A one-day workshop hosted by the ANU School of Sociology and the ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

Wednesday 27th August 2014
Workshop thematic

Data-capturing technologies and informatic practices play an increasingly pivotal role in the organisation and experience of social life (French, 2014). Sensing devices, for instance, are now commonly embedded in camera units, smart cards, smart phones, satellite navigation systems, biometric readers, webpages, and imaging scanners. Sensors are designed to passively collect personal details, and to render bodies, actions and motions into items of knowledge and objects of capital for various onlookers. They transfer records of social events from a ‘context of origin’ to a ‘context of calculation’, where mediated data representations can be assessed and can inform decision making protocols at the interpersonal and institutional levels. The growing sensorisation of daily life, in which sociomaterial objects, activities and environments become foci for invasive sensing procedures and sense-making analytics, is dramatically refiguring the organisational structuring and cultural landscapes of familial, health, educative, occupational and leisure contexts. It is yielding huge volumes of de-contextualised data for processing, and a demand for sophisticated algorithmic solutions that (a) automate how data is categorically profiled, correlated and arranged; and (b) determine a set of corresponding social interventions and experiences. But it is also generating novel expectations and obligations in terms of how individuals conceptualise and manage their ‘data-bodies’, and how institutions process and manage their ‘data-sets’.

This situation reflects an emerging ‘sensor society’ (Andrejevic and Burdon, 2014), where social actions, motions and relations are routinely exposed to pervasive sensing. The personal data that is extracted and emitted from the bodies of persons as they conduct activities and contact sensing infrastructures, comes to determine how they are viewed and treated by a variety of profilers. Sense makers now include commercial marketers, health practitioners, law enforcement agents, insurance actuaries, journalists and community groups. In the aftermath of Edward Snowden’s revelations concerning the scale and intensity of state, commercial and industrial espionage, issues of surveillance excess and democratic process have appeared on both public and political radars. Publics are gradually becoming aware of the data retrieval and archiving capacities of smart technologies and their positioning within vast personal data economies, as ‘prosumers’ of personal information circulations.

But how is the genesis of a sensor society - and a corresponding post-privacy order - transforming traditional organisational operations and citizenry roles? How is it altering who we are, what we know about ourselves and how we think and act? What types of power differentials and asymmetries are being consolidated? In other words, what desires, appetities, interests and rationalities lurk behind these developments?

The onset of mass sensorisation, and the increasing sharing and processing of personal information, necessitates that we engage the conceptual and political meaning of ‘citizenship’ in the informatic age - what it implies contractually in terms of citizenry rights and responsibilities. This demands that we critically consider personhood and identity politics and explore how publics understand and relate to the personal data trails that recurrently emanate from their actions, motions and activities. It is these issues that provide an intellectual context and framework for the workshop.

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Workshop venue

Lecture Theatre 1.04, H.C. Coombs Extension (Building 8), Fellows Rd, The Australian National University, Acton ACT 2601

Workshop program

1:00pm - 1:15pm  Transitioning through visibility: imminent citizenships in the age of revelation  
Gavin J.D. Smith, The Australian National University

1:15pm - 1:45pm  Self-tracking modes: reflexive self-monitoring and data practices  
Deborah Lupton, University of Canberra

1:45pm - 2:15pm  Sero-politics: using epidemiological data in HIV non-disclosure prosecutions  
Martin French & Amy Swiffen, Concordia University, Canada

2:15pm - 2:45pm  Suspicion, inside and out: on becoming athlete-citizens in and through the anti-doping regime  
Kate Henne, The University of Melbourne

2:45pm - 3:15pm  Conceptualising public participation that is both discursive and data-driven: the case of alcohol consumption  
Nicholas Carah, The University of Queensland

3:15pm - 3:45pm  ** Refreshments **

3:45pm - 4:15pm  Reconfiguring citizenship in the surveillance school  
Emmeline Taylor, The Australian National University

4:15pm - 4:45pm  Asymmetrical visibility within convergent media assemblages: cultivating visible citizens and invisible organisations  
Ashlin Lee, The University of Tasmania

4:45pm - 5:15pm  Alluring screens: the irrational subject and the ethics of smartphone big data  
Clare Southerton, The Australian National University

