SOCIETY
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POWER
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The City of Sun: Panopticon, Synopticon and Omniopticon – Big Brother and the Giant with Thousand Eyes

Loss of liberty is inimical to all forms of literature... The fact is that certain themes cannot be celebrated in words, and tyranny is one of them. No one ever wrote a good book in praise of the Inquisition.

George Orwell

What it was conventionalized as a *paradigmatic* view of the world and of the power, emerged as a logical structure that knew its most splendorous moment between the 15th and the 20th centuries – when a gradual domination of a

verbal logic happened, brilliantly captured by the physics as *mechanics*.

It is when the book Universe, defended by Bacon, passes to be described as a perfect clock mechanism.

Surely, one of the most curious and fascinating works that illustrate such phenomenon – specially regarding the surveillance – is the book *Civitas Solis*, or *The City of the Sun* by Tommaso Campanella, written in 1602.

In it, Campanella shows the ideal city, where peace and love are sovereign, place made of multiple circles, and directed by three chiefs. The first one, the *Power*, deals with surveillance. The second, the *Knowledge*, which is information, obliges all arts, sciences and schools. The third, *Love*, commands human reproduction, establishing criteria of selection like the color of the eyes, the stature or the color of the hair, for example.

In the imaginary City of the Sun, nobody can by owner of anything because, explains Campanella, «the love for the publics thing increases accordingly to the degree of renounce to the particular interest». Thus, nobody can receive private favors.

Music is permitted only to women and, sometimes, also to children. Workshops are directed by old men and women who punish or command the punishment of who refuse to obey. Young people are obliged to serve those who are older than forty years. It is forbidden to make any noise in the moments dedicated to meals.

Doctors command cookers about what they can or not prepare. Sex is only permitted to women older than nineteen and to men older than twenty-one. Sexual relations of who had surpassed limit ages where regulated by the chief doctor.

Even the names of the newborn were determined by the general director. All people,

in this imaginary city, were obliged to regularly confess, being permanently controlled in their thoughts.

Tommaso Campanella's description portraits an ideal city as a prison! Everything in the *City of the Sun* is architectonic and permanently submitted to a continuous process of surveillance and control.

Almost three hundred years after the intriguing work by Campanella, it would be the time of Jeremy Bentham, through a collection of letters written in 1787 in Russia to "a friend in England" – possibly inspired on his brother's invention – to establish ideal principles of society based on permanent surveillance.

It is about the celebrated architecture project *Panopticon*, which became famous through Michel Foucault's book *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, published in 1975.

Similarities between Campanella's ideal city

and the Bentham's ideal building, which would permit an equally ideal society, are flagrant.

However the *Panopticon* have been almost always taken as a design for an ideal prison, it originally was much more than that.

In his proposal, Bentham names the *Panopticon* as the Inspection-House – an architectural concept applicable to penitentiaries, but also to social housing, industries, hospitals, hospices and schools among others.

When referring to the *Panopticom* in his first letter, Bentham says that it is «a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind».

In the second letter, he gives a detailed description of the architectonic concept, not only evidencing the relations with Campanella's city as establishing logical links with plane perspective technique, making everything controlled by light:

«The building is circular. The apartments of the prisoners occupy the circumference. You may call them, if you please, the *cells*. These *cells* are divided from one another, and the prisoners by that means secluded from all communication with each other, by *partitions* in the form of *radii* issuing from the circumference towards the center, and extending as many feet as shall be thought necessary to form the largest dimension of the cell. The apartment of the inspector occupies the center; you may call it, if you please, the *inspector's lodge*. It will be convenient in most, if not in all cases, to have a vacant space or area all round, between such center and such circumference. You may call it, if you please, the *intermediate* or *annular* area. (…) Each cell has in the outward circumference, a *window*, large enough not only to light the cell but, through the cell, to afford light enough to the correspondent part of the lodge. The inner circumference of the cell is formed by an iron *grating*, so light as not to screen any part of the cell from the inspector's view».

Each moment of the prisoner, student of worker in an industry can be permanently followed by an inspector who, but its turn, cannot be controlled, or even saw, by who is observed.

