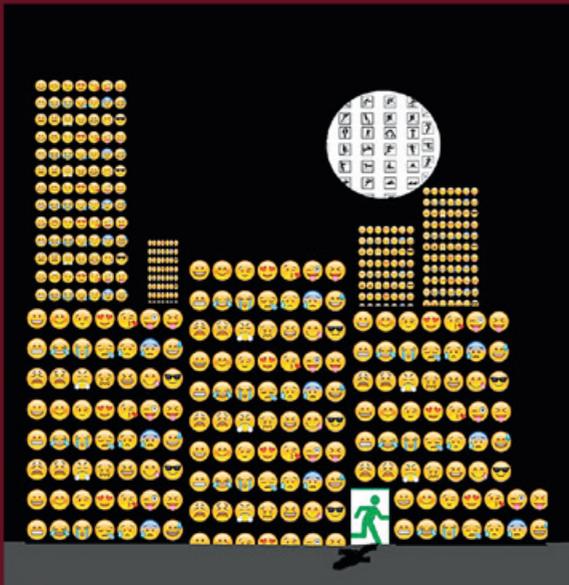


Monika Kopytowska /
Artur Gałkowski (eds.)

Current Perspectives in Semiotics

Texts, Genres,
and Representations



Monika Kopytowska /
Artur Gałkowski (eds.)

Current Perspectives in Semiotics

This timely volume, inspired by the work of Umberto Eco, features applications of semiotic theories and methodological frameworks to a vast array of texts, genres and practices within contemporary semiosphere. Exploring the interplay of language, image and sound, contributors discuss the structural and functional properties of signs, along with motivations behind them and implications they have for the meaning-making process, identity, ideology, and the politics of representation.

The volume is an outcome of the *SIVO Signum-Idea-Verbum-Opus* project initiated by Umberto Eco's keynote address during his visit at the University of Łódź in 2015. It is also a continuation of theoretical explorations which can be found in *Current Perspectives in Semiotics: Signs, Signification, and Communication*, published simultaneously by Peter Lang.

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Current Perspectives in Semiotics

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PETER LANG

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Current Perspectives in Semiotics

Text, Genres, and Representations



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Krzysztof Gajewski

From Semiology of Everyday Life: Video Lifestreaming Practices as a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare

Abstract: The notion of lifestreaming was coined in the 90s by Eric Freeman and David Gelernter. The term refers to documenting one's own life with help of all possible testimonies such as a diary, blog, photos, videos and every other textual, graphical, or acoustic message one can produce. This idea got a new dimension with the proliferation of new media such as the Internet and pocket video cameras held in hand, integrated into a mobile phone, a laptop, a tablet, attached to a helmet, a car windscreen, or a flying drone. In this chapter a phenomenon of video lifestreaming will be analyzed with the methodology inspired by Umberto Eco's semiology of everyday life. The term was employed by translators of Eco's essays, Piotr Salwa and Joanna Ugniewska, who collected Eco's texts from the time span of 40 years and published them in a book with such a title. The common perspective of these texts was the focus on phenomena from mass culture and everyday life, and applying to it a methodology of semiology. In an essay "Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare", Umberto Eco revisits McLuhan's concept "medium is the message", proposing an idea of semiological guerrilla whose intervention starts at the last stage of information flow. The chapter will show both emancipating and oppressive potential of personal video lifestreaming practices and try to answer a question of whether such practices can serve as an element of a modern semiological guerrilla warfare.

Keywords: lifestreaming, semiology of everyday life, guerrilla warfare, medium, video technology

1 Introduction

One of the most important concepts of Umberto Eco's semiology is that of "semiological guerrilla." In his essay "Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare" (1967), Eco proposes a strategy counterbalancing predominant power of mass media, such a newspaper and TV. The shape of media landscape has changed a lot since then, and contemporary semiological guerrilla takes new forms so as to fulfil its original function: to provide a bottom-up, citizen control over institutional media. One of the examples of this kind of activity is undoubtedly lifestreaming.

The term of lifestreaming encompasses an entire range of various activities. Recent developments within video technology, in particular the invention of small and cheap digital video cameras made photo and video technology common in our everyday life. One of the most typical forms of application of video technology is video monitoring, which in last few decades mushroomed in the public space of our cities. There can be, however, distinguished some other forms of video monitoring technology, such as video lifestreaming practices, which can be perceived as a civil response to public video surveillance, a form of semiological guerrilla. Let us start with an analysis of the idea of “semiology of everyday life”.

