2014

Watching the Watchers

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In 2014, citizen-led sousveillance will place the powers that be under increased scrutiny.
By Neil Richards
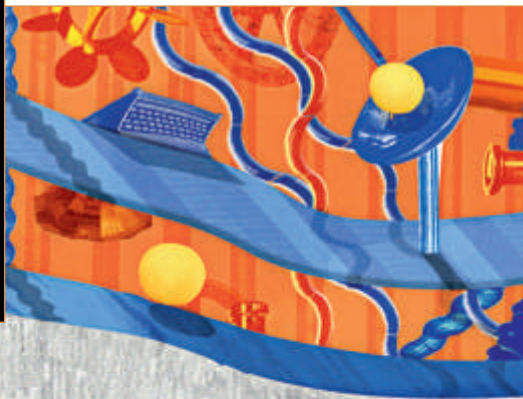
We are living in the surveillance age. The same digital technologies that have revolutionised our daily lives over the past three decades have created ever more detailed records about those lives for government and corporate watchers. Police monitor the high street using CCTV or drones. Advertisers monitor our internet usage to send personalised adverts.

ANTI-EUROPE MEPS

Citizens across Europe will go to the polls in May, to elect the 766 members of the European Parliament. Though the parliament has gained power in recent years, the elections will be the first since the Eurocrisis began. With anti-EU sentiments running high, this parliament may become one of the most Eurosceptic ever elected – a makeup that could be a potential stumbling block as the EU seeks to stabilise its monetary union. **TH**

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But surveillance is itself under increased scrutiny. During 2014, ordinary people will grasp the technologies of surveillance – cameras, drones, web bugs and so on – and use them to monitor the surveillors. Sousveillance's time has finally come.

The term "sousveillance" was coined in 2003 by the technologist Steve Mann, but the idea is only now gaining traction, thanks to small and cheap technologies that enable it. Its strength is that watching allows control. Information is power no matter who holds it – governments, businesses or ordinary people. Sousveillance is the democratic idea that the people below should watch the institutions above, rather than the other way around. As the American judge Louis Brandeis put it in 1914, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman." Sousveillance shines that light upwards. It takes many forms, but they all share the idea that watching the watchers keeps them in check and can produce a better society.

It's *The Guardian* revealing internet monitoring by GCHQ and the NSA. It's the cheeky Dutch protestors who, in June 2013, marked George Orwell's 110th birthday by placing party hats on CCTV cameras throughout the city of Utrecht. It's the work of the UK campaigning group Big Brother Watch, which has

7M BARRELS

The amount of oil China will be importing per day in 2014, making it a bigger importer than the US. **TH**

shown that CCTV isn't just invasive of privacy, it's often ineffective, unused and cripplingly expensive. And it's browser plugins such as Ghostery, which let internet users see who is tracking them online and act accordingly.

In 2014 it will extend to personal sousveillance cameras. Citizens have been recording encounters with police using cheap mobile-phone cameras for several years now, and there's mounting evidence that recording the police makes them perform their jobs more effectively. But Google Glass and other new sousveillance technologies, which come to market in 2014, will take this to a much more sophisticated level.

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Startups take on the government

Public-private partnerships are doomed – but a new model for our vital services will soon emerge. **By Will Davis and Evan Baehr**

During 2014, we will see the end of the public-private partnership (PPP) model for innovation – and the obsolescence of the very marketplaces that PPPs are designed to regulate.

In theory, PPP frameworks appeal to persons of every political stripe by striving to make government more efficient. According to their supporters, they incentivise private enterprises to innovate with unique access-rights to government services and property, or enable steep discounts and rebates. They are able to seed new industries in ways that our bureaucrats cannot. By making better use of money and resources, they let government focus on essential services.

In theory this is all true. But, despite their potential to transform, the promise of PPPs has never been fully realised – and it likely never will. These partnerships do not reliably create the dramatic social change their advocates promise. They inherently favour incumbent corporations which are adept at creating business models dependent on government contracts for sustenance. These companies' ultimate customer is the government, not the end user – you and me. That situation leads to perverse incentives and negative outcomes for the very citizens PPP's are designed to help.

In 2014 this framework will be overthrown by a more effective system for encouraging innovation. Much like Marc Andreessen's famous 2011 declaration in *The Wall Street Journal* that "software is eating the world", startups will eat government. They will do so not simply by out-innovating complex partnerships, but by creating new marketplaces altogether.

Although it has long been known that startups are efficient vehicles for innovation, this functional role of the startup within society is shifting. Once simply a more productive method of innovating within marketplaces, startups are discovering they have the power to create entirely new marketplaces – completely redefining our basic understanding of the efficient allocation of resources.

For example, cities such as New York have long regulated taxi services through typical examples of PPP frameworks: the city gives winning bidders the right to operate and collect revenue in exchange for the government setting fares and regulating driving privileges, while also collecting rents from those taxi companies. For decades, it was assumed that this model was the most efficient approach to managing this transportation marketplace. Yet anyone who has been in a New York yellow cab of late knows that this system is fundamentally broken. If you're