In his fifth letter, Bentham says: «The essence of it consists, then, in the centrality of the inspector's situation, combined with the well-known and most effectual contrivances for *seeing without being seen*».

In the next letter, he is proud of his project: «…the apparent *omnipresence* of the inspector (if divines will allow me the expression) combined with the extreme facility of his real *presence*. (…) Another very important advantage… is that the servants or subordinates of every kind, will be under the same irresistible control with respect to the head keeper or inspector… It is this circumstance that renders the influence of this plan not less beneficial to what is called liberty, than the necessary coercion…».

Bentham's ideas and words are the base of what would be popularly known as *fiscal terrorism* in the twenty century.

The word *Panopticon* means "seeing all". It indicates the idea of control on the actions of many people by a few ones.

One of the aspects of Bentham's *Panopticon* is the solitude. In its architecture, all are solitary and permanently contolled.

In a certain sense, this condition of solitude under continuous surveillance illustrates one of the aspects of the cyberworld as it was established in the beginning of the 21st century: millions of people more and more solitary, permanently surveyed by artificial intelligence systems in the capture, identification and treatment of data.

Panopticon launches itself to the Greek myth of Argus Panoptes, who saw everything, never being seeing. In one of versions of the myth,

Argus would have only one eye, but omnipresent. In another one, he would have four eyes, each one turned to a cardinal point. Finally, he would be a body covered by eyes.

Panoptes – that means "who see everything" – was a giant with an extraordinary force that had freed Arcadia from the terrible attacks of a furious bull. More than this, he finished to be a kind of police force that protected shepherds and farmers.

Hermes – Toth in the Ancient Egypt, god that would have Mercury as his correspondent in the Roman world – was the murder of the giant Argus Panoptes.

It is important to understand who was the murder of Panoptes as to comprehend something about its mythical dimension.

Thoth was the god of writing, of the literature; the one who made possible the existence

of all other gods, because is him who allows the emergence of *history*.

It is the *history* – which in the Greek Hermes means the function of a guide of thought, of psyche – that eliminates the monster who sees everything, without being seen, overwhelming demonstration of power, of control.

The word *Argo* etymologically means "bright" and "fast". When we asked ourselves about what would be, in logical terms, the sensorial universes that implicate in their very first nature the absolute control, without possible defense, the passage of information without barriers, they are hearing and smell.

We can close your eyes, not touch and not eat. But there are no barriers in smell and hearing. We enter inside an environment and feel, inevitably, its fragrances and its sound.

Each space has a sound.

Because of this, hearing and smell are very first references of power, of control.

Thus, in non-visual cultures, strongly acoustic, everything must be controlled at all time. What emerges as the concept of freedom in the independence of decisions, free of control, appears with the establishment of a more strongly literary and historical culture.

It is that culture what *kills* the giant Argo Panoptes, but it is also it that succumbs to the same monster that controls everything when the sensorial palette is changed in the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twentieth-first century through virtual media.

If Campanella depicts the *City of the Sun* as the perfect city in the form of a prison; it is Bentham's prison what aspires to be everything, to condition and forge a perfect society.

Like Argo – and not without a good reason –

Bentham's prison is called *Panopticon* and appears seven years after Luigi Galvani's discovery that electricity could *control* muscle movement. Thirty-five years before, Benjamin Franklin had argued that light was a form of electricity and invented the light bulb, known as *lightning rods*, announcing the beginning of what would be an electronic world two hundred years later. That is, the human being controlling nature in its *modus operandi*.

In a sense, Bentham was prescient, in logical terms, about what would be the end of the so-called verbal imperialism and, therefore, he was a utopia in his time.

Jeremy Bentham's system was never put into practice and ended up almost forgotten for nearly two hundred years – when it was picked up by Foucault in 1975, in the beginning of the global digital revolution.

To Bentham's *Panopticon* opposes *Synopticon* – a concept ellaborated in 1987 by Thomas

Mathiesen, Norwegian sociologist, indicating a society of *voyeurs*, where few control many, like what happens with public figures and media.

To these two concepts, we could add another one: the *omniopticon* – when monitoring becomes articulated inside a framework operating by coordination, incorporating both the panopticon and the synopticon effects, but also the control of everybody by everybody.

