

Article | Police and the Post-9/11 Surveillance Surge: “Technological Dramas” in “the Bureaucratic Field”

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Abstract

In the last decade, the United States has invested considerable resources into an expanded intelligence apparatus that extends from the hyper-secretive federal intelligence community down to the more mundane world of municipal police. This paper investigates the effects of the post-9/11 surveillance surge on state and local policing. It presents original research on interagency intelligence centers in New York and New Jersey and deploys Pfaffenberger’s “technological drama” as a process animating the neoliberal constitution of what Bourdieu calls the “bureaucratic field.” Despite seemingly dramatic changes, there exists powerful continuity in the profession of policing. Before or after the Snowden revelations, the day-to-day reality of criminal intelligence remains shaped by the immediate demands of investigations and the small politics of interagency rivalries, insulating policing from dramatic reforms and swift change. What reformers see as dysfunction is better understood as a technological drama in the bureaucratic field that paradoxically provides a degree of autonomy and slows the pace of change. This paper builds on and contributes to the tendency within Surveillance Studies that emphasizes the ways in which human agents and organizational cultures mediate surveillance, highlighting utility of field theory and encouraging scholars of surveillance to participate in larger theoretical conversations between theories of fields and assemblages.

Introduction

The recent exposé on massive surveillance by the US National Security Agency (NSA) generated high drama: the shock of the initial reports, Edward Snowden’s confession, his flight to Moscow and ambiguous asylum, the continuing releases, and endlessly expanding scandal. The immediate dust of events, however, obscures the extent to which storing vast quantities of data and mining it for insights has become common practice. While much attention has rightfully focused on the NSA, the disclosure of analogous law enforcement programs went largely unnoticed. In September 2013, *The New York Times* exposed the Hemisphere Project, a partnership between AT&T and two federal entities, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The Hemisphere Project is a massive database of telephony metadata. Four billion records are added *every day*. It provides 26 years of data that can be requested by federal, state and local narcotics officers. The Hemisphere Project’s signature intelligence product uses an algorithm to match a historical pattern of use from a “dropped phone” to locate the user’s new number (Shane and Moynihan 2013; Office of National Drug Control Policy n.d.). With this intelligence, disposable phones—“burners”—used and abandoned by narcotic

traffickers no longer provide a degree of protection. It is the era of “big data intelligence.”¹ The rules have changed.

State and local law enforcement now have access to sophisticated technologies for surveillance and intelligence gathering and analysis. The adoption, use and institutionalization of these technologies, however, is mediated by the institutional cultures and concrete social relationships that animate law enforcement as a distinct social space. A “technological drama” is playing out in a complex field of micropolitical contention where actors’ differential interests and investments—shaped by career trajectories, agency affiliation, organizational roles, among other factors—condition the effects of new surveillance technologies on the intelligence tradecraft of police agencies (Pfaffenberger 1992). Despite seemingly dramatic changes such as the formation of the Department of Homeland Security or the passage of the US Patriot Act and related legislation, there exists powerful continuity in the profession of policing. Before or after the Snowden revelations, the day-to-day reality of criminal intelligence remains shaped by the immediate demands of investigations and the small politics of interagency rivalries, insulating policing from dramatic reforms and swift change. What reformers see as dysfunction is better understood as a technological drama in the “bureaucratic field” that paradoxically provides a degree of autonomy and slows the pace of change.

While the Snowden leaks focus attention on the NSA, this paper provides perspective on the *domestic* intelligence complex transformed by the same post-9/11 “surge” in surveillance that turned the NSA into a voracious dataveillance machine (Wood, Konvitz and Ball 2003). It shows how US state surveillance extends beyond the super-secretive NSA and the federal intelligence community. Sophisticated surveillance methods are grounded in and differentially distributed across the varied institutional cultures and social spaces that define “the state.” Organizationally, this paper proceeds in four sections: (1) a review of relevant theoretical literature; (2) an overview of the empirical case, existing scholarship and my research methods; (3) an analysis of the technological drama conditioning this change (4) and a conclusion that suggests avenues for future research and theorizing in Surveillance Studies.

Surveillance and Policing, Technology and Social Space

Surveillance is naturally linked to policing and crime control. Recent technological developments only seem to have strengthened this relationship. As Haggerty, Wilson and Smith (2011) put it:

Digitally facilitated practices such as profiling, mapping, modeling, simulation, intelligence-led policing and pre-emption increasingly supplant conventional methods of investigatory policing work such as manual note taking, post-crime evidence gathering and personalized decision making. Visualizing and anticipating unknown futures have become an important element of policing and security landscapes.

(2011: 232)

¹ “Big Data Intelligence” is not a technical term used by intelligence professionals like “human intelligence” or HUMIT and “signals intelligence” or SINGIT, but it is used informally to describe the nature of contemporary security and surveillance practices. For example, security corporations use the term when they are marketing big data analytics for security purposes: Damballa, a cyber-security firm, offers a “Big Data Intelligence” webinar (Damballa n.d.); in 2013, IBM used the term in their launch of their “Security Intelligence with Big Data” initiative (Hoffman 2013); i-HLS, Israeli Homeland Security, a media group that covers the global homeland security market, organizes a yearly “Big Data Intelligence” conference, which includes presentations by tech giants like Microsoft and Oracle and attracts representatives from high profile security agencies such as the Los Angeles Police Department (i-HLS 2014; Wilson 2014). The term “big data intelligence” has also been used by some journalists and commentators when discussing incidents like the Snowden leaks (Henschen 2013) and the 2013 shooting at the Washington DC Naval Shipyard (Kennedy 2013).

Reflecting on these changes, criminologists and scholars associated with Surveillance Studies theorized a “new penology” (Feeley and Simon 1992) and “new Surveillance” (Marx 1988) characterized by actuarial forms of risk management (Ericson and Haggerty 1997) and increasingly automated, computerized forms of “dataveillance” (Clarke 1988) and “social sorting” (Gandy 1993; Lyon 2001, 2002).