2 Semiology of Everyday Life

This term can be perceived as a Polish contribution to Umberto Eco studies. The expression was employed as a title of a collection of Umberto Eco's essays translated by Piotr Salwa and Joanna Ugniewska. The book published in 1996 contains texts spanning over three decades, from the 60s till the 80s, excerpted from such books by Eco as *Della periferia dell'impero* (1977), *Sette anni di desiderio* (1983), and *Il costume di casa* (1973). The common perspective of these texts was a semiological approach to phenomena of mass culture and everyday life. Along with the above mentioned publications, such books as *Apocalittici e integrati* (1964) or *Il superuomo di massa* (1978) make Umberto Eco one the most important investigators of mass culture in terms of semiology, just next to Roland Barthes with his pioneering *Mythologies* from 1957.

Salwa and Ugniewska enumerate several features of Eco's approach. One of the most important among them is the lack of hierarchy of objects to investigate. Among the objects of semiological analysis Eco undertakes we encounter comic books (Eco was one of the first to take them as an object of scholarly analysis), TV shows, wax museums, zoological gardens, amusement parks, parapsychological journals, and current media news. There is no central value that would determine the judgement of other values. It seems that every single detail, being the result of a human creative act, could become an object of semiological investigation.

The key concept in Eco's thought is introduced by the opening essay, *Fortezza della solitudine*. The place mentioned in the title is a recreational house of a comic book star, Superman, who comes there occasionally to get some rest. Also, this place performs a function of a store and a treasury house filled with all memories of Superman, as well as objects related to his previous adventures, such as a replica of the *bottle-sized* Kandor city. A similar *Wunderammer*,

filled with souvenirs from someone's whole life, can be found in the castle of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*. The figure of treasure illustrates the approach the Italian semiotician undertakes in his pop-cultural investigations. Everything can be a valuable object for a semiotic analysis, because every single thing is related to a lot of other elements of human culture by the logic of the supplement and a mechanism of *bricolage*. The phenomenon of semiosis guarantees that the process of proliferation of meanings will never stop. The hierarchy of aesthetic values does not exist here, or, even if it does, it does not matter for this kind of study.

Such a thing cannot, however, be said as far as ethics is concerned, since Eco's reflections are filled with a critical approach. The object of critique is not only mass culture, but Western European-American society as well as the political and social order in general. In the architecture of a zoological park and the way it is organized, Eco finds an incarnation of colonial thinking, based on a "the White man's burden" maxim (Eco 1996: 66). It is a famous quote from *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad that will be analyzed by Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) more than fifteen years after Eco published *Dalla periferia dell'Impero* in 1977. Therefore semiology has the potential for a critique of culture. Still, the very idea of semiology is preserved, the main point of Eco's investigation is to reconstruct whole systems of signs discovered in various cultural realms (Ugniewska 1996: 6).

An important notion of Eco's semiology of everyday life is *simulacrum*, a fictitious entity whose presence covers its real world original and puts into question the very existence of the original. Advertising industry, architecture of "nouveau riche" houses, entertainment TV shows, and amusement parks provide a lot of examples of representations that are more vivid and convincing than the reality they represent. It is worth pointing out here that Eco's reflections precede the publication of *Simulacres et simulation* by Jean Baudrillard (1981).

Hyperreal representations, such as wax figures or copies of Roman sculptures in palaces of American millionaires serve as best examples of kitsch. In his semiological analysis of kitsch, however, Eco never despises or looks down on the object of his reflection. He seems not to exclude any phenomenon from the scope of his semiological investigation. As Joanna Ugniewska remarks, in Zygmunt Bauman's terms (1987), Eco is not a legislator, but an interpreter.

One of the articles included in this collection was a lecture given by Umberto Eco at the congress organized by the International Center for Communication in New York in 1967. The title of the lecture was "Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare". Eco starts his reasoning from a statement that in our times mass

communication institutions replace military force as an instrument of political power. A change in political power is correlated with the influence of media market, rather than with the army, as it used to be. Nowadays a *coup d'état* or any other kind of radical political actions leads to personal shifts in mass media industry rather than in the army.

The day after the fall of Khrushchev, the editors of Pravda, Izvestia, the heads of the radio and television were replaced; the army wasn't called out... Today a country belongs to the person who controls communications. (Eco 1986: 135)

Eco contests Marshal McLuhan's thesis that "the medium is the message" and shows several misunderstandings behind it. These misunderstandings are based mostly on the polysemy of a word "medium", sometimes used in a sense of channel, and on other occasions of a code. Eco enriches the lexis of McLuhan's theory with notions from Claude Shannon's theory of information and its structuralist interpretation by Roman Jakobson.