It is exactly what we see in the hypercommunciation global networks real time structures.

Messages are constantly captured by government agents, especially in terms of fiscal terrorism; millions of people seeking information of any kind about their idols – being possible even to see where they live through *Google Earth* or *Google Maps*, for example; and systems like *FaceBook* or *MySpace*, but especially *Twitter*, establish a network for continuous exchange of superficial information.

In all these cases information is always superficial.

The old hierarchy of control, aiming specific groups, began to be extended to all – according to a *low power* logic.

State espionage passed to recall, among other information, numbers, indices of transactions or evidence of illicit enrichment – but never *knowing* the person. This condition has made that gross errors started to be regularly committed in name of an apparent but false isonomy.

Espionage of the State against the person went so far as the French government determined in 2006, a price to pay for telecommunications companies for each person being spied upon. Arguing that these prices would prevent the explosion of costs in telecommunication services – given the huge amount of bugged out - France established a free trade of espionage.

In China, most of the seventy thousand taxis in Beijing are equipped with surveillance systems and GPS locators, allowing a continuous and immediate intelligence location of vehicles.

Since long time it has been known that the Mafia and other Italian criminal organizations establish an acoustic espionage strategy that, in some sense, is very similar to those performed by the governments of France and China among others.

The *Pacific Northwest National Laboratory* announced the development a visualization system that operates in a short wave spectrum, so that it can "see" through fabrics, but not metal, plastic or skin. Thus, this particular camera can easily take out virtually the clothes of a person, even if he is fully covered.

With obvious utility in the identification of plastic explosives, such equipment may result in matters as simple as knowing who admits or not

to be stripped by a police officer.

But now, the expansion of spying on citizens went far beyond the old division that existed between gangs and the State, between democratic and dictatorial regimes, or even between individuals.

In all these conditions, values and intimate story of the person, which is strategically transformed into number, hasn't great importance. This erasing of personal history is one of the central elements in the concept known as "crime".

I met one case, for example, of a person who received a heavy fine for speed excess in Switzerland. The person did not live in the country, but knew the route and knew there was a fail in the signaling – as often happens, though rarely in Switzerland. He knew that to deal with the fine, would be required to hire a lawyer and get into a lawsuit that would cost much more than the expensive fine.

An automatic sensor detected speed excess. There was no consideration for the person, or for any conditions of its action. The result has been automatically notified and in fact, there was no possible defense – even because the person was living in another country.

Complaints about sensors that record wrong speeds are not uncommon, but it is not possible to prove. The only evidence that authorities present is a photograph showing that the vehicle was there, but there is no way to prove that there really was an infringement.

A low power blindly applied, operating in low intensity and large spectrum.

In May 2009, the BBC announced that «thousands of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras are already operating on Britain's roads. Police forces across England, Wales and Scotland will soon be able to share the information on one

central computer. Officers say it is a useful tool in fighting crime, but critics say the network is secretive and unregulated».

That same story had a terrible history experienced by a resident of Brighton: «John Catt found himself on the wrong side of the ANPR system. He regularly attends anti-war demonstrations outside a factory in Brighton, his hometown. It was at one of these protests that Sussex police put a "marker" on his car. That meant he was added to a "hot list". This is a system meant for criminals but John Catt has not been convicted of anything and on a trip to London, the pensioner found himself pulled over by an anti-terror unit. "I was threatened under the Terrorist Act. I had to answer every question they put to me, and if there were any questions I would refuse to answer, I would be arrested. I thought to myself, what kind of world are we living in?". Sussex Police does not talk about the case».

Low Power Society does not know the person, but only a statistic data. Thus, in almost

most cases, the transit police abandoned its old education role and started worked practically only for invoicing with the aim of increasing revenues. In many cases, the police started to receive a commission on the collected amounts – and this also passed to happen with good part of civil servants.

A press news of June 2009 clearly illustrates the phenomenon: a van was badly parked under an overpass in New York City. Repeatedly, for several weeks, officials of the traffic police fined the offender. But he was dead! For weeks, no police officer even noticed that there was a dead person inside the vehicle. It was George Morales, who died of a heart attack. Even with a strong odor of putrefying body, he was only discovered when the car was towed. For weeks, various police officers that went there had a single function: to raise money through fines. For them, the citizen, the man in the car, was not the main objective.

