Surveillance Capitalism:  
Making Big Data Work for All

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Alexander Karran
“Surveillance Capitalism is a new “parasitic” form of capitalism that has arisen as consequence of big data utopianism. In this new utopian vision, all technology is “smart”, connected and provides product as a service. Where data is considered to be without ownership and seen as a panacea”
Surveillance Capitalism…..

• Who
  • A loose coalition of all the big players in technology and social media

• Aims
  • Sell certainty from uncertain data (selling the “future”)
  • Change human behaviour at scale

• How
  • Form the largest mass surveillance infrastructure ever known
  • Convince society that its digital data are waste products and worthless
    • Accumulation through dispossession (Harvey 2003)
  • Surveillance will be Implicit, Explicit and Ubiquitous
    • Report behaviours, habits, tastes and beliefs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
The Big Data Ecosystem...

- Consists of Infrastructure, analytics, applications and machine learning
- 2-4 Quintillion Bytes of data per day created
- Market worth of 2 trillion dollars by 2020!
- Currently operating on the extraction of “natural” resources model
  - Create a zero-cost asset that can be diverted from service improvement to a unit for market exchange
- “The online world is not truly bound by terrestrial laws... it is the world’s largest ungoverned space” (Schmidt, Cohen)
- Not confined to any national borders
The Big Data Ecosystem
Surveillance Methods

- Implicit – Quantified Being
- Explicit – Quantified Doing
- Ubiquitous – Quantified Environment
Implicit

- Cognitive
- Affective
- Physiological
- Biochemical
- Genetic

How we think
How we feel
How we respond
How we are made

Quantified Being
Explicit

Google
Facebook
Snap Chat
Instagram
Amazon
Alibaba
Netflix

100 Billion searches (Avg.) monthly
1.71 billion monthly active users
400 million Pictures per day
1.1 – 12.4 Billion orders per year
4.8 million concurrent users per show

Quantified Doing

3000 data points gathered daily
Browser behaviour statistics
Preferences
Demographic Profiling
Geo-positional data
2.5 Quintillion Bytes of data per day
Ubiquitous

Internet of Things, Technology:
We Wear
Implant
Interact with
Work with
That simply surrounds us

Quantified Environment
Humans – A Natural Resource

• Goldman Sachs report 2016 Big Data - “A gold rush” the race to capture and trade “vast amounts of data”

• A never ending surplus of “human-natural” behaviour data

• Capitalism inextricably linked to a new resource in order to mutate and revitalize itself

• Breaking the supply and demand chain of old capitalism and replacing it with a feedback mechanism in which consumers are
  Not buyers, Nor sellers, Nor products

Rather they are the very basis of “free” raw materials for a new form of manufacturing

To Turn
Humans – A Natural Resource

This
Humans – A Natural Resource

Into this
Humans – Enter the Prosumer

• The term “Prosumer” was coined by Alvin Toffler in the 1980’s
• Derived from “prosumption” whereby consumers produced, while consuming
• Simple examples exist, think YouTube, Twitchtv etc.
• Concept requires re-tasking for this world of constant data prosumption
• Data that humans create is not waste, it represents
  • Digital labour
  • Digital Value
Example: Social Media Platforms

- **Symbiotic**
  - Digital Labour
  - Prosumer
  - Platform
  - Aggregation
  - Mining
  - Value Extraction
  - Provider
  - Development
  - Advertising

- **Parasitic**
  - Resource
  - Extraction
  - Exploitation
The Problem?

• Create even greater levels of inequality
• Threat to “liberal” democracy, the notion of free will and of the development of self
• In a world which reflects only the manipulated self, how do we foster creativity and innovation
• Already examples, Twitter censorship and pruning, Facebook echo chambers, “shaped” search results etc.
• Complete loss of Privacy and Erosion of “Rights”
• Build in obsolescence timed perfectly to match a new offering and then create the need for the offering
The BlockChain a Technical Solution: “fair pay, fair use”
Policy: The Political Solution

• Advocate for the convergence of public understanding, corporate empathy and state level policy

• Advocate for the education of all citizens from the earliest age possible about digital data, ownership and how it affects them

• Propose code of conduct with regard to data ownership from “production to sale”

• Provide a legal framework to support “fair pay, fair use”

• Provide ideological support for the notion of liberal democracy via the freedom to choose without manipulation
Big Data : Its not all bad

• The very convergence enabling surveillance capitalism will lead to:
  • More intelligent machines
  • Personalised health care
  • Cognitive support and enhancement
  • Emotional support and enhancement
  • Solutions to existing scientific and social problems
  • Solutions to problems we are not even aware exist
  • Better economic modelling
  • A more “knowing” environment