The final conclusion of his essays situates Eco much closer to Roland Barthes and Paul de Man than to McLuhan. Eco states that the meaning conveyed in the process of communication depends more on the recipient than on the sender, an operator of the medium. What constitutes the final meaning of the message is interpretation. This cannot be controlled by the source of information, but only by its addressee. Therefore Eco postulates a "guerrilla solution":

What must be occupied, in every part of the world, is the first chair in front of every TV set (and naturally, the chair of the group leader in front of every movie screen, every transistor, every page of newspaper). [...] The battle for the survival of man as a responsible being in the Communications Era is not to be won where the communication originates, but where it arrives. (Eco 1967: 142)

TV, movie theatre, radio, and newspaper were the most important mass media technologies in the 60s. Nowadays mass media landscape is undergoing a deep and dynamic transformation. One can see an implementation of Eco's semiological guerrilla idea in Web 2.0, allowing every person to comment, correct, and interpret any communication act by big media industries and every other agent in the field of public discourse. Eco's notion can serve as well as an inspiration to theoretically analyze such communicative activity as *lifestreaming*.

3 **Lifestreaming: A Short History**

Even though the history of *lifestreaming* is not long, the term has undergone a semantic evolution. Below its three main senses are described.

3.1 Lifestreams as a Software Architecture

The term “Lifestreams”¹ was used by Eric Freeman in his Ph.D. thesis published in 1997. Yet, as we read on a site dedicated to this topic, entitled *Lifestreams. Organizing Your Electronic Life*, the word has two authors: apart from Freeman, also David Gelernter, Freeman’s thesis supervisor (Freeman 1994). This term designated a new software architecture Freeman and Gelernter proposed as an alternative for a desktop of computer operating systems from the 90s (and still in use). The desktop model copies categories from, as Freeman calls it, paper-based world. On the desktop of the operating system such as Mac OS or Windows one can see objects such as documents, files, folders, directories, even a trash can, all arranged into a tree structure. The latter employs traditional Aristotelian logic of notions founded on the distinction between *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*.

However, the desktop model is not necessarily adequate and sufficient for a “deluge of data” a typical computer user must deal with nowadays, in time of the Internet and the omnipresent computer technology (Freeman 1997: 2). A big categorization problem emerges, since a user needs to manage by herself every record of data and classify it properly, so that it can be easily accessible for the future use. If the speed with which a new bundle of data is delivered exceeds a certain threshold, this kind of information management becomes difficult or even impossible to conduct. The Lifestream model consists basically of

a time-ordered stream of documents that functions as a diary of your electronic life. Every document you create or other people send you is stored in your lifestream. (Freeman 1997: 1)

What is a fundamental feature of this approach is that the Lifestream model does away with any taxonomy and relations between elements and, as its output, returns a simple timeline of heterogeneous objects. In the desktop model all the data is classified into a system of groups and sub-groups, establishing in this way a complicated tree structure with several branches. The Lifestream model structure is relatively simple, without any ramifications or bifurcations, generating a straight line to sort all the objects by time of their creation or of their addition to the database. Due to the lack of any taxonomy and logical relations among the items the system does not require much activity on the part of the user. The whole procedure of collecting information becomes automatic.

1 With a capital letter at the beginning.

3.2 Lifestreaming as a Life Design Tool

One can recall once again the maxim of Marshal McLuhan – “the medium is the message” – when taking into consideration the history of the concept of lifestreaming. Freeman’s Lifestreaming was an abstract data structure with which one can define some basic operations such as writing, reading, searching, etc., or which one can employ to handle a big amount of data. The opportunities offered by the lifestreaming technology determined the future of the notion that changed its meaning in its subsequent history. However, one can remark that it somehow came back to its original, literal meaning:

Lifestreaming has evolved into the act of documenting and sharing aspects of daily existence online. A lifestream website collects the things you choose to publish (e.g., photos tweets videos, or blog posts) and displays them in reverse-chronological order. (Mullen 2010: vi)

Jessica E. Mullen introduces a notion of life design, coined as an analogy to graphic design. Whereas in graphic design one chooses a composition, colours, and fonts, in life design one is to select which habits, activities and social relations to preserve and which to remove so as to “create a desired outcome” (Mullen 2010: 1). For Jessica E. Mullen lifestreaming is something that can be practiced:

After practicing lifestreaming for two years, I have concluded that lifestreaming can be a process to address problems in life design. (Mullen 2010: 1–2)

The practice of lifestreaming, i.e. publishing one’s private life online may help in “critical evaluation” of it and, therefore, becomes a kind of extension of mind (cf. Clark and Chalmers 2010). As an antecedent of lifestreaming practices Mullen indicates diaries, where people described their daily lives. There is a big difference, however, since diaries only in exceptional case became public.

