

# Many-eyed monsters and their lure: Surveillance, seduction, and governmentality

Shyam Krishna

Royal Holloway, University of London

**Abstract.** Large scale digital systems employed for national population management regularly invoke narrative of surveillance risk especially of the ‘big brother’ kind. This has been true of India’s biometric digital identity program and China’s social credit system, both of which aim for universal national coverage and the financial inclusion of large underserved population. This paper analyses both these cases beyond the view of top-down panoptic state surveillance to use ‘liquid surveillance’ as a lens. By analyzing policy and media discourses multiple aspects of a complex surveillant power emerges. Efforts of inclusion as a practice of the state’s neoliberal governmentality is seen to cast individuals as a citizen-consumer hybrid. Power is then experienced by the surveilled individuals as combination of consumerist seduction of the market and surveillant control by the state. This is supplemented by traditional synoptic media messaging and, newer, more atypical surveillance mechanisms as peer-to- peer surveillance is routinised in social interactions by the prevalent and necessary use of the surveillant technology in question.

**Keywords:** Liquid Surveillance, Consumerism, Seduction, Governmentality.