Just a month earlier, in May 2009, the BBC

denounced that there was a surveillance system and a DNA database - then with genetic information of nearly five million people - controlled by the British authorities.

Surveillance systems in Britain were already so developed and refined that they had even smaller flying objects for capturing images and sound, known as aerial robots or drones, remotely controlled by computers, «Unmanned surveillance drones were first used by the police in 2008. The drones are lightweight weighing around 1.5kg, relatively quiet being battery powered, can carry different cameras and are remote controlled. They can fly or hover while transmitting live images to an operator on the ground and can operate during the day or at night. Unmanned aerial vehicles or UAVs can be used for many different activities such as searching for firearms or missing persons, road traffic accidents and surveillance after a terrorist attack. The police are already using drones for aerial surveillance in Merseyside, Essex and Staffordshire».

In several countries, without people knowledge, and with increasing regularity, various products, in addition to cars and even clothing, have been manufactured and marketed with *RFID Radio Frequency Identification* chips. Sensors at distance can detect those chips.

Interestingly, like what happened with the beginning of the Internet, *RFID* technology grew out of military use. Its use is currently extended even to hospitals, embedded in small objects or bracelets with patient's identifiers.

For Phil Zimmermann, specialist on digital security and privacy, «when we create a system where police has a much easier work, it will be a limit where if it becomes too easy you can fall in a police State».

But it is not only the police. In the summer of 2009, a friend who lives in New York needed to send a small amount of money to his son, who was living in Chile. He called the bank and requested

the transfer. An official from the bank started, then, the conventional interrogation asking his full name, tax ID number, credit card number, address, date of birth, place of birth, telephone number, mother's name, as well as the answer to a security question previously established for the identity verification. All these data were kept in the bank. When all questions were satisfactorily answered, he was transferred to another person, who initiated a new interrogatory in order to validate the previous identification. Then the person asked him if he had a car, what kind, year of manufacture, when it was purchased, its color, the state the vehicle was, its registration number, the model and how much he paid annually for its insurance! The same could have happened in relation to his house, or anything else. The bank and, of course, its employees, had access to all this information!

China was preparing to launch in the first years of the twenty-first century, an Internet network fully controlled and kept under strict control by the government, extending the espionage to other

global networks.

In 1998, astrophysicist and author David Brin, author of *The Transparent Society*, said: «No matter how many laws are passed, it will prove quite impossible to legislate away the surveillance tools and databases. They are here to stay».

The argument that the control of information is a democracy condition for the benefit of all and that is something free for people of any social class is false, because in a police State few control the information on many and such situation always generated all sorts of abuses and corruption. Must not forget that the nazi regime made extensive use of IBM Hollerith punch-card machines, mastering the information in order to oversee, control and select those who should die.

In a post literature world there is no history – key factor of identity from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. Thus, under the bureaucratic point of view the constraints of ethical action

seem to be irrelevant and, in an apparent paradox, seem to become relevant under a moral point of view – reversing the old condition of the literary societies. Everything that concerns dominions and territories, material or immaterial, practically disappear; but everything what concerns symbolic qualities – like "the poor", "the refugees", "the rich", "minorities" – pass to be in the foreground, without identifying the process under the action. What reminds us that the content of a new medium is its previous one, in this case literature taken as content, while strongly symbolic contingent.

The most impressive is that the process of control and surveillance passed to be applied by parents to children and teenagers, without allowing that they might grow in an environment of freedom.

Monitors attached to children and infants, allowing parents to hear them at distances of more than one hundred fifty feet have become commonplace. From birth – on behalf of their safety

– children passed to be constantly monitored.

With the growth of children, parents passed to use beeps, GPS location systems and mobile phones in order to control their movements.

In several amusement parks around the world, has become common for parents to rent bracelets or location straps with GPS chips, to control the children who were apparently free. The removal of surveillance equipment was only possible with the use of special instruments. In fact, on behalf of their safety, children began to be treated much like prisoners.