Today’s lifestreaming is publicly accessible and it happens immediately after creating every entry of it. As Mullen admits, the practice of lifestreaming may develop into obsession of “living publicly”, publishing pieces of someone’s life just to attract more attention from other people. In this case, lifestreaming is bereft of its life design potential and turns into its opposition: designs someone’s life in a way mostly independent of her rational decisions.

3.3 Lifestreaming as Communication

One of the fundamental premises of lifestreaming practices is the idea of a constant supply of content to publish. A lifestreamer is streaming his life to the most possible extent. She publishes a photo of her breakfast and coffee she has

in the afternoon. She takes photos of herself on every possible occasion, at every place she visits, including Maidan in Kiev after bloody riots, graves in the cemetery, and a concentration camp memorial site. Technology seems to be active in a sense that it encourages profiting from extremely easily accessible means of capturing an image of every moment from someone's life. Before the advent of digital photo technology a lifestreaming idea of taking someone's own photo every day during many years so as to contemplate evolution of someone's facial features was brought about as an artistic project of Roman Opałka. Nowadays, the Internet is full of people that keep taking photos of themselves for years and publish stream of these photos as an animation, creating, on the occasion, a new video genre.

Photos documenting activities from daily life are accompanied by commentaries that document personal life of the lifestreamer and are mostly very boring to read. This may sometimes raise doubts if this sort of content, sometimes very private and intimate, should be publicly accessible. Anyway, according to Clay Shirky, these doubts come from confusing broadcasting media with communication media. A lifestreaming website is basically a way of communication between a lifestreamer and her friends, even though the whole message is visible to a wider public.

Most user-generated content is created as communication in small groups but since we're so unused to communications media and broadcast media being mixed together we think that everyone is now broadcasting. This is a mistake. (Shirky 2008: 86)

Lifestreaming is communication. That fact does not exclude benefits from lifestreaming activities other than only those personally interested in life of a particular lifestreamer can draw. As broadcasting it is not yet prepared, "edible", since no selection has been undertaken. The process of selection is a very difficult problem in this case, considering the size of the content produced as a result of lifestreaming, which allows to attribute to it the notion of big data problem. The amount of data exceeds human epistemic capabilities and special procedures of data mining should be applied. This, however, is a completely different story.

3.4 Lifecasting as Semiological Guerrilla

Now semiological guerrilla, a term used 50 years ago by Umberto Eco, will be very useful for this investigation. Namely, practices undertaken by contemporary lifestreamers, such as video bloggers, very often deserve such a qualification, even though not necessarily in its original sense.

4 Mediated Reality and Lifecasting

Among various forms of livestreaming, “lifecasting” occupies a prominent place. Lifecasting designates video livestreaming. This kind of livestreaming seems to be the most radical one, inasmuch as it provides a possibility to record uninterruptedly both image and sound, pretty well in the same way as we perceive the reality with our senses. The necessary condition for practicing lifecasting is advancement in video technology: light, small, and comfortable to use video cameras.

The very term “lifecasting” was coined by one of the pioneers of lifecasting, Justin Kan. With a web-cam attached to his head, he started video streaming of his life 24/7. His website, justin.tv, where the stream was broadcast, attracted a lot of attention (Guynn 2007). However, it is Steve Mann who is considered the “father of wearable computing” (Schofield 2001) and a camera was an integral part of a wearable computer system.

Steve Mann has been wearing a computer device along with a digital camera attached to his head and a display built into special glasses. The whole wearable digital system was constructed and programmed in such a way as to help in dealing with problems of everyday life, by way of mediating reality. A person equipped with such a device, firmly attached to her body, deserves a special status, that of cyborg. Her sensual (so far mostly visual) stimuli are being mediated through computer system. Camera captures image in front of the person, the image is then processed by appropriate software executed on the computer and as final result an augmented reality picture is displayed on the glasses the person is looking through. Mann perceives Mediated Reality technology as an extension of human senses. One can get an ability to see in infrared, therefore in the dark, or to obtain new senses created as a connection of human natural senses (synaesthesia). This kind of “cross-sensory reality mediators” can provide sensations incomparable to those produced by our usual five senses (Mann 2002: 2). Mann’s ideas seem profitable for industry, medicine, and military (Schofield 2012).