Following this initial round of theorization, some scholars focused on the ways that human agents and organizational cultures mediate surveillance. Research on closed circuit television systems, for example, demonstrates the structuring power of micro-level operations, obligations and managerial concerns (Fussey 2002, 2007; Smith 2007) and the subtle, communicative relationships between watchers and watched (McCahill 2013; Smith 2007). Related work on interagency intelligence centers emphasizes the way the inertia of organizational history can expand the mission beyond its initial scope (Regan and Monahan 2013).

This paper elaborates on this tendency within Surveillance Studies, demonstrates the utility of Bourdieu’s work, and encourages scholars of surveillance to participate in a larger theoretical conversation between field theory and assemblage theory. Specifically, it links Pfaffenberger’s (1992) conceptualization of “technological dramas” with Bourdieu’s (1990) field theory.² “Technological drama” is an ideal typical model of the technological construction of political power and the responses it elicits. The model is comprised of three stages: (1) technological regularization, when technologies are introduced by “design consistencies” as an expression of a hegemonic ideology; (2) technological adjustment or the “redressive strategies” of “impact consistencies”—those adversely affected by the introduction of said technology; (3) technological reconstitution or the reciprocal efforts of impact constituencies to symbolically recode technology in more favorable terms and design consistencies to reintegrate these efforts (Pfaffenberger 1992: 300). Technological drama, then, captures how social power is expressed through technology, in the first instance, and then resisted, reappropriated and transformed, in the second. The model highlights the iterative and conflictive nature of technological change. In this way, it differs from more prosaic notions of “technological enablement,” which challenges technological determinism and advances the general interrelatedness of technology, society, and culture (Miller 2011: 5-7). In contrast, technological dramas capture the specific conflicts around the introduction of new technologies and the wider social changes that surround it.

This ideal typical model, however, disembods the technological drama from any well defined social context. For this reason, I develop the technological drama around new technologies in policing as a social process located within what Bourdieu calls a “field.” A field is a social space defined by the struggle to control a specific form of social power, understood as various forms of capital: “cultural authority in the artistic field, scientific authority in the scientific field, sacerdotal authority in the religious field, and so forth” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 17). Bourdieu put forward the field as a concept to replace reified, overused and essentially meaningless terms like “society,” “state” or “culture.” For example, “the bureaucratic field” replaces the unitary notion of *the* state with “a splintered space of forces, vying over the definition and distribution of public goods” (Wacquant 2010: 200).

While the bureaucratic field captures the formal world of official administration, Bourdieu’s theory of the state is more complicated. It includes a series of overlapping social spaces: the political field, the economic field and the field of power (Bourdieu 1994, 1998, 2005, 2015). This analytic move replaces empty rhetoric—the state and ruling class—with categories that can be in a more complex analysis. The field of power is a “meta field” where the highest reaches of many other fields—including media, science, literary—intersect. It acts as the “great reservoir” and legitimate monopolizer of symbolic power. The

² The synthesis of Bourdieu and Pfaffenberger was first proposed by Peter Manning (1992). Manning, however, abandoned this project in subsequent work and, instead, focused more on the work of Bourdieu (for example, see: Manning 2008).

state is the “central bank” of symbolic capital, defined as “the form of capital that is born from the relationship between any particular kind of capital and those agents socialized in such a way as to be familiar with and acknowledge this kind of capital” (Bourdieu 2015: 191). “If we stayed at this level,” as Steinmetz (2015) notes, “Bourdieu’s theory of the state might seem to identify a sort of *deus ex machina* conceptualized at the same level of generality as the theory of the ‘capitalist state’ in the cruder forms of Marxism that he criticizes” (2015: 4).³ Instead, Bourdieu (2015) insists that the field of power is a site of “symbolic struggle to construct the legitimate social view of the world and impose this as universal” (2015: 32).

In this way, field theory offers a dynamic view of the state. Any field is both a historical construct that transforms all that enters it *and* dynamic space perpetually changed by purposeful action. On the hand, a field is a structured space of social positions, a *field of forces*, which impinges upon its constituent agents in the form of constraint. For example, a person who wants to enter “the bureaucratic field” as a police officer, then, must acquire a minimal amount of “symbolic capital”—education, training, certifications and connections—to enter this specific social space. On the other hand, the field is a space of struggle, where agents and institutions seek to conserve or transform the existing distribution of capital—expressed in the “bureaucratic field” by the allocation of public resources, the scope of jurisdictions and missions and the relative prestige of government agencies and related policy regimes. A field, then, is a *battlefield* where, in the first instance, various partisans are disciplined by the historical forces that structure their specific position and, in the second instance, are mobilized in an endless struggle over the bases of identity and hierarchy of positions. For this reason, field theory provides a useful theoretical framework to further develop the tendency in Surveillance Studies to emphasize the organizational and human mediation of surveillance. It is particularly apt to study intra-organizational dynamics such as the technological dramas around the introduction of new technologies of policing.

Unlike assemblage theory, which, for example, has been very influential in Surveillance Studies (see for example: Ericson and Haggerty 2000; Hier 2002; Lippert 2009; Murakami Wood 2013), field theory emphasizes internal relations that form a cohesive relational whole, largely governed by its own rules (Bourdieu 2005: 33). Assemblage theory rejects the idea of relatively closed systems like fields, privileging instead the proliferating connections of linked yet still autonomous entities (Delanda 2006: 10-12). This analytic move has the advantage of being especially attuned to wider relations that could be neglected with a narrow focus on intra-field struggles. At the same, assemblage theory suffers from its own shortcomings: (1) it invites a circular dynamic where a scholar presupposes fluidity and contingency and then proceeds to continually find it; (2) despite its materialist pretensions, the methodical principles

