ABSTRACT

The future of surveillance is simply more of it. No entity has any incentive to reduce the level of surveillance. It has value to the watcher. What is expected to change is the amount and the way in which it is done. Trends in the cultural, social, economic, and political landscapes will have an influence on the way in which the different contexts of surveillance will proceed. In addition, it is expected that the technologies of surveillance will get more efficient, making the processes more accessible and invisible to the surveilled.

INTRODUCTION

I have offered a specific look at the process and consequences of surveillance in our everyday lives with a focus on the way in which surveillance is connected with the creation of narratives. The stories of the “lives” of people and institutions have increasingly become relevant to other people and institutions leading to the four main contexts of surveillance as the entities create narratives of each other. Given the focus on narratives, the future of surveillance can also be examined through the same lens to understand how the narratives would be impacted in the future. I consider the importance of the narratives in understanding the future of surveillance since the process of surveillance will have to

stay in step with the trends expected in the way in which the narratives would shift with time. Consider for instance the way in which the new technologies have offered aspects of recording the stories that did not exist before some of the tools became available. Many who subscribe to a product called “Google Timeline” and have the GPS active on their smartphones with the Android software receive periodic updates from Google about the places the smartphone, and the person connected to the phone, has visited within a time period. This is a part of the personal narrative which could well be lost with time, but the tracking tool makes it a part of the narrative of a person. Thus, the narrative itself changes with time.

In this chapter I first consider some of the key ways in which the narrative may shift in the future and then consider the ways in which surveillance could transform to stay relevant for the narrative shifts. The narrative shifts are connected with the trends in lived practices and one key component of these practices is related to the cultural space that people and institutions are inserted in. Later in the chapter I would argue that there are other vectors that would impact the lived practices such as the political, economic, and technological contexts, but I begin with what can loosely be labelled “cultural/social.”

Cultural/Social

It would be an understatement to state that the cultural and social spaces that most people in the World live in has seen some radical changes starting in the early 1900s. Major global conflicts of two World Wars, realignment of identity narratives with new found freedoms for long-oppressed segments of society including women, disappearance of traditional power structures such as the colonial systems, emergence of new structures of family and increasing fragmentation of monolithic cultures brought the World to the early 2000s when it was becoming clear that the dominant cultural and social motivators were being replaced by a more fractured and provisional notion of culture where not any single set of everyday lived practices could claim dominance because everyday life was constantly being reshaped. It also becomes clear in the 2000s that everyday lived practices – the things we do – is

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