5:15pm - 5:30pm  Workshop Summation by Nikolas Rose

6:00pm - 7:30pm  The mind transparent? Reading the human brain  
Nikolas Rose, Kings College London, UK
Workshop abstracts

Transitioning through visibility: imminent citizenships in the age of revelation

What affect is increasing visibility, that is, the accelerating capturing, circulating and profiling of data traces, having on the bodies of those to whom the personal data derives? What values and impressions are being inscribed on public consciousness by the technologies and industries of visibility? How are the interests of users implicated in legitimating the design, marketing and implementation of more sophisticated data-sharing infrastructures? These questions and issues inform the purview of this introductory paper as it proposes the ‘imminent citizenships’ notion and overviews the workshop thematic. The term ‘imminent citizenships’ is advanced as an analytic for conceptualising the transitioning contractual politics associated with the ‘new transparency’ and with the emerging sovereign power of actuarial informatics. It points to the variable nature of rights and responsibilities in this specific context, while also accentuating the general distrust, uncertainty, relativity, excess, exceptionalism and injustice characterising social, political and economic life in the neoliberal era. The personal information economies underpinning the contemporary period present an ideal microcosm for analysing the realignment of civil rights and responsibilities, from a state-orchestrated framework to a market-influenced consumer model. In an era when social activity increasingly occurs via the mediation of data-sharing and data-capturing interfaces, it is vital that critical scholarship attends to the emerging patterns of social relations. I argue that cultural appetites for convenience, safety, connectivity, attention and stimulation, and institutional requirements for identification, knowledge, capital and influence, act in ways that seduce and coerce individuals into perpetuating self-revealing behaviours. But important social rights are being forfeited via this process: the right to be anonymous, the right to be forgotten and the right to disappear.

Gavin J.D. Smith is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the Australian National University. His current research explicates the interpretive meanings individuals attribute to their visibility and the work they invest in managing their ascribed ‘data-body’. He is the author of Opening the Black Box: The Work of Watching (Routledge, 2014) and the co-author of Key Concepts in Surveillance and Visibility Studies (Sage, 2015).

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Self-tracking modes: reflexive self-monitoring and data practices

The concept of ‘self-tracking’ (also referred to as life-logging, the quantified self, personal analytics and personal informatics) has recently begun to emerge in discussions of ways in which people can voluntarily monitor and record specific features of their lives, often using digital technologies. There is evidence that the personal data that are derived from individuals engaging in such reflexive self-monitoring are now beginning to be used by agencies and organisations beyond the personal and privatised realm. The detail offered by these data on individuals and the growing commodification and commercial value of digital data have led government, managerial and commercial enterprises to explore ways of appropriating self-tracking for their own purposes. In some contexts people are encouraged, ‘nudged’, obliged or coerced into using digital devices to produce personal data which are then used by others. This paper examines these issues, outlining five modes of self-tracking that have emerged: private self-tracking, communal self-tracking, pushed self-tracking, exploited self-tracking and imposed self-tracking. The analysis draws upon theoretical perspectives on concepts of selfhood, citizenship, biopolitics and data practices and assemblages in discussing the wider sociocultural implications of the emergence and development of these modes of self-tracking.
Deborah Lupton is Centenary Research Professor in the News & Medical Research Centre, Faculty of Arts & Design, University of Canberra. Her latest books are Medicine as Culture, 3rd edition (Sage, 2012), Fat (Routledge, 2013), Risk, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2013), The Social Worlds of the Unborn (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), The Unborn Human (editor, Open Humanities Press, 2013) and Digital Sociology (Routledge, 2015). Deborah’s current research interests are in big data cultures, self-tracking cultures, the digitisation of children, academic work in the digital era and critical digital health studies.

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Sero-politics: using epidemiological data in HIV non-disclosure prosecutions