³ Bourdieu’s critique of Marxist theories of the state may no longer be as valid as it was in the early 1990s. Thirty-five years ago, Skocpol (1980) could claim that the state theory of Poulantzas tended “to assume that all capitalist states will automatically have this capacity [to organize the unity of the capitalist class], or will rapidly generate it if it is needed.” In this way, this “functionalist theory overestimates the automatic ability of capitalist states to unify, organize, and serve the class interest of capitalists” (1980: 178). Today, Jessop (2002, 2008) has synthesized several strands of Marxist thought into a holistic theory of the state, which moves past crudities of early Marxist accounts and holds that the nature of the state is shaped by the wider social relations in which it is situated, especially the balance of social forces. Although Jessop attempted to answer critiques that Marxist theories of the state do not appreciate intra-state conflicts, his theory of the state still lacks a theoretical appreciation of the fine professional struggles that animate intra-state politics. For this reason, field theory is especially appropriate. At the same time, it’s important to recognize the shortcomings of Bourdieu’s approach. As Jessop points out, Bourdieu’s theory often reduces the state to: “just a bureaucratic field in which political elites manoeuvre *intra muros* to pursue political objectives.” As such it fails to appreciate the broader politics of the state “as an institutionally mediated condensation of a changing balance of forces that is determined not only by cooperation–conflict within the state but also by struggles to transform its institutional architecture and strategic biases and by struggles at a distance from the state that shape political calculation” (1980: 67).

required to deploy assemblage theory in empirical research remain ill-defined; and (3) it lacks any theoretical concepts to apprehend power struggles within and between assemblages (Bureš 2015: 15-21).

To address these shortcomings, scholars have recently sought to synthesize elements of field theory into assemblage (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011, 2014; Bureš 2015; Leander 2011). Surveillance Studies have not participated in this project for theoretical synthesis. Indeed, there is little work in Surveillance Studies that has engaged with Bourdieu, and it has focused mostly on his notion of the habitus and not his full theoretical framework (Welland 2001; Arvidsson 2002; Ball 2002, 2005; McCahill and Finn 2013).

For this reason, this paper takes the first step toward bringing Surveillance Studies into this larger theoretical conversation between field theory and assemblage theory. It demonstrates the utility of field theory in a limited case that theory is especially well suited to explain the professional struggles that practically mediate surveillance systems. Specifically, I analyze a “technological drama” in policing as a specific kind of social process that animates the struggle to redefine the relations among the actors and institutions in the bureaucratic field. I show that policy initiatives and related technologies—CompStat and crime mapping, intelligence-led policing and new systems for data aggregation and analysis—are put forward as an expression of neoliberal ideology and are resisted by “impact consistencies” in ways that limit the extent of change in policing, while still altering the profession in complex ways that do not conform to the stated policy objectives.

Empirical Case, Existing Scholarship and Research Methods

This paper is derived from a larger research project focusing on “fusion centers” or the 78 intelligence taskforces officially recognized by the Department of Homeland Security. Fusion centers are a new and relatively understudied addition to the world of law enforcement in the United States. While it is possible to date the conceptual origins of “fusion centers” with the Drug Enforcement Administration’s El Paso Intelligence Center in 1974 or the Los Angeles County Terrorism Early Warning Center in 1996, what became known as the National Network Fusion Centers formed in the first decade of the 21st century, following the release of the 9/11 Commission Report in 2004 (DOJ Office of the Inspector General 2010: i; German and Stanley 2008: 5; Monahan 2010/2011: 85).

Fusion centers were created to answer the 9/11 Commission’s call to shift the intelligence community from the “‘need-to-know’ of information protection” to “‘need-to-share’ culture of information integration” (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States 2004: 417). With a mission to “fuse” intelligence from disparate sources, fusion centers are meant to fill gaps among local, state and federal security agencies and enlist the “800,000 plus law enforcement officers across the country...as the ‘eyes and ears’ of an extended national security community” (Rollins 2008: 7).

Despite their status as a high profile federal counterterrorism initiative, fusion centers are the subject of much controversy. Watchdogs within government have found fusion centers to be ineffectual, wasteful and unaccountable (DHS Office of the Inspector General 2008; Masse, O’Neil and Rollins 2007; Rollins 2008; Government Accountability Office 2010; US Senate 2012). Outside of government, policy advocates, research centers and journalists have raised questions regarding fusion centers and civil liberties (German and Stanley 2007, 2008; EPIC n.d.; Price 2013; Hodai 2013; Moynihan 2014). At the same time and in contrast, many in law enforcement hold up fusion centers as an important tool. Following the release of a sharply critical senate report on fusion centers, the National Fusion Center Association issued a statement endorsed by many major associations of law enforcement professionals

that highlighted the “the significant benefits that fusion centers provide to state, local and tribal law enforcement” (National Fusion Center Association 2012).⁴

As a new layer of institutional structure in law enforcement in the United States that is subject to conflicting and obviously politicized claims, fusion centers require basic research. To address this need, my research provides a focused study of intelligence fusion in two states. It complements the existing work on fusion centers within *Surveillance Studies*: an opening round of preliminary research by Monahan (2009, 2010/2011; Monahan and Palmer 2009) and later a 36 site survey by Monahan and Regan (Monahan and Regan 2012; Regan and Monahan 2013, 2014; Regan, Monahan and Craven 2013).

For the purposes of this paper, the most important finding from Regan and Monahan’s survey is the importance of organizational history and institutional context, which they highlight to explain the drift of fusion centers from a narrow counterterrorism mission toward an ill-defined and expansive “all crimes” or “all hazards” mission. Regan and Monahan find three “predictable” reasons for this expanding mission: “fusion centers have to be valuable to their states, there is too little activity that is clearly terrorism related, and fusion center personnel have to use their time and skills constructively” (2013: 10). This paper further supports significance of organizational history and institutional context. I find that the immediate demands of investigations and the small politics of interagency rivalries insulate policing from dramatic reforms and swift change, despite seemingly sweeping changes like the formation of fusion centers and the introduction of powerful, new technologies.

Since the world of intelligence is defined by formal secrecy, rendering it particularly difficult to access, my research developed outward in the form of “snowball sampling” (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). I sent out interview requests to every fusion center in Southern New England and the Northern Mid-Atlantic States.⁵ Eventually, I conducted a series of site visits and numerous interviews at two fusion centers: the New York State Intelligence Center (NYSIC) and the New Jersey Regional Operations Intelligence Center (NJ ROIC). Since the NYSIC sits in the more crowded institutional environment of New York State, I expanded the study to include the county crime analysis centers and municipal crime analysis teams funded under Operation Integrated Municipal Anti-Crime Teams (IMPACT), a grant-driven interagency partnership between New York State’s Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), a multi-function criminal justice support agency, and the law enforcement agencies (police departments, district attorney’s offices, sheriffs, probation, parole and corrections) in the 17 counties, which, together, account for 80 per cent of the crime outside of New York City.