Steve Mann points to George M. Stratton as a pioneer in the field of Mediated Reality. Stratton was Wundt’s collaborator and one of the first experimenters in the field of psychology. He performed a famous inverted-glasses experiment. Stratton constructed glasses that inverted image upside-down and left-right. After wearing inverted-glasses for a few days he became able to see normally and function in everyday life with no trouble. What Mann especially underlines is that Stratton was conducting his experiments out of laboratory, in a private and domestic setting of everyday life. Stratton did not separate his scientific research and private life, which was against traditional methodology of experimental

sciences. Stratton broke down the division between work and play somewhere between science and art (Mann 2002: 1).

5 Emancipatory Potential of Lifestreaming: From Surveillance to Sousveillance

Constant wearing of a camera recording image a person has in front of her can seem a new, mobile incarnation of the Big Brother idea, since every moment of someone's private life is recorded and can potentially be viewed by anyone. In such a way, this idea was artistically represented in a science-fiction movie *Strange Days* directed by Kathryn Bigelow in 1995. In the fictional world, only a bit more technologically advanced people than us wear small headsets called SQUID (for superconducting quantum interference device) that register magnetic fields of the brain. Then the data from all their senses can be recorded onto a memory disk. Thereafter every person, using a SQUID and this memory card, was able to "get into" someone else's body in such a way that she perceived the same sense stimuli. This kind of recordings was then circulating more or less in the same way as videotapes in the 80s, in the black market conditions. Steve Mann put this idea into practice, even though technical details are different. The first question that arises in the context of continuous recording of everyday life activities would be undoubtedly the privacy.

It's really a way of turning [Orwell's] Big Brother inside out: you're tracking the environment, rather than the environment tracking you. (Rich DeVaul, cit. in Schofield 2001)

Rich DeVaul, a renowned specialist in wearable computing devices, stresses the emancipatory potential of lifestreaming: you are an operator of camera and you decide where to direct the camera lens. Steve Mann introduces the notion of sousveillance, invented as an opposition to surveillance. Sousveillance is "inverse surveillance". "Surveillance" is "watching from above", whereas "sousveillance" means "watching from below". The former can be symbolized by an "eye in the sky", while the latter offers first person perspective from the ground level. Surveillance refers to video monitoring conducted by an organizational body such as the state, city, or a private company. Our behaviour is monitored on the street, in a shop, in a bar, in the cinema and we are not able to see people watching us, or even know who they exactly are. With a set of cameras distributed in several places in the city Bentham's idea of panopticon came true, with one small but important, modification. Bentham's panopticon was supposed to be an architectural solution for prison houses, whereas in our case the idea of panopticon was applied to the public space at large, as if we all lived in a big prison.

Sousveillance is meant to help this situation. According to this paradigm, every person is allowed to carry a video device, thus creating a “first person”, private monitoring. “Digital Eye Glass”, as Mann calls this kind of device, becomes an extension of human body, to use McLuhan’s term, which means, among other things, that it affects our perception of the reality. Digital video recording glasses can be connected to the Network, making up a part of the “Internet of People, Places and Things” (Mann 2012a: 1). Mann proposes this expression starting from an already known idea of the “Internet of Things”, including into it surveillance technology focused on the security of places, and adding his own concept of the “Internet of People” connected by wearable, mobile, wireless devices.

Sousveillance video cameras do not need to be worn by a person, changing her into a cyborg. They can be mounted on almost any other mobile objects, such as a bike, a drone, or a car. The latter, called dashcam (Dashboard camera) became common over the last few years. Dashcam is supposed to deliver forensic evidence in case of car accidents. Especially Russia is known for a wide use of dashcam among car drivers (Lavrinc 2013). A blogger explains this phenomenon as follows:

The Russian courts don’t like verbal claims. They do, however, like to send people to jail for battery and property destruction if there’s definite video proof. That is why there’s a new, growing crop of dash-cam videos featuring would-be face-beaters backing away to the shouts of “You’re on camera, fucker! I’m calling the cops!” Dash-cam footage is the only real way to substantiate your claims in the court of law. (Galperina 2012)

Galperina enumerates various other cases when the dashcam-recorded video can spare a lot of trouble, for instance after accidents intentionally provoked so as to get money from an insurance company. Also, it serves as an arm against corrupted police officers that sometimes try to enforce a bribe from a driver. However, in the case of dashcams the point is somehow different from what it was in the context of Steve Mann’s original concept of sousveillance. Mann wanted citizens to be equipped for a fight against big organizations, such as state or private companies, while as far as dashboard camera in Russia are concerned, the conflict line divides also citizens.