One of the most controversial instruments of control was the *VeriChip*, the first FDA Food and Drug Administration approved human-implantable RFID radio-frequency identification microchip to be implanted in children.

And, paradoxically, as the geographer and environmentalist Cindi Katz says, «these

technologies also represent the "defense" against the absence of the State», in a hyper State world!

Other surveillance and control instruments, such as kits for the collection and analysis of hairs of children, looking for traces of illicit drug use, began to be freely traded.

Virtual surveillance programs controlling step by step all movements of the children with their computers were added to wiretapping and location technologies through mobile phones.

With those tools, parents started knowing with precision all *sites* visited by their children, the time of each visit, the content of all exchanged messages, all passwords, telephone conversations, identities of people with whom they talked and geographical locations, turning children into real prisoners – in the name of their safety: people who will grow up inside a kind of informational and virtual concentration camp, unable to understand what the concept of freedom means!

In the *Synopticon* universe, *voyers* have access to a huge amount of superficial information about their idols – most of which is pre-fabricated, like kinds of avatars or "virtual masks" – once again revealing literature as the content of a new medium.

Sprout out all over the world, television reality show programs known as *Big Brother* were a curious phenomenon of sublimation of this phenomenon. There, a group of strangers is obsessively observed, as if they were famous movie stars. They enter in the process as mere strangers, people watch them knowing that, in some way, they are simulacra of actors and actresses, though in real life scenes – which are also fake. Curiously, in several cases, they eventually become stars – but without any function, without any background or history beyond having indiscreetly been seen by millions of other people.

What happens with the emergence of a *omniopticon* is not only the incorporation of a

panopticon process – through multiple systems of espionage on people in general – and of a *synopticon* phenomenon, with a generalized voyeurism that is responsible, for example, for most the design in television programs, journalism in general and the political world, but the intensive crossing of voyeurism, control and narcissism among masses of self proclaimed common people.

Millions of web-cams were installed in diverse countries, broadcasting in real time the most intimate images of the most varied type of people.

Suddenly, much of what before could be the target of espionage surprisingly started to be generously offered by millions of people for whom secrecy and intimacy are irrelevant elements.

On the other hand, the commercialization of small video cameras and high definition digital photography at low prices, often installed in mobile phones, enabled the expansion of images of people

around the world without their consent, and most of the time without their prior knowledge.

Thanks to this, a countless, and sometimes contradictory, bureaucratic cast of laws self-proclaimed defenders of image rights appeared.

Everything passed from the sphere of the observer of the art, to that of laws and repression. Many of the photographs made by the great Henri Cartier-Bresson would not have been possible in the context of such intense rigor of bureaucratic of rules and prohibitions.

In 2003 around fifty million digital cameras were sold in the world. Over one hundred and fifty million cell phones with video and photography cameras incorporated were sold in the next year. In July 2008 Sony celebrated a record of one hundred million cameras sold since the beginning of its commercialization. Two months later Canon beat the same record. That year, around the world, over one hundred and fifty million digital cameras

had been sold.

According to the *Picture Business Magazine* of May 2009, only in the first four months of that year almost two hundred million mobile phones had been sold throughout the world, of which about 90% incorporated both video and photography cameras.

Still in 2009, about half of one hundred and ten million families had cameras attached to their mobile phones and they took a photo a day on average – meaning more than five hundred million photos each month.

In 2007, Daniel J. Solove, a law professor at George Washington University Law School, launched the book *The Future of Reputation*. The book begins with the story of a world famous event that happened in the subway in Seoul, South Korea, in 2005. In it, a young woman brought a dog that defecated in the carriage. The passengers next asked her to clean. She refused simply saying that

it was not their business. Someone photographed the scene, using a mobile phone. The image was quickly placed in a popular blog.

Don Park told the result of that incident: «Within hours, she was labeled *gae-ttong-nyue* – dog shit girl – and her pictures and parodies were everywhere. Within days, her identity and her past were revealed. Requests for information about her parents and relatives started popping up and people started to recognize her by the dog and the bag she was carrying as well as her watch, clearly visible in the original picture. All mentions of privacy invasion were shouted down ... The common excuse for the behavior of the people was that the girl does not deserve privacy».