Altogether, I completed over a year of fieldwork where I observed eight meetings and interviewed 75 people who work in intelligence in New York and New Jersey. In addition to these interviews, I draw on publically available primary sources (government reports and leaked documents) and records released to me under state-level open government laws. As a historical sociologist, I approach these materials in a qualitative and constructivist mode (Warren 2002). I use historical analysis to trace the processes behind the emergence of these police intelligence systems and the pressures shaping their operation. I map out the constitutive relationships that shape intelligence gathering and structure its analysis, dissemination and operational use. Other analytic tools include document analysis of policies, standard operating procedures, contracts and intelligence products, and qualitative analysis of interview transcripts.

⁴ The NFCA statement was also endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major County Sheriffs Association, the National Governors Association the Homeland Security Advisors Council, the National Narcotics Officers Coalitions Association and the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies.

⁵ This region covers Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. I chose this area for practical reasons: I could easily travel to and from any of potential research site in a single day and at a reasonable cost.

Technological Dramas in the Bureaucratic Field

Pfaffenberger's concept of technological drama captures the political dimensions of technology. "Technology is designed not only to perform a material function," he writes, "but also to express and collectively reinforce beliefs about the differential allocation of power, prestige and wealth in a society" (1992: 283). For this reason, technological drama is a useful framework to organize an analysis of the effects of technologies in policing. Indeed, the current policing doctrines related technologies—CompStat and crime mapping, intelligence-led policing and new systems for data aggregation and analysis—are connected to the neoliberal offensive and the related restoration of capitalist class power.

While "[n]eoliberalism is often described as the ideology of the market and private interests as opposed to state intervention," Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy contend "it is fundamentally a *new social order* in which the power and income of the upper fractions of ruling classes—the wealthiest persons—was reestablished in the wake of a setback" (2005: 9). Since the 1970s, the set of policies associated with neoliberalism—privatization, deregulation and cuts in public sector spending—have swept away the broadly social democratic, corporatist arrangements that characterized the thirty years of relative stability and prosperity following the Second World War. In the last thirty to forty years, however, the wealth, incomes and power of the capitalist class have reinflated (or, as in the case of China and Russia, been created!). Meanwhile, the middle and working classes have lost bargaining power in an increasingly competitive and unprotected global labor market (Harvey 2005: 8-18).

In the bureaucratic field, neoliberalism is felt as two related conflicts. Wacquant explains:

In the contemporary period, the bureaucratic field is traversed by two internecine struggles. The first pits the "higher state nobility" of policymakers intent on promoting market-oriented reforms and the "lower state nobility" of executives attached to the traditional missions of government. The second opposes what Bourdieu, riding off Hobbes's classic portrayal of the ruler, calls the "Left hand" and the "Right hand" of the state. The Left hand, the feminine side of Leviathan, is materialized by the "spendthrift" ministries in charge of "social functions"—public education, health, housing, welfare, and labor law—which offer protection and succor to the social categories shorn of economic and cultural capital. The Right hand, the masculine side, is charged with enforcing the new economic discipline via budget cuts, fiscal incentives, and economic deregulation. (2010: 200-201)

In his elaboration of Bourdieu's theory of the state, Wacquant adds "the police, the courts, and the prison as core constituents of the 'Right hand' of the state, alongside the ministries of the economy and the budget." Wacquant argues that criminal justice institutions need to be at "the center of our analysis of the redesign and deployment of government programs aimed at coping with the entrenched poverty and deepening disparities spawned in the polarizing city by the discarding of the Fordist-Keynesian social compact" (ibid).

In Pfaffenberger's term, I present CompStat and crime mapping, on the one hand, and intelligence-led policing, and new systems of data aggregation and analysis, on the other hand, as political projects: efforts at technological regularization aimed at both disciplining police labor and more tightly focusing policing on the coercive regulation of inequality and related social problems. In this synthesis of Pfaffenberger's technological drama and Bourdieu's field theory, the "higher state nobility" of Bourdieu and Wacquant is analogous to Pfaffenberger's "design constituency." That is to say, they are relatively empowered state functionaries that impose market reforms through the implementation of new technologies. In contrast, the "impact constituency"—those adversely affected by technology—are the "lower state nobility" who, in

the case of the law enforcement, often remain wedded to the relatively humane ethos of “penal welfarism” with its formal emphasis on rehabilitation over coercive punishment (Garland 2002: 27-51). In the following three subsections, I detail the technological drama that is currently playing out within policing.

Regularization

Pfaffenberger defines technological regulation as the process wherein “a design constituency creates, appropriates, or modifies a technological artifact, activity, or system that is capable of signifying and coercively implementing a constructed vision of a stratified society, one in which power, wealth, and prestige is differentially allocated” (1992: 291). It is characterized by “the creation of fabricated social contexts and rituals that constitute political aims within the fluid field of social relations” (1992: 285). In the context of contemporary policing, technological regularization finds expression in two related policing initiatives—CompStat and intelligence-led policing. Both of these initiatives exemplify how technology is involved in the neoliberal transformation of the bureaucratic field by, on the one hand, increasing the managerial control of state agencies and police executives over municipal departments and lower level officers and, on the other hand, targeting police resources toward the coercive regulation of social problems.

Short for computerized statistics, CompStat is the managerial innovation of William Bratton, the New York Police Department (NYPD) commissioner under tough-on-crime Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. It is built on four principles: (1) timely and accurate crime data, (2) effective strategies, (3) rapid deployment of police resources and (4) relentless follow up and assessment. In notorious rituals of public shaming, senior NYPD officials would take precinct commanders to task, aggressively questioning them if crime numbers did not drop on their watch. During the first year and half of his tenure, Bratton replaced over a third of NYPD’s precinct commanders (Walsh and Vito 2004: 60). CompStat, as a managerial tool, is closely related to public order and broken windows policing, which emphasize the focused application of police power to target “problem people and places” and address “quality of life issues” such as vagrancy, vandalism and other “anti-social behaviors.” Both CompStat and public order/broken windows policing were first put to use in Giuliani-era New York City (Harcourt 2009: 47-51).