Sousveillance technology can play quite a similar role in the case of a bike. The company producing this kind of equipment called Rideye advertises it as “an objective, omnipresent witness that protects you from false claims” (rideye.com). In this case, lifestreaming is directed against other users of public roads, such as drivers or other cyclists. As the producers of Rideye seem to suggest, it can even play a role of a standard surveillance device. To prove it they tell a story of one of the users of Rideye who recorded, by chance, people demolishing a car and injuring the driver. The company comments:

Here's another exciting RIDEYE success story: the camera's high-resolution video brings three hooligans to justice! (Rideye, <http://www.rideye.com/blog/>, accessed 15/06/2017)

As we can see, quite contrarily to what Mann says, in the design of sousveillance there is no necessary anti-institutional element. It can be used as well as support for "traditional" surveillance.

Still, applications of sousveillance as an emancipatory tool are numerous. One of the illustrations is Steve Mann's artistic project called HeartCam. It consists of two standard, surveillance dome hemisphere camera units serving as bra cups. The left cup contained a heart monitor, and the whole device was taking photos when the pace of the heartbeat accelerated. The construction was aimed at "reversing male gaze". In the case of assault, if a potential perpetrator caused the wearer of the HeartCam to get stressed, the frame rate of streaming would increase. Therefore, in this case the video technology was applied so as to defend one person from the possible assault of verbal or other type on the part of another person (Mann 2003: 21–22).

There are several differences between surveillance and sousveillance though, as Mann indicates. Surveillance is architecture-centred, which means that cameras are mounted somewhere high on a building. Sousveillance cameras carried by people and kept on human eye-level are, consequently, human-centred. Recordings from surveillance cameras are mostly kept secret, whereas private videos are very often published online. Surveillance technologies by themselves are secret, while the software used for the sake of livestreaming is mostly open source and public. But still, as much as surveillance deprives us from privacy, continuous livestreaming makes our secrets public as well (Mann 2005).

6 Reflectionism as a Form of Semiological Guerrilla

Sousveillance belongs to a broader category of activities aimed at the symbolic fight against formal structures such as governments or corporations by way of inverting roles of a controlled and a controller. Steve Mann proposes the term "reflectionism" which is defined by him as

a philosophy and procedures of using technology to mirror and confront bureaucratic organizations. Reflectionism holds up the mirror and asks the question: "Do you like what you see?" If you do not, then you will know that other approaches by which we integrate society and technology must be considered. (Mann et al. 2003: 333)

As one can see, there are two main aspects of reflectionism: theoretical ("philosophy") and practical ("procedures"). On the one hand a reflectionist attempts to disclose as much as possible the facets of panopticon we are living in, but, on the

other hand, she tries to undermine current relations of control and to replace the notion of surveillance with a paradigm of observability, assuming more symmetry and balance between the observing and the observed that can switch their roles (Mann et al. 2003: 333).

As far as intellectual genealogy of reflectionism is concerned, Mann mentions a tactic of *détournement*. This concept was elaborated in the 50s by the Letterist International group and subsequently inherited by the Situationist International. It concerned an artistic technique consisting of inverting and mixing of elements extracted from previous artistic productions, using these elements very often contrarily to the original intentions of the creator (Debord and Wolman 1956). Subversive potential of *détournement* was modified by Mann so as to serve social and political purposes, preserving, nevertheless, its artistic dimension. As one of his inspirations Mann refers to the Theater of the Absurd.

Reflectionism retains its private, individualized, dispersed character, and is far from institutional regulations. It consists of individual activities whose goal is “surveilling the surveillers”. In this formula one can hear an allusion to a quote from Juvenal’s satire: “Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?” (Juv. 6: 347), which can be translated as “Who will guard the guards?” Reflectionism focuses on enhancing the ability of people to access and collect data about their surveillance in order to neutralize surveillance. It enforces the equality of surveillance. If I can be surveilled, I should be able to surveil, as Mann puts it.

7 From the History of Sur- and Sousveillance

As one of the earliest examples of sousveillance Mann recalls Rodney King’s case. In 1991, a black taxi-driver was beaten by the police, when caught after refusing to stop for a police control. The whole scene was recorded on videotape by George Holliday from his balcony. The video was shown by a local TV station and subsequently by other stations. The whole event had several political and social repercussions, leading to a national debate on brutality of the police and race discrimination. The video became a pop-culture icon, inspiring one of Banksy’s works, *Grand Terrace*.