Here, the right is immediately transported to a public trial – and it is important never to forget that the greatest tragedies of humankind were always made on behalf of large majorities.

Howard Reingold argued that «the shadow

side of the empowerment that comes with a billion and a half people being online is the surveillance aspect ... We used to worry about big brother - the State - but now of course it's our neighbors, or people on the subway».

One of the possible scenarios as a result of the expansion of the images captured by thousands of millions of people around the world will be a radical change of the Napoleonic law, which designated legal principles in many countries, mainly the Latin, establishing an environment of unstable and volatile jurisprudence.

When the trial is public, jurisprudence becomes volatile. Paradoxically, when this happens, reaction against change grows. Judgments in the public square, all over history, have always been the most reactionary – Socrates is a good example.

Our concept of privacy, as well as those related to copyright, are supported on the logic of the *excluded middle*, or *third excluded*, which fundamentally is an Aristotelian principle. Even

so, they are departments related to specific environments. I can do things in a restaurant that I would not do in a friend's house, for example. As I can authorize the publication of a text under certain conditions and not under other ones. Such relativity implies a kind of territorial diagram, which is something characteristically visual.

But virtual systems set a new logical universe, a new aesthetic, where the inclusion and convergence replace exclusion and departmentalization.

An essential issue presented by Solove is related to the question of memory: the entire structure of Law, not matter its nature, is based on the duration of memory, a biological condition. The establishment of sentences, social reintegration, the criteria for the prescription – everything is directly related to the time we remember the facts.

But in a universe where everything is

recorded forever and remembered at every moment, changing the biological nature of our own memories, the root of what we understand by "Law" is compromised.

Not only the foundation of Law, but also all human relations are changed. More than tolerance, understanding draws the principles of human relations, and for this to happen the design of memory is vital. The old proverb according to which *truth is daughter of time* illustrates this phenomenon.

A world where there isn't some kind of oblivion is fertile ground for expansion of nano conflicts.

Data presented in a study by the *Consumer Electronics Association* titled *Digital Imaging: Focus on Sharing* showed, in 2009, that about 55% of the digital photos taken were sent to other people via email and more than 40% were placed online.

In June 2009, *Photobucket*, considered the most important website exclusively devoted to free storage and distribution of digital images, with great impact especially for users of cameras in mobile phones, founded in 2003 by Alex Welch and Darren Crystal at *Fox Interactive Media*, announced they received about fifty million visitors per month throughout the world, with approximately eight billion archived images with growth of around a thousand new images every two seconds.

In the main structure of this phenomenon are the so-called *social networks*.

In 2009, *Facebook* – created five years before by Mark Zuckerberg, then a student at Harvard – announced on its front page what was his central goal: «Giving people the power to share and make the world more open and connected». Through *Facebook*, quick updated information about a person could be seen by millions of people, who would know habits and preferences of all kinds, always described by the person.

Like *Facebook*, *MySpace* is a information database, often confidential and intimate, of a great number of people who happily proclaim the end of privacy.

Privacy and avatar – the projection of an ego ideal, a mask...

In May 2009 *Facebook* and *MySpace* were considered the most widely used social networks distributing digital photos.

In 2006, *MySpace* already had over one hundred million members. At that time, their growth was of almost two hundred and fifty thousand new members per day.

Only in April 2009 about one hundred and fifty million people had visited the three most important social networks – certainly a negligible number considering its thunderous growth rates.

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connected in networks, where what before was taken as private and personal information was now transformed into free public communication.

In Brazil and India the social network *Orkut* – created by Orkut Büyükkökten – was quite popular, with millions of members. In Japan was *Mixi* – meaning "I mix". In South Korea, *Cyworld* was the most important social network, counting in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, with 92% of young people aged around twenty years and 30% of the total population in the country as its members!

Even social networks for dogs – Dogster – and cats – Catster – were created!

In June 2009, *Time* magazine – which was known for keeping the covers to major world figures – had an issue devoted to the phenomenon *Twitter*, in a moment when the world was still vigorously suffering the economic crisis that seemed to announce a mutation at a planetary

level.