As a strategy of technological regularization, CompStat is an expression of neoliberal ideology and, as such, it helps catalyze the two interrelated battles the bureaucratic field. On the one hand, it is an instrument of labor control that pits the design constituency/higher state nobility against the impact constituency/lower state nobility. The dramatic changes and personnel shifts within the NYPD under Bratton have been unpopular among lower level officers. As one NYPD detective complained: “The job is getting smaller all the time—more demands, less autonomy, less respect” (Smith 2012). At the same time, CompStat invested senior NYPD majors with great amounts of symbolic capital, catapulting them to high prestige positions across the country and world.⁶ On the other hand, the relentless follow up and assessment built into the CompStat model forced police into adopt an increasingly aggressive style of policing that criminalized the urban poor (Mitchell and Beckett 2008; Kaplan-Lyman 2012). In this way, CompStat compels police officers, under threat of professional embarrassment or job loss, to abandon any rehabilitative or community-oriented conceptions of policing—an ethos of policing more in line with the Left hand of the state—and adopt the coercive objectives of Right hand of the state.

In recent years, the design constituency/higher state nobility has exported CompStat outside of New York City. Within New York State, Operation IMPACT was explicitly designed to implement CompStat to Upstate New York municipalities and counties. “We saw the value of timely and accurate crime reporting

⁶ To cite only one example, Bratton left the NYPD to become the commissioner of the Los Angeles Police Department from 2002 to 2009, a knighted consultant for UK Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011, a consultant for the Oakland Police Department in 2012 and, most recently, a second tenure as NYPD police commissioner beginning in December 2013.

that is paired with rapid reaction and relentless follow up,” the former DCJS director (2013) told me “We wanted to take what had been so effective in the City and apply the model to New York State.” This commitment continues today. The current DCJS deputy commissioner (2013), the official in charge of overseeing IMPACT across the state, told me that “some [municipalities] have used IMPACT [to implement CompStat]. We’ve also supported from other sources. We support the implementation of CompStat because we see real value in it.”

In the two decades years since the first Compstat meetings in New York City, the model has evolved into a larger policing doctrine: intelligence-led policing (ILP). Where CompStat focuses on crime data, ILP places great emphasis on individual targeting. It focuses on chronic offenders and makes greater use of informants and surveillance to identify and track them. Like CompStat, ILP focuses on rapid deployment but it tries to move beyond “effective strategies” to the application of preventative measures. Where CompStat focuses on accountability and follow through, ILP tries to shift the posture of policing toward “a top-down management approach” that “uses crime intelligence to objectively direct police resources decisions” (Ratcliffe 2008: 83-87).

Reflecting this commitment to ILP and its increased emphasis on surveillance and strategic targeting of chronic offenders, the NYSIC, NJ ROIC and the IMPACT-funded county crime analysis centers and municipal crime analysis teams are places where data centralizes and high level analytic capabilities are developed. Using Raytheon’s Digital Information Gateway search and retrieval software, intelligence analysts at these sites can remotely access the databases of other agencies. The resultant intelligence sharing network creates a supple dataveillance system: “centers of concatenation” or clearinghouses where “disparate data are drawn together as needed, invested with meaning, communicated to others, and then discarded such that no records exist of such surveillance activities” (Monahan and Regan 2012: 302).

Intelligence analysts at fusion centers and CACs do more than aggregate data, however. At all of these sites, intelligence analysts use Analyst Notebook, a data analytics platform produced by i2, an IBM subsidiary, and/or Visual Analytics, a similar software package from Raytheon, to create social network analyses and visualizations of dial number retriever (DNR) data. Like NSA’s PRISM program and the DEA’s Hemispheres Project, the latter product is an intelligence product refined out of telephony metadata—incoming and outgoing calls with their date, time, duration and geocell data (i.e. what cell tower is the signal routed through)—but without bulk collection. A detailed picture emerges even when examining DNR data from a single phone. “With DNR data and i2,” one state trooper assigned to a fusion center (2013) explained, “you can figure out when the heaviest calls are. Drug operations are businesses. They are very routine. You can analyze this data and find where he sleeps, where he deals and the rhythms of his work. Then you can take him down.”

These technologies, however, are not simply new additions to the investigative toolkit of law enforcement. They are an effort at technological regularization, a political project to refashion police agencies. Here, the New Jersey State Police (NJSP), the lead agency in the state’s fusion center, the NJ ROIC, is a good example. The NSJP turned to ILP to rehabilitate its image following a racial profiling scandal. In 1999, the NJSP signed a consent decree that placed the agency under ten years of federal oversight by the Department of Justice (Collum 2010).⁷ A period of reform and professionalization followed. Under the

⁷ We owe the term “racial profiling” to the NJSP pattern of discriminatory enforcement in the 1980s and 1990s. The department was notorious for “ghost stops,” unreported stops where a trooper pulled over and searched cars and let the driver go if they did not find anything illegal. In a five-month investigation, Joe Collum, the journalist who coined the term “racial profiling,” found that 76 per cent of New Jersey Turnpike arrests in 1988 and 1989 were African Americans for possession of drugs and weapons. Collum also interviewed a number of people who were stopped and searched, but not charged, and concluded that blacks and dark-skinned Hispanics made up 90 per cent of those pulled over. The issued exploded into national news in 1998, when NJSP officers shot at a van containing four minority men during a traffic stop, wounding three of them (Collum 2010).

tenure of Colonel Rick Fuentes, NJSP police superintendent since 2003, the tighter management systems and more detailed reporting that followed in the wake of the consent decree gave way to a broader reform movement centered on intelligence-led policing. In 2005, the NJSP reorganized their investigations branch around the intelligence functions of police work. The next year, the NJSP and the Manhattan Institute, a neoliberal think tank, released *The New Jersey State Police Practical Guide to Intelligence Led Policing* (Fuentes 2006).