What happens when epidemiological data are used to prosecute and convict persons in cases where they are alleged to have not disclosed their serostatus to sex partners? In this paper, we consider the transit of epidemiological data from public health and biomedical research contexts into the criminal trial setting. Aggregate data, derived from the blood samples and personal health information of persons living with HIV, have increasingly been taken up by courts as a form of evidence to determine different transmission risks associated with different kinds of sex acts. Because this aggregate data is generally not personally identifiable, its uptake by courts is not commonly viewed as problematic. In this paper, however, we seek to problematize these ‘medico-legal’ circuits of information. With a focus on non-disclosure cases in Canada, we consider two types of information uptake, one involving identifiable personal health information and one involving so called de-identified aggregate epidemiological data. Concentrating on the latter case—the case that is more difficult to problematize because, from a bioethics standpoint, potential harms associated with secondary uses of de-identified data have gone largely unrecognized—we provide a description of how courts use of epidemiological data is reconfiguring/re-signifying this data for adjudicative purposes. This opens up a theorisation of the broader implications of the use of epidemiological data in criminal prosecutions. We consider the new forms of ‘bio-informatic’ citizenship being forged by this re-purposing of epidemiological data. And, we reflect on the ‘seropolitics’ of this immanent citizenship, attending specifically on the novel risks and responsibilities it engenders for persons and communities living with or affected by HIV, systems of care, and systems of law.

Martin French is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Concordia University, Canada. His research examines the social dimensions of technology with an empirical focus on communications & information technology (CIT). It emphasizes the broader social and political contexts of CIT, focusing especially on risk, surveillance, privacy, and social justice. By attending to the informatic practices of professionals, organizations and networks, his research creates an evidentiary foundation for understanding the relationship between information flows, the practices that nurture or impede them, and the resulting configurations of governance that they enable or disrupt. He is the co-author of Key Concepts in Surveillance & Visibility Studies (Sage, 2015).

Amy Swiffen is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Concordia University, Canada. Amy’s research focuses on the relationship between law and society in new legal contexts, such as human rights, international law and public health law. Her book Law, Ethics and the Biopolitical (Routledge 2011) explores a new paradigm in ethical thought known as bioethics. Her research appears in American Ethnologist, Law and Critique, Law, Culture and the Humanities, Legal and Political Anthropology Review, and Theory and Event. She has also co-edited a collection of essays on the end of history and on cruel and unusual punishment. Her current research is focused on hate crime legislation in Canada and the principle of ‘triage’ in public health law.

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The Australian National University | 5
**Suspicion, inside and out: on becoming athlete-citizens in and through the anti-doping regime**

The regulation of athletes’ bodies in sport is a topic of growing critical analysis, particularly in relation to the global anti-doping regime’s embrace of surveillance technologies and routine bodily scrutiny. The intimate interactions with regulatory requirements, however, receive less scholarly attention. Drawing upon findings gleaned from a six-year, multi-sited ethnographic study, this paper explores how the threat of doping in sport, as codified and articulated by regulatory language and procedure, becomes understood and incarnated by athletes in various ways. In particular, it highlights how the interplay between athletes, surveillance and performance enhancement technologies, and anti-doping authorities reinscribes a commitment to self-scrutiny, a responsibility that informs interpersonal, imagined, biological, and technocratic modes of engagement. In doing so, embedded logics of suspicion emerge as defining features of the regime, yielding a broader, constitutive process of subject formation, a process I refer to here as ‘athlete-citizenship’. Athlete-citizenship, I argue, captures a precarious and institutionalised set of conditions, which, although unique to sport, provides an illustrative example regarding the biopedagogical dimensions—that is, those aspects associated with how subjects obtain, pursue, and enact knowledge—of citizenship formations that take shape amid mass surveillance. In doing so, the analysis also attends to some of the methodological challenges of attempting to unearth and unpack the range of embodied relationships that citizens develop with surveillance technologies across multiple sites, a dilemma that is compounded when we consider how many objects of inquiry are imbued with ideological, scientific, and subjective attributes that shift over time and space.

Kate Henne is a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Melbourne. She holds an interdisciplinary PhD from the University of California, Irvine, with a specialisation in Anthropologies of Medicine, Science and Technology and Graduate Emphases in Critical Theory and Feminist Studies. She employs ethnographic methods to study how surveillance intersects with other forms of social control and inequality in the everyday life. Her book, *Testing for Athlete Citizenship: The Regulation of Doping and Sex in Sport* (Rutgers University Press, 2015), traces the development and deployment of regulatory technologies used to police athletes’ bodies and methods of performance enhancement.