Twitter only allows short messages of up to one hundred and forty characters, but has a dynamic communication inversely proportional to its informational synthetic design – seemed to confirm the maxim according to which the less information the better the communication.

Steven Johnson described, then, a case that illustrates not only the success of *Twitter*, but also how an *omnioptic* society works: «Earlier this year I attended a daylong conference in Manhattan devoted to education... about the future of schools. Twenty years ago, the ideas exchanged in that conversation would have been confined to the minds of the participants. Ten years ago, a transcript might have been published weeks or months later on the Web. Five years ago, a handful of participants might have blogged about their experiences after the fact. But this event was happening in 2009, so trailing behind the real-time, real-world conversation was an

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equally real-time conversation on *Twitter*. At the outset of the conference, our hosts announced that anyone who wanted to post live commentary about the event via *Twitter* should include the word *#hackedu* in his 140 characters. In the room, a large display screen showed a running feed of tweets. (…) At first, all these tweets came from inside the room and were created exclusively by conference participants tapping away on their laptops or *BlackBerrys*. But within half an hour or so, word began to seep out into the *Twittersphere* that an interesting conversation about the future of schools was happening at *#hackedu*».

The conversation on Twitter did not end with the end of the conference. Unlike the case with other social networks, Twitter is not especially suited to computers, but its concise design makes it a perfect tool for mobile phones too – everything in it is fast and immediate.

In April 2009, an anti communist political revolt in Moldova was articulated through *Twitter*

and the Chinese government began to exert all sorts of pressures of censorship to prevent similar events may occur in the country.

On the other hand, in October 2008, *Wired* magazine published an article questioning whether *Twitter* could possibly be used as an ideal tool for planning and conducting terrorist attacks.

The experience Steven Johnson lived at the conference about the future of the school, in Manhattan, passed to be a concrete planetary reality for a growing number of people who intentionally distributes freely personal information, like the choice of a dish in a restaurant or a simple experiment to walk the streets of a city, all done in real time.

What a person is wearing at that moment? How is she feeling? What is she looking at?

In a sense, the information becomes to work like what happens in the acoustic universe, where

Y T E I C O S   R E W O P   W O L

experimenta

modelo

de masas

dimensio

Manuel López 2

there are no barriers, that is, low intensity power distributed in large spectrum.

In the early 1990s, the beginning of the popularity of the caller ID – which allows the person who receives a phone call to know what number is calling – provoked a large negative reaction of the people. They considered an intrusion into their universe of privacy.

Gradually, and especially after the widespread use of mobile phones, those identifiers have become commonplace and the protests simply disappeared.

With the knowledge of that simple number, quickly a gigantic amount of information became accessible. As explained by Marc Rotenberg, law professor at the Georgetown University and executive director of the *Electronic Privacy Information Center*, the Caller ID is a mean of obtaining personal information without prior consent or knowledge.

Many marketing companies, dedicated to the sale of most varied products, started using information from telephone calls to identify new market niches.

Not only phone calls but also cookies without the consent of the person being spied upon, information through the use of credit cards, frequent customer cards, registration fitness centers, membership programs of trade discounts, magazine subscriptions and almost everything that characterizes the daily life of a person, has become a collection of true police interrogations, where large amounts of personal information – confidential few years before – began to circulate freely, and analyzed not only by fiscal officers but also by vendors of all kinds of products.

Everything passed to be controlled, a little everywhere, without knowledge of personal history, through a strongly *omnioptic* reality.

For David Lyon, «the home, once a sacrosanct haven from 'public' life, increasingly finds itself to be the site of surveillance. Government administration gains easy access to details of who lives with whom, and this affects voting capacity or welfare entitlements, while commercial agencies encounter few obstacles to analyzing the financial standing and consumer preferences of each household in a given street».

Power is control. Thus, all power implies an asymmetry in knowledge. When the relations of knowledge tend to symmetry, power tends to disappear.

What happens in the *omnioptic* reality of the low power society is the expansion of large-scale structure of micro-asymmetries of knowledge, giving rise to an illusion of a tendency to symmetry, of the strengthen of the democratic spirit.

Thus, all political discourse in the establishment of new surveillance tools is based on

the ideas that they will serve to ensure democracy and individual rights.