The action of George Holliday was accidental, but Mann keeps insisting that sousveillance could be conducted in a planned and continuous manner:

Examples include: customers photographing shopkeepers; taxi passengers photographing cab drivers; citizens photographing police officers who come to their doors; civilians photographing government officials; residents beaming satellite shots of occupying troops onto the Internet. (Mann et al. 2003: 333)

According to Jeremy Bentham, the inventor of Panopticon architecture, the very possibility of being watched substituted watching itself and sufficed for exercising control over prisoners. So it is with the political and the social power in general, Michel Foucault adds. Since we can be watched in almost every public place of our cities, a key role is played by a possibility to use this technology ourselves, so as to gain a kind of balance between being an object of observation and conducting one's own observation. Institutions defend themselves against such an activity quite rarely in an open way. Only some of them, such as military bases, display signs prohibiting photographing. Big shops, on the contrary, almost never openly prohibit taking photos, even though they are very unwilling to tolerate such an activity among their clients.

Steve Mann, during decades of his wearing Eye Glass, a device attached firmly to his head, functioning as a camera and a screen simultaneously, was exposed several times to acts of discrimination and even aggression. The reasons were either strange look, a look of a cyborg, a person with electronic parts attached firmly to her body, or the very fact of continuous shooting video. One of the examples of this kind of repression was a physical assault he became a victim of in Paris McDonald's bar in 2012.

[a] person within McDonald's physically assaulted me, while I was in McDonald's, eating my McDonald's Ranch Wrap that I had just purchased at this McDonald's. He angrily grabbed my eyeglass, and tried to pull it off my head. The eyeglass is permanently attached and does not come off my skull without special tools.

I tried to calm him down and I showed him the letter from my doctor and the documentation I had brought with me. [...] Perpetrator 2 angrily crumpled and ripped up the letter from my doctor. [...] Perpetrator 1 pushed me out the door, onto the street. (Mann 2012b)

As we can see, Mann was expecting difficulties from institutions when wearing his Eye Glass equipment and was provided with an official medical statement ascertaining the necessity of wearing by him an Eye Glass camera. However, the document was not treated seriously. An attempt at civil sousveillance at McDonald's had been prevented by means of physical force, actually illegal, as executed by employees of a private company.

Mann, who was visiting McDonald's together with his wife and children, did not even try to employ any physical force to defend himself. He did not need it. His "arm" was the strength of his sight able to "catch" and record everything in front of his eyes. After perpetrators tore up his documents, he looked at a badge of one of them.

I noticed that Perpetrator 1 was wearing a name tag clipped to his belt. When I looked down at it, he quickly covered it up with his hand, and pulled it off and turned it around

so that it was facing inwards, so that only the blank white backside of it was then facing outwards. (Mann 2012b)

The power of Mann consisted in recording every move and other visible data related to persons he was looking at. Still, it is not exactly neo-panopticon as Mann observes, because an act of being watched and recorded is visible for both sides of the conflict. In this case we attain a state Mann calls *equivalence*. Both opposite sides possess equal possibility of monitoring and registering behaviours of the opposite side. This is a postulate, or a promise, that is to abolish current state of *inequivalence*, inasmuch as in most of the cases organizations and big companies monitor consumers and citizens, whereas individuals are deprived of any possibility to watch closely institutional bodies.

George Ritzer coined the term of *McDonaldization*. The process of *McDonaldization* manifests when the *McDonald* style of management spreads all over economy and becomes a standard in all domains of production and services. A similar kind of domination and hegemony can be perceived as far as *surveillance* is concerned.

McVeillance is the installation or using of surveillance cameras while simultaneously prohibiting people from having or using their own cameras, hand-held magnifiers, smartphones, or the like. More precisely, *McVeillance* is the ratio of surveillance to *sousveillance*. (Mann 2012b)

Steve Mann believes in a human right to preserve memories of everything one is able to see; including all the possible aids to attain this goal, such as video lifestreaming with *Eye Glass* system. He observes that banning a video registration is similar to the practice of Orwell's "thought police" that decides what citizens can keep in memory and what should be forgotten.

A common argument for defence of surveillance is a statement that if you are an honest citizen, if you do not break the law, then you have nothing to hide and you should not be afraid of monitoring. What follows is that only criminals are against cameras. As response to this argument Mann gives an example of photographing a policeman. Even though it is not prohibited by law, practice shows that most often this kind of act causes the policeman to react violently to prevent taking photo of him. Here we encounter another form of *inequivalence*.

