Monahan, Torin, and David Murakami Wood. 2018. Political Economy. In Surveillance Studies: A Reader, edited by T. Monahan and D. Murakami Wood. New York: Oxford University Press, 281-284.

SECTION 11

POLITICAL ECONOMY

The field of surveillance studies has excelled at theorizing surveillance and examining particular examples of surveillance practices and technologies. While the economics of surveillance has not been entirely neglected, until recently it had been lacking in sustained critical political-economic analysis. Surveillance is now a global phenomenon (Murakami Wood 2013), not just in the sense of it being in every country, but in the sense of it being a part of everyday life for all the world's people, whether they know it or not. Surveillance practices, as Katja Aas has stated, form the "contours of a global polity" (2011: 332; see Section 5), but they also do much more.

There have been a few traditional Marxist analyses of surveillance, with the scholarship of Christian Fuchs (2009), for instance, offering critique of the political economy of online companies and their capital accumulation strategies (see also Section 10). Still, as Kirstie Ball and David Murakami Wood (2013: 1–2) argue: "Surveillance studies needs more serious attention to the political economy of surveillance, not just in terms of studies of particular corporate actors, or the growing 'surveillance economy' but the way in which surveillance works in and for government (in the broadest sense) at this global scale." More recently, such shifts are occurring with a growing number of studies drawing on more hybrid approaches to the political economy (e.g., Ball and Snider 2013).

Without question, surveillance has long played a role in shaping the structure of the economy. For example, the discipline and control of workers (see Section 10), as Karl Marx noted, is central to the rise of the factory system. However, political economy goes beyond simply describing the structure of industrial organization. As Marx showed, it is the management of human society more broadly, through the appropriation of the surplus value of labor by an exploiting class. Appropriated surplus is harnessed, at least in some part, to produce the means of war and security, which are used both to expand the geographical scope of capitalism through imperialism and colonialism and to monitor and control potentially revolutionary working populations in distant parts of the empire and in the metropole. Throughout the twentieth century, techniques for disciplining workers were increasingly matched by techniques for seducing, both of the bourgeoisie and the growing numbers of the working class with disposable income and leisure time. The excerpt by Adam Arvidsson describes some of this history in its review of developments in consumer monitoring for advertising. The growth of advertising and marketing research, along with personal credit rating systems (Lauer

2010), testifies to the importance of the surveillance of consumption and consumers as much as production and producers. The excerpt by David Murakami Wood and Kirstie Ball develops this area further, combining research from organization theory and marketing with that from architecture and human geography to develop a sociospatial theory of the "brandscape," the dream of a perfectly controlled corporate-saturated environment, co-constructed with its subject population.

The field is now arriving at an awareness of the globalization of surveillance (Lyon, 2004; Mattelart 2010), a global surveillance society (Murakami Wood 2013; see also, Gates 2012), and even multi-layered planetary-scale surveillance (Bratton 2016; see also Section 9). These concepts represent attempts to explain the role of surveillance in shaping complex tensions, alliances, and flows among states, corporations, and people. Across this terrain, the private sector comes to dictate security interests; government policing and intelligence agencies internalize corporate cultures and management practices; and state security functions are increasingly outsourced to private contractors (Monahan 2010). On the other hand, this is not a smooth process, but one of struggles and reversals as corporations are also called upon—and frequently fail—to meet the demands of state security (Dibb et al. 2014; Gates 2011). People also can, and do, obstruct logics of capital flow through labor movements, protest, or sabotage (Cowen 2014; Fernandez 2008; Monahan and Fisher 2011). Additionally, sometimes people can evade financial surveillance by circumventing banking institutions altogether, as with informal "hawala" money-transferring arrangements common in the Middle East and South-East Asia (Razavy and Haggerty 2009). In part due to concerns about financial transactions supporting crime or terrorism, many states have now mandated that banks engage in advanced forms of financial surveillance of customers. The excerpt by Anthony Amicelle describes these developments and offers a critique of how subjective biases become encoded in—or hidden behind—the software applications used to profile customers (see also, Amoore and De Goede 2008).

It could also be said that when it comes to global financial surveillance, it is states that often struggle to meet the demands of capital, as can be seen with the way that the European Mediterranean nations, particularly Greece, were downgraded and disciplined not just by supranational agencies like the International Monetary Fund, the self-declared arbiter of economic surveillance, but also by private transnational credit rating agencies, like Standard & Poor's, Fitch, and Moody's (Murakami Wood 2013). This is far from the only kind of economic surveillance operating at this level.

The complexities of the global economy defy the old logic of international relations and mainstream security studies. In Section 7, we saw how China's technologies and practices of internal security were not only increasingly indistinguishable from those of the West, despite being branded as "authoritarian," but increasingly built by Western corporations as much as by domestic companies—for example, as this book was being finished, a Danish company announced a major deal for Chinese state security systems (Omanovic 2016), and it has been widely reported that the activities of unscrupulous private intelligence providers like Hacking Team and Gamma Group have been supplying dictators and military governments with advanced security systems (see, e.g., Marczak et al. 2015).

