

WTMC PhD WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT

Technology in Surveillance Society

27-29 January 2010, Soeterbeeck, Ravenstein

Everyday activities are increasingly subject to surveillance not only by bureaucratic, official organisations but also by other people and in the name of entertainment. There are many examples. People engage in identity management on a frequent basis, providing different sorts of proof of identity in a variety of legal and social settings. People increasingly monitor their own and others' health behaviours as a result of health education campaigns, laws and norms about safe sex, smoking and healthy eating. Reality TV and some social networking sites offers some with the opportunity to expose themselves and others the opportunity to watch them doing so. This can be a form of surveillance of those who take part as well as of those who watch. The near-ubiquitous use of digital technologies in a country such as the Netherlands means that people leave digital traces not only in Facebook and Flickr but also when they use their mobile phones and engage in offline activities such as shopping and travelling. Surveillance is also a powerful theme in popular culture, especially in the genres of science fiction and crime/thrillers.

The sheer scale of modern society promises privacy but in return it requires formal surveillance systems as people can no longer know or trust that others are who and what they say they are. Thus, late modernity is paradoxical in that it offers privacy and anonymity which themselves generate the need for surveillance which in turn may threaten privacy. Surveillance systems are thus essential to the smooth running of daily life but at the same time may threaten privacy and civil liberties.

Technologies have always been deeply implicated in surveillance. There are the obvious ones – identity cards, cameras in shops and other public places, databases created by both state and corporate organisations containing details of individuals that can be combined, workplace monitoring of attendance and productivity, and remote sensing systems. There are also less obvious systems of surveillance such as accounting systems, performance indicators, classifications, health and behavioural norms, all of which are deeply engrained with developments in science and technology.

In this workshop we will learn how concepts and theories from science and technology studies can contribute to a deeper understanding of these developments. As well as lectures by leading scholars in this field, the workshop will include close reading of key texts and skills training activities, including 'writing about methods'. Confirmed speakers include Kees Boersma, Huub Dijkstra, Amade M'charek and Irma van der Ploeg.

The registration form for the workshop is available online, at:

http://www.mb.utwente.nl/steps/forms/WTMC_Janws2010_registration_form.doc/

Please register by 31 October 2009.