

Electronic Journal of Sociology (2005)

ISSN: 1198 3655

Surveillance and Biopolitics

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Abstract

The paper addresses the relationship between contemporary modes of surveillance and biopolitics in terms of borders management. It is suggested that the shift from disciplinary society (panopticism) to control society (post-panopticism) is a problematic one in that the two modalities of power (discipline and control) are not mutually exclusive but coexist within the working of biopolitics and through the hybridisation of management techniques as is the case at the borders.

With the increasing uncertainties of post September 11 world, the issue of surveillance is given renewed importance through the discourses surrounding the proliferation of 'control' technologies and the rhetoric of (in)security pervading contemporary politics. Electronic technologies are seen to be intensifying the 'capacity' and ubiquity of surveillance creating 'new' forms of social control. Not that the newness of the current modes of surveillance is to be regarded from a merely ontological vantage point and especially not as 'a shift to a new type of society' (Rose, 1999: 237) *per se* but more so from the epistemic informationisation and hybridisation of control and monitoring facilitated by the spread of digital technologies which lend to the emerging trends of surveillance their label of newness while sustaining the existing *status quo* of society. Examples of these technologies include DNA fingerprinting, electronic tagging, drug testing, health scans, biometric ID cards and passports, smart closed circuit television, etc, all of which rely on algorithmic techniques as well as 'body parts' in order to perform their function of surveillance.

