

Social Surveillance in the Time of COVID-19

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The pandemic of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19 disease, has increased the already pervasive processing of personal data and social surveillance, which is based on it. Along with one of the biggest health crises in the modern world, we are witnessing the severest restriction of mobility in order to prevent social contacts, which is an established method of preventing the spread of infectious diseases but has never occurred on such a scale. The global "state of emergency" is inextricably linked with the risk of erosion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In the fight against the invisible enemy, states are willing to adopt dubiously effective hightech solutions, such as drones, thermal cameras, facial recognition technology, and various contact tracking or movement restriction applications that encroach on an individual's private sphere. They are based on the already known premise that each of us will have to give up a piece of our rights to protect the health or even the community's survival as a whole. The dichotomy between preventing the spread of the deadly virus on the one hand and (supposedly urgent) limitations on individual rights on the other is only fictional: a wide variety of digital solutions often fail to achieve the promised results even at the level of imposed technology, or the proposed technology is not as effective as to outweigh greater limitations on fundamental rights in comparison with less invasive measures.

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