The turn to ILP was an effort to exert greater control over troopers in the field. “This top-down approach to policing may run counter to traditional police operations where field personnel possess greater discretionary decision-making authority,” NJSP Major Raymond Guidetti argues, writing with Thomas Martinelli, a criminologist at Wayne State University, “however, a true ILP philosophy requires a top-down approach. This approach also minimizes criticism of individual value judgments and ensures proper resource allocation” (Martinelli and Guidetti 2009).

With this historical momentum and massive amounts of state and federal funding, the CompStat model and ILP have emerged as unavoidable reform currents in policing that seek to regulate and control policing practices. With technologies like crime mapping, in the case of CompStat, and more sophisticated systems for data aggregation and analysis, in the case of ILP, they bring with them *both* material force, increased capabilities for dataveillance and intelligence analysis, *and* symbolic power, the cachet of the new and exciting.

In many respects, this effort at technological regularization has been successful. The NJ ROIC and NYSIC have each carved out a niche in their respective states. The NJ ROIC has effectively become the outsourced intelligence division for many cities in state which struggle with violent crime and drug traffic: Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Trenton, Camden, among others. While the NYSIC has to compete with other agencies for mission, DCJS and NYPD in particular, it has become the main information broker for criminal intelligence in New York State and operates a statewide gang database that is generally held in high esteem. Meanwhile, DCJS and Operation IMPACT are widely credited with increasing interagency cooperation and institutionalizing crime analysis and the CompStat model across the state. However, these developments do not steamroll all that is before them. Instead, they confront a complex and conflictive field of forces. When the rubber hits the road, adjustments are made.

Adjustments: In Pfaffenberger’s model, technological adjustments are the efforts of an impact constituency to exploit the ambiguity in technological regularization and redress the political assault on their position. Pfaffenberger defined three adjustments: (1) countersignification or the “attempt to substitute a more favorable frame of meaning”; (2) counterappropriation, when “those deemed unsuited to possess an artifact get their hands on it anyway”; and (3) counterdelegation or the subversion of the coercive function of technological regularization (1992: 300). Examples of all three of these adjustments came out in my research.

Countersignification was evident in the response of a police chief in an Upstate New York city with a population over 50,000, who bucked trends and kept his department committed to older policing paradigms, despite pressures to adopt CompStat and ILP. This chief was worried that increased emphasis on crime mapping, data fusion and other technology-driven forms of intelligence analysis was distracting police from their core functions:

We have lost a lot of contact on a personal level with community. Everyone now thinks “OK, here’s a lead. Let’s put it into the NYSIC. Let’s run the guy’s cell phone.” Those are fine but you’ve got to keep that human element. There is nothing you are going to get from a computer that is going to approach the value of the intelligence you can get from talking to people in the street. It’s not going to happen. People may see this as old

fashioned but there is nothing better than a cop that can do an interview. I don't care what database you have. The human part is being ignored. "We didn't get anything on this guy in the database." "Well, OK, maybe if you went outside and talked to people on his block you might."

(ibid)

He also saw ILP as "the latest buzz word you need to say to get grant funding. It is what it is but I don't really see it as progress."

As a result, this chief, in an act of countersignification, substituted community policing—an older policing approach that emphasizes building ties and working closely with community leaders and institutions—as a more favorable frame of meaning. When he became chief, he discontinued the department's two year long IMPACT-funded CompStat process because he felt that the program was inappropriate for a small municipality. "If there is one thing that irks me more than anything," he said, "it is taking a department like [this one] with 127 people and comparing it to NYPD. There just isn't a comparison on that model. Why do we have to try to be like the NYPD when we are nothing like New York City?" He also discontinued the un-uniformed street crime unit, the type of aggressive rapid response team emblematic of CompStat and ILP—there were "a lot of complaints with the minority community about excessive force. They were trying to play a numbers game. They were physically abusive and verbally abusive"—and replaced them with a uniformed Community Street Enforcement Team. He explained: "I think the biggest success is, when you put out a lot of uniforms, you are giving people a perception of safety and security. I think the perception of safety is what most departments are concentrating on now because we really don't have a real immediate effect on the crime rate" (ibid).

Another adjustment, counterappropriation, is evident in the response of intelligence analysts to the noncooperation between the NYSIC and NYPD. The NYSIC, the statewide intelligence center, is operated by the New York State Police (NYSP). In most states, the state police are the largest and most prestigious police agency. In New York State, however, the NYSP are sidelined by the NYPD, the largest police department in the world, which run their own large intelligence operations and cooperate only on their terms.⁸ As one officer with a municipal police department (2013) said, "They're as bad as the fucking FBI now. Their idea of cooperation is 'You work with us and maybe we will share something with you.'" Unsurprisingly, then, the NYPD does not cooperate with the NYSIC. They have not signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each other, which means they do not officially share intelligence.

For this reason, NYSIC analysts turn to counterappropriation as a redressive strategy. Analysts at the NYSIC will rely on informal contacts with individual NYPD officers to access to the records and intelligence of New York's largest and most important municipality. This creates a delicate situation. It does provide a degree of access to the massive intelligence gathering capabilities of the NYPD but it is tenuous. Not only is it dependent on personal relationships of trust and reciprocity, but the information cannot be officially used. If an analyst could not turn around and corroborate the information unofficially gained from NYPD contacts in databases which they could officially access, the information had to be left out of any reporting.

⁸ In 2003, the NYPD, for example, launched the "demographics unit," an intelligence gathering team with a boundless human intelligence collection mission to target Muslim communities with no respect for jurisdictional boundaries (Apuzzo and Goldman 2013). The NYPD also runs Operation Sentry, a series of intelligence sharing partnerships for counterterrorism with jurisdictions within 200 mile radius of New York City, which covers all of New Jersey, Connecticut and Rhode Island and much of New York State, including the Hudson River Valley, and Capital District (Kelly 2011). For many municipalities in New York, their Operation Sentry partnership was more active than their relationship with the NYSIC.