However, technology companies, which have created entirely new models of digitally mediated, surveillance-based capitalism, have overtaken petrochemical, mining,

and even banking corporations as the most highly capitalized in the world. These companies have refined the science of capital extraction, often from data generated through the "free labor" of users of online platforms or apps (Andrejevic 2013). The growth of the so-called sharing economy—with companies like Uber and Airbnb—illustrates how total control over platforms can yoke users into extractive arrangements, while companies sidestep local laws and labor practices, perhaps obliterating them in the process (Olma 2014; Schor 2014). The final two excerpts in this section analyze the capitalist surveillance logics of two powerful technology giants: Facebook and Google. The first excerpt is from Nicole Cohen's critical study of Facebook's exploitation of personal information, and the last is Shoshana Zuboff's focused and detailed, but clearly distressed, study of Google's economic philosophy. Zuboff sees in Google a totalizing model for the next reinvention of capitalism, which has surveillance as its core function. Provocatively, she highlights the supposed inescapability of surveillance under this regime by using the term "Big Other," as opposed to the clunky, authoritarian Big Brother of a former era.[1] No longer simply a mode of ordering for state and capital, surveillance itself becomes both the source of surplus value and the method of control, the brandscape identified by Murakami Wood and Ball writ global. It is a profoundly disturbing vision and should be a call to action, except that, as both sets of authors note, the means by which such calls would be generated are themselves now part of the new architecture of surveillance capitalism.

NOTE

1. Although Zuboff makes no reference to Jacques Lacan or Slavoj Žižek, who have also deployed this term, one could easily imagine a generative psychoanalytic reading of the desire animating surveillance capitalism and critiques of it.

REFERENCES

Aas, Katja Franko. 2011. 'Crimmigrant' Bodies and Bona Fide Travelers: Surveillance, Citizenship and Global Governance. *Theoretical Criminology* 15 (3):331–46.

Amoore, Louise, and Marieke De Goede. 2008. Transactions after 9/11: The Banal Face of the Preemptive Strike. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33 (2):173–85.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2013. Estranged Free Labor. In *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, edited by T. Scholz, 149–64. New York: Routledge.

Ball, Kirstie S., and David Murakami Wood. 2013. Editorial. Political Economies of Surveillance. *Surveillance & Society* 11 (1/2):1–3.

Ball, Kirstie S., and Laureen Snider, eds. 2013. *The Surveillance Industrial Complex: A Political Economy of Surveillance*. New York: Routledge.

Bratton, Benjamin H. 2016. *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cowen, Deborah. 2014. *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dibb, Sally, Kirstie Ball, Ana Canhoto, Elizabeth M. Daniel, Maureen Meadows, and Keith Spiller. 2014. Taking Responsibility for Border Security: Commercial Interests in the Face of e-Borders. *Tourism Management* 42:50–61.

Fernandez, Luis A. 2008. *Policing Dissent: Social Control and the Anti-Globalization Movement*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2009. Information and Communication Technologies and Society: A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Internet. *European Journal of Communication* 24 (1):69–87.

Gates, Kelly. 2011. *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance*. New York: New York University Press.

———. 2012. The Globalization of Homeland Security. In *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies*, edited by K. Ball, K. D. Haggerty and D. Lyon, 292–300. London: Routledge.

Lauer, Josh 2010. The Good Consumer: Credit Reporting and the Invention of Financial Identity in the United States, 1840–1940. *Enterprise and Society* 11 (4):686–94.

Lyon, David 2004. Globalizing Surveillance: Comparative and Sociological Perspectives. *International Sociology* 19 (2):135–49.

Marczak, Bill, John Scott-Railton, Adam Senft, Irene Poetranto, and Sarah McKune. 2015. Pay No Attention to the Server behind the Proxy: Mapping FinFisher's Continuing Proliferation. Citizen Lab report, https://citizenlab.org/2015/10/mapping-finfishers-continuing-proliferation/.

Mattelart, Armand, 2010. *The Globalization of Surveillance*. Translated by S. Taponier and J. A. Cohen. Malden, MA: Polity.

Monahan, Torin. 2010. *Surveillance in the Time of Insecurity*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Monahan, Torin, and Jill A. Fisher. 2011. Surveillance Impediments: Recognizing Obduracy with the Deployment of Hospital Information Systems. *Surveillance & Society* 9 (1/2):1–16.
Murakami Wood, David. 2013. What Is Global Surveillance? Towards a Relational Political Economy of the Global Surveillant Assemblage. *Geoforum* 49:317–26.
Murakami Wood, David, and Kirstie Ball. 2013. Brandscapes of Control? Surveillance, Marketing, and the Co-Construction of Subjectivity and Space in Neo-Liberal Capitalism. *Marketing Theory* 13 (1):47–67.
Olma, Sebastian. 2014. Never Mind the Sharing Economy: Here's Platform Capitalism. *MyCreativity*, October 16. Available from http://networkcultures.org/mycreativity/2014/10/16/never-mind-the-sharing-economy-heres-platform-capitalism/ [accessed June 28, 2015].
Omanovic, Edin. 2016. Denmark Approves Export of Internet Surveillance System to China. Privacy International, July 11. https://privacyinternational.org/node/894.
Razavy, Maryam, and Kevin D. Haggerty. 2009. Hawala under Scrutiny: Documentation, Surveillance and Trust. *International Political Sociology* 3 (2):139–55.
Schor, Juliet. 2014. Debating the Sharing Economy. Great Transition Initiative, October. Available from http://greattransition.org/publication/debating-the-sharing-economy [accessed August 26, 2016].