Surveillance is not opposite to *sousveillance*. One can be a partisan of both surveillance and *sousveillance*. The opposition to surveillance is *anti-surveillance*, which is basically reluctance to use surveillance and can be combined with both *pro-sousveillance* ("I wear a camera, but I don't wish any cameras in public spaces") and *anti-sousveillance* ("I am contrary to continuously recording cameras at all"). *McVeillance* would be then attributing the

right of monitoring to organizational bodies, while refusing it to individuals. As Mann puts it: “McVelliance = surveillance – sousveillance”.

7 Conclusions

In his essay “Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare” Umberto Eco reconsiders a McLuhan’s concept “the medium is the message”. Eco remarks that McLuhan forgot about a Recipient who decodes a Message with its own Code. Consequently, Eco proposes an idea of Semiological Guerrilla intervening at the last stage of information flow next to a Recipient instead of controlling the Source of information.

Richard DeVaul’s predictions concerning the emancipatory potential of lifestreaming have already proved their validity, even though it happened in a different way he thought. As Jack Schofield remarked, the idea of taking control over the environment by way of tracking it with a camera was accomplished thanks to development of mobile phones and media convergence trend that led to production of a smartphone: a phone equipped with, among other features, a digital camera (Schofield 2012). Wearable cameras exist already, but not many people decide to use them in everyday life. They are widely used by those practising extreme sports, such as skydiving, paragliding, skiing, climbing, biking, motorsport, etc., but physical construction makes them very uncomfortable to wear in everyday life. On the other hand, we carry our phones all the time, and the camera with it.

One of many unanswered questions the phenomena described above evoke is where the power of video recording comes from, why governments, corporations, and other organizational structures insist on keeping surveying their citizens, clients, members, or just innocent bystanders. The obvious response – to help to recognize possible criminals – does not look satisfactory enough, given that the quality of the picture recorded is very often so poor that it makes it impossible to help in any serious enterprise.

Discomfort of being recorded on video camera becomes especially apparent in cases of sousveillance, as in the example with filming a policeman. The policeman possesses effective means, conferred by law, to prevent being sousveilled (in some countries it is now actually illegal), while most of us cannot prevent being video registered by sur- or sousveilling cameras.

An explanation of this fact was given by Michel Foucault. According to him, power relations are founded on knowledge every actor has of others (power-knowledge). Panopticon architecture potentially provides a guard with a lot of information on behaviour of prisoners, while the prisoners have no knowledge

of the guard. They do not even know if the guard is watching them at the moment, or even if he really exists.

But this does not seem to be the whole truth. On the one hand, even if we admit that what counts is information and the knowledge we can draw from video monitoring, one must always have in mind that we can easily overestimate the real informational value of data gained through the surveillance system. Video monitoring systems output is, as we already mentioned, of a very poor technical quality. On the other hand, a policeman being filmed is not doing any illicit activity he or she could be ashamed of. One cannot therefore exclude a sheer possibility of an aversion to being recorded. This kind of aversion was discovered by anthropologists in many oral cultures, in a form of voodoo rites for instance. To have an effigy of someone is to have power over him or her, this is one of the fundamentals of sympathetic magic, as George Frazer observes. A camera is a machine to produce iconic signs of the reality, its images. Is then consequently semiological guerrilla warfare based also on sympathetic magic, in its homeopathic version, and on the law of similarity?

The task of Semiological Guerrilla according to Eco's manifest is to contest and fight the media industry controlled by some force, such as government, a political party, or a commercial company. Umberto Eco suggests in essay that the idea was to take over the last link in the chain of communication: this in front of every TV, at every table with a newspaper on it, next to every radio set. The role Eco's guerrilla was playing consisted in critical interpretation of the message, in decoding every single sign as far as its ideological contraband of implicit senses are concerned. His is an interpreter, a hermeneut, and a decoder of a message written by someone else. He is working on a text existing before his intervention, he produces a message of a second degree. Eco's semiological guerrilla undertakes a transtextual activity, in the sense Gérard Genette attributes to this term. According to Genette, it would be a metatextual message, as it comes as a commentary to its hypotext (Genette 1982).

So far, during four decades, the development of media technology overthrew the domination of big media industries by providing individuals with powerful video technology; powerful in the sense that this kind of technical advancement was formerly accessible only to professionals. Still, the comfort of use of today's devices was unimaginable two, three decades ago. A camera a cheap mobile phone contains nowadays is as powerful as professional devices were a few years ago. A contemporary semiological guerrilla soldier equipped with a semiological video gun which is a mini video camera is able to produce her own message. She is not an interpreter anymore, she generates her own version of the reality.

It seems that a real semiological war is going to start right now, and a new semiological warfare should be elaborated.

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