Impact constituencies/the lower state nobility will also subvert the technological systems imposed upon them, a process Pfaffenberger labels counterdelegation. A city with a population of just over 30,000 in the New York's Hudson River Valley, for example, found the CompStat-style crime mapping produced by their IMPACT-funded intelligence analyst to be of limited usefulness. The head of the detective division (2013) explained to me:

The problem here is you're looking at a city of only 30,000 people with limited numbers of crimes; it's not like NYPD where the crime trends are kind of probative. These are the numbers. You know the law of small numbers? We look at our burglaries and they happen on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and they're all over the board as far as times go. So when you're dealing with small numbers. You can't accurately predict incidents... I wouldn't say it's not useful but it's limited.

Instead of using crime mapping to help plan the deployment of police resources, as in CompStat model, this department's intelligence analyst spend more time producing criminal history reports on known chronic offenders. A lieutenant (2013) in the same department who previously worked as the intelligence analyst explains:

Since we are such a small community pretty much everybody knows each other. So it is kind of hard to do some of the stuff they do in like [a larger upstate city] than it is to what you can do in [this city] which is only 4 square miles. That also means that we don't get many surprises. We know who the professional criminals are. When the guy whose specialty is vehicle breaks-in is released on parole, I'm not left wondering what just happened here. Why are we all of a sudden having all these car larcenies again? I'll look at the daily releases, check criminal histories, look into our confidential intel files and produce a briefing on this guy. It doesn't take rocket science to figure it out.

As a result, this police department increasingly came to use the IMPACT grant to augment more traditional investigative practices. The head of the detective division (2013) explained to me:

The department will use IMPACT funds for overtime to do saturation patrols if there's crime trend that warrants it. Usually there isn't. Usually, we just do our cases. We assign our cases based upon solvability factors. If it is a burglary that has leads we assign it. If it's no suspects, no leads, no witnesses, no physical evidence then it is not really an assignable burglary. So we concentrate on crimes that have a likelihood of being solved. So IMPACT doesn't really change what I do but it can be used as a source for overtime to support what we are already doing so it helps. A couple years ago, we used IMPACT funds to get a new records management system. That made a big difference. It made our work easier but, again, it didn't change the nature of the work...the work is the work. We may use these technologies to find people or predict who is going to do what or where there's going to be crime or who is a likely suspect but you still got to do the work, you still got to do the investigation, you still got to do the witnesses interviews, you still got to gather the evidence, you still got to process the crime scene, you still got to do all that.

(ibid)

This type of counterdelegation was common. Police executives happily take the relatively flexible IMPACT funds, tell DCJS what they wanted to hear about CompStat and other "effective strategies" and use the money to supplement their normal operations. As another chief (2013) explained, "To me, Operation IMPACT is really looked on more as a budgetary supplement than a crime fighting tool. So

cops want to know how much overtime they're going to get, things of that nature. As far as crime fighting goes, there is nothing that can't be done without IMPACT."

Reconstitution: In the final act of technological drama, reconstitution, "impact constituencies try to reverse the implications of a technology through a symbolic inversion." This symbolic inversion happens through the creation of "counterartifacts...which embody features believed to negate or reverse the political implications of the dominant system." In response, design constituencies try to reintegrate these counterartifacts "back into the controlled and ordered space of regularization" (Pfaffenberger 1992: 286, 307). The efforts of a three man intelligence division in a North Jersey city of just over 40,000 provide a good example of the work of symbolic inversion, while the response of the NJ ROIC shows an attempt to reintegrate impact constituency.

While the NJ ROIC had developed working relationships with the large cities in the state, this smaller North Jersey city and its surrounding municipalities had slipped through the cracks. The head of the intelligence unit (2013) put it this way:

They're not useful on the day-to-day because not many people utilize the ROIC. They are great because we've built relationships and we can get some information from them that's useful but we are not, on a consistent basis, giving them information and getting back useful products. We are doing the majority of that on our own. So, at this point, the ROIC is not that useful because people don't buy in. We don't go to the ROIC for our information. They are just another resource that can be useful. The majority of our information comes from the people right here: the boots on the street and our partners in surrounding towns.

The three officers in this intelligence unit produced their own intelligence products and disseminated them to surrounding municipalities, creating their own area of influence and making it harder for the NJ ROIC to build liaison relationships in the region. "We don't need a million dollars," the head of the unit explained to me (ibid), "we can do it with excel spreadsheets and our shitty records management system."

In the terms of technological drama model, their "excel spreadsheets" and "shitty records management system" became counterartifacts that projected political power and enabled this three officer intelligence division to exercise a local monopoly in intelligence analysis. These counterartifacts created what Pfaffenberger calls "countercontext" that displaced the technological regularization strategy of the design consistency/higher state nobility (1992: 304). In so doing, this three officer intelligence unit accumulated symbolic capital and built up their reputation as competent officers who understood intelligence. Several other interviewees, including some troopers at the NJ ROIC, spoke highly of them and their work.

In response, the state troopers at the NJ ROIC, the design constituency/higher state nobility dedicated to the political project of technological regularization, tried to reintegrate this municipal intelligence unit and their local network into their operations. The NJ ROIC invited this three officer intelligence to the first Fusion Liaison Officer Initiative Orientation, a meeting that I also observed. The six hour orientation covered the history the NJ ROIC, the scope of its information and intelligence systems, its technical capabilities to analyze data and develop intelligence products and the limits imposed on its operations by its privacy policy and related federal statutes. It also included general information on the intelligence cycle and intelligence-led policing. The initiative intended to recruit Fusion Liaison Officers to serve as the link between the municipal police and the fusion center.

While troopers at the fusion center hoped that the program would build their network, the officers with this municipal intelligence division felt even more alienated by the meeting. The head of the unit explained:

It becomes about politics. They want buy-in but their attitude gets in the way. I can tell you the biggest reason people don't go to the state police because they are the state police. Ask any cop what they think of the troopers. You'll get something like "Oh, those guys who think they are hot shit." They don't even have to have had much contact with them. It's institutional. They need to go do an aggressive public relations campaign to make it happen. They need to come and say, "We need your help," but that's not happening. If I didn't know anything about ILP and I went to that training you were at, I would come away not knowing anything about ILP. Because what they didn't say is, "We're the state police. We have a fusion center but what we need is you. We're not making our own intel. We need you to report to us and, in turn, this is what we can do for you." What they said "We're the state police. We're awesome. We have all these cool tools. We're the smartest guys out there. Send your people to us." It's the delivery. Listen, I like them personally but they need to fight something that is greater than them. It's the culture of the state police and they aren't doing a very good job fighting it. There's no buy-in to the fusion center because the troopers don't buy into us. They think they are better than us municipal cops. So they have a lot of resources but how well are they used?