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**Conceptualising public participation that is both discursive and data-driven: the case of alcohol consumption**

This paper examines the online social movement Hello Sunday Morning (HSM) in order to consider the role media technologies that are simultaneously participatory and data-driven play in managing public life. HSM participants give up drinking alcohol for a period of time and blog about their experiences. HSM began as an online network that fostered discursive forms of participation. They encouraged ordinary drinkers to discuss how individual behaviours were situated in larger drinking culture. This fostered critical public conversations with peers about drinking culture. Participants’ blogs double as a rich trove of data that demonstrate how their discursive expressions about drinking change over time. Policy-makers and funders however require quantitative evaluation of behaviour change. This has led HSM toward more structured and data-driven modes of participation based on body and peer to peer monitoring and automated feedback on alcohol consumption. Participants become more oriented toward the production, presentation and evaluation of a ‘quantified’ and ‘monitored’ self, rather than discursive deliberation about the culture they live in. I position HSM within the broader application of participatory and data-driven media in the promotion and management of alcohol consumption. While online participation has been theorised in terms of ‘speaking and being heard’ (Couldry 2010), I suggest we also need
to consider how ‘architectures of listening’ (Macnamara 2013) double as architectures for monitoring, calculation and control. HSM is a unique intervention in efforts to manage alcohol consumption because it emerges from a ‘start up’ design and entrepreneurial culture. HSM experiments with mobile and social media to structure participation in ways that generate more engagement and data. This prompts us to explore how participatory and data-driven media systems enable us to understand and express ourselves and to deliberate about our place in larger cultural formations and practices.

Nicholas Carah is a Lecturer in Communication at the University of Queensland. His research explores drinking culture and social media in Australia, specifically the branding activities of the alcohol industry and the online social change movement, Hello Sunday Morning. He has a book entitled, *Pop Brands: branding, popular music and young people* (Peter Lang, 2010) and has published in journals such as *Television & New Media, Convergence & Consumption, Markets & Culture*.

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**Reconfiguring citizenship in the surveillance school**

Schools are privileged in their ability to shape the views, actions and role of future generations. This paper explores the conflux of socio-political, cultural and economic factors that have contributed towards the ascension of the Surveillance School. It is argued that by embedding surveillance practices in the pedagogical apparatus, they quickly become part of the daily insipid routine, and thereby normalised and accepted by young people. Incessant, omnipresent technological surveillance becomes ordinary, expected and even natural. Understanding the surveillance of young people is paramount at a time when the status of childhood and youth is being challenged. As Henry A Giroux states ‘increasingly children seem to have no standing in the public sphere as citizens’. The extent of the consequences are yet to be fully recognized, but there are clear indicators that the new modality of school surveillance is contributing to a reconfiguration of societal values such as privacy and trust, as well as undermining an already fractured belief in democratic participation amongst young people. There are concerns about the vanishing rights of children as the Surveillance School relinquishes young peoples’ rights to personal freedom, movement, anonymity, and privacy. For some, young people are no longer considered the world’s future, but as a threat to the present. This paper maps the trajectory of current processes and considers the implications for democratic values, justice and citizenship.

Emmeline Taylor is a Senior Lecturer at the Australian National University and has been researching the rise of surveillance in educational institutions for over a decade. She is the author of *Surveillance Schools; Security, Discipline and Control in Contemporary Education* (Palgrave Pivot, 2013). The manuscript explores the role of surveillance in schools, drawing predominantly on North America and the UK. She has also contributed to a number of key texts that attend to issues of surveillance and technology such as the *Handbook of Surveillance Studies* (2012) and the *Handbook of Security* (2014) as well as internationally recognised journals such as *The Sociological Review* and *The Journal of Education Policy*.

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**Asymmetrical visibility within convergent media assemblages: cultivating visible citizens and invisible organisations**

Modern citizens are being cultivated to accept heightened personal visibility to organisations, while these organisations become increasingly invisible. I argue this through exploring citizens’ position in convergent media assemblages (CMAs), specifically the heterogenous services provided by Facebook and Google, online and through mobile devices. I contend that cultural trends and new interface technologies develop citizens’ receptiveness
to visibility, such as in CMAs. Cultural arrangements that emphasize connectedness (Rainie and Wellman 2013), exposure (Ball 2009), and immediacy (Lee and Cook 2014), valorise discourses on how visibility is socially and experientially rewarding, while punishing invisibility. This sensitizes citizens to accept personal visibility, such as through CMAs, for personal and social fulfilment. This is achieved through digital networks, and interface/sensor devices like smartphones and quantified self devices that digitize lived experiences. However the context of enhanced personal transparency is asymmetrical in nature, with organisations that benefit from personal visibility often being invisible to public scrutiny. Convergent platforms such as Google and Facebook manipulate and circulate personal information in ways hidden from users, with few options available to control this, or challenge how citizens are excluded or privileged in these networks. To combat this I argue modern citizenship should embrace visibility, and empower citizens to take control of visibility processes and determine their trajectories. This can be achieved by promoting surveillance measures (Mann 2010), that equip subjects with the socio-technical means to enforce the transparency of organisations, and that recognise and enforce citizen sovereignty over their visibility and how it is used and circulated.

Ashlin Lee is an Associate Lecturer in Sociology and PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania. His research focuses on the relationship between technology and society, and of the intersection between users, society, and technologically based surveillance systems. His PhD explores the role of ‘smart’ (or convergent) mobile technologies in the lives of users, and the forms of sociality that are developed around these devices. He has published in Journal of Sociology, Teknokultura, and The Conversation.

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Alluring screens: the irrational subject and the ethics of smartphone big data

Smartphones, ever-present and silently sensing, are providing rich and incredibly valuable information about the flows of everyday life. This data, in combination with the wealth of social media data that smartphones also contribute to, firmly places this device at the centre of ethical debates around how this information is managed. At present much of the focus when it comes to data ethics is on giving appropriate notice and information to users, as well as obtaining consent for the collection and dissemination of the data. Whilst these questions are certainly productive they also reinforce and rely on an understanding of a rational acting subject who divulges information intentionally and consciously. Yet instances in which smartphone data is produced involve complex interrelations of pleasure, intimacy, habits and inclinations that can’t be accommodated in this model. This paper will explore the ethics of smartphone big data in light of the nonconscious and habitual dimensions of data production, exploring how a Nietzschean ethical framework can offer valuable insight in these debates. Crucially, it offers a way in to ethical evaluation beyond a focus on individual responsibility, which has proven to be insufficient when it comes to the management of big data.

Clare Southerton is a PhD candidate in the School of Sociology at the Australian National University. Her PhD focuses on the relationship formed between people and smartphones, with a particular interest in the habitual everyday encounters with these technology that form an ‘intimacy’ with machines that relies heavily on the nonconscious. Her past research has explored the user experience of video gaming and ‘gamification’.

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Workshop keynote*

The mind transparent? Reading the human brain

Professor Nikolas Rose

The human body was made legible long ago. But what of the human mind? Is it possible to ‘read’ the mind, for one human being to know what another is thinking or feeling, their beliefs and intentions. And if I can read your mind, how about others - could our authorities, in the criminal justice system or the security services? Some developments in contemporary neuroscience suggest the answer to this question is ‘yes’. On the one hand, evolutionary neurobiologists and cognitive neuroscientists argue that humans, have an evolved capacity to ‘read the minds’ of others, and that this is a condition for human sociality; as a corollary the lack of this capacity in some humans - from autists to psychopaths - is argued to underlie their particular pathologies. On the other, a range of novel technologies of brain imaging have been used to claim that specific mental states, and even specific thoughts, can be identified by characteristic patterns of brain activation; this has led some to propose their use in practices ranging from lie detection to the assessment of brain activity in persons in persistent vegetative states. In this talk, I explore the history of these developments, sketch their scientific and technical bases, and consider some of the epistemological and ontological mutations involved. I point to the ecological niches where they have - or have not - found a hospitable environment. I end by asking whether a new expertise of the readable, knowable, transparent mind is taking shape, and if so, with what consequences.

Nikolas Rose is Professor of Sociology and Head of the Department of Social Science, Health and Medicine, School of Social Science and Public Policy, King’s College London. Rose is a co-director of the Centre for Synthetic Biology and Innovation (CSynBI), a major research collaboration between King’s and Imperial College London. A member of numerous advisory groups engaging key stakeholders, he has also held high-level academic posts in the LSE and in Goldsmiths College. He has published widely across numerous fields and disciplines, with his work translated into 13 languages.

* This public lecture by Professor Rose forms part of the ANU School of Sociology’s distinguished speaker lecture program. See http://sociology.cass.anu.edu.au/ for more details.

Time: 6pm - 7:30pm

Venue: Room 1.02, Sir Roland Wilson Building (Building 120), McCoy Circuit, The Australian National University