At the lunch break, the officers from this municipality left. The state troopers could not bridge the cultural gap between the state police and municipal police and integrate this municipal intelligence unit into the "controlled and ordered space of regularization" represented by the NJ ROIC (Pfaffenberger 1992: 307).

Altogether, Pfaffenberger's model of technological drama provides a useful framework to analyze the conflicting positions different police officers from various agencies take toward the neoliberal reform of policing and the technologies associated with them. The design consistency/higher state nobility have latched on these reform currents—CompStat and crime mapping, intelligence-led policing and new systems for data aggregation and analysis—because they affirm and strengthen their position in the bureaucratic field. For the state police, in both New York and New Jersey, the emergence of fusion centers and their expanding liaison relationships with municipal police mean more power and prestige for the fusion center and the state police. The same holds true for the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the grant-driven partnerships at the heart of Operation IMPACT. As more municipalities use IMPACT funds to set up CompStat and hire intelligence analysts, it increases the relative power of DCJS, a state-level support agency with no law enforcement powers, over municipal police. As the former DCJS director (2013) told me, "People will do almost anything if you make it a condition of the grant."

In response to this effort at technological regularization, impact constituencies/the lower state nobility exploit ambiguities and try to redress the most adverse effects of regularization. They will draw on "root paradigms" or "cultural models for behavior, maps for interpreting social relations in terms of cultural meaning" in order to displace political imposition of the design consistency/higher state nobility (Pfaffenberger 1992: 298). In the examples discussed here, municipal police draw on older policing paradigms, like community policing, to thwart the political project imposed upon them. They will transform their subordinated position in the bureaucratic field as municipal police into a source of symbolic capital, as in the case of the three man intelligence unit that exercises a local monopoly on intelligence analysis. Sometimes, they will quietly work around protocol like the NYSIC analysts who personally and unofficially broker access to NYPD records.

Under these combined pressures, policing is slowly changing. Focusing on the raw power of new technologies to collect, aggregate, sort and visualize information, however, does not tell us how these new surveillant and intelligence-gathering powers are received by police and with what effects. The technological dramas mediating policing reforms complicate the institutionalization of intelligence fusion, but they do not fully undermine it. The neoliberalization of the state is a complex and slow process. New

York City sets the example. As the major US financial center, New York City is endowed with a special status by virtue of its role in the global process of capital accumulation, its important position in national politics, and the local resistance shaped by sharp tensions around income inequality and racial segregation (i.e. campaigns against stop and frisk, the demonstrations following death of Eric Garner, etc.). Larger cities in the region embraced New York's models with less resistance because their large populations make CompStat and ILP more viable, while their higher crime rates and eroding tax bases make these labor-saving reforms more attractive. The examples of resistance come from small cities that are less important economically, culturally, and socially.⁹ In this way, technological drama is the process through which neoliberalization of policing gradually and unevenly extends to more peripheral locations.

By focusing on technological drama in the bureaucratic field, we can begin to understand the complex interaction among technology, individual agents and institutional actors. While recent changes in law enforcement and the introduction of new technologies have the potential to arm police agencies with new powers akin to those of the NSA, the culture of the police and complex interagency environment of state and local law enforcement slows the pace of change. The result is not a revolutionary shift in policing but the addition of some new wrinkles to the old rules of intelligence tradecraft.

Directions for Surveillance Studies in a Post-Snowden World

Edward Snowden's exposure of the NSA's massive global surveillance did much to advance public awareness of surveillance. In this way, Snowden did much to advance Surveillance Studies as a scholarly project. This paper tries to moderate some of the excitement and anxiety that naturally has followed these revelations. It presents original research on the nature of intelligence gathering and analysis in the *domestic* intelligence complex transformed by the same post-9/11 surge in surveillance that turned the NSA into the voracious dataveillance machine. In the last decade and half, the US government, on both the federal and state level, has poured money into domestic intelligence, creating an interlocking system of intelligence centers and increasing the surveillance and intelligence gathering powers of US police agencies to unprecedented levels. The effects have been uneven and difficult to gauge.

This paper reinterprets the difficulties surrounding the institutionalization of intelligence fusion as a result of the complex interagency environment that characterizes state and local law enforcement in the United States. I look to the organizational histories structuring these interagency intelligence centers and the relational field of forces that surrounds them to explain the ways that police agencies have responded to reform, resisted change and appropriated resources to meet the more immediate demands of police work and the small politics of everyday life.

As a more general point, I put forward this emphasis on organizational history and the relational politics of the field as potential way forward for Surveillance Studies in a post-Snowden world. While the revelations of NSA's sweeping global architecture call forth the need for sweeping theorizations of an apparently global surveillance society, I would caution against this impulse. Historically, Surveillance Studies has been "heavy on theorizing and light on empirical research" (Zureik 2007: 114) and, as such, tends to produce "an abundance of nominal (if rarely operationalized) concepts" (Marx 2007: 125):

⁹ The head of the three man intelligence unit in the small North Jersey city (2013) acknowledged as much: "This is how I see it. I'm telling you what's not working for us. The ROIC is supposed to be the statewide fusion center but they don't cover the whole state. They have a good relationship with [the city of over one hundred thousand to the North]. They want to have a good relationship with us but they have no contact with [the city of 21,000 to the Northeast, the city of 22,000 to the West, the city of 23,000 to the South, the city of 22,000 to the Southeast]. I get it. They focus on [the city of over 100,000] because it's [the city of over 100,000]. There's only so much you can do but [those smaller cities] are as important to us as [the city of 100,000]. If they don't have everyone reporting to them, it doesn't help us. I don't need to know what's happening in Newark or Paterson. I need to know what's happening [in those smaller cities]. That's why we we're so busy making our own intelligence in this shitty little basement."

disciplinary society and the panopticon (Foucault 1995; Cohen 1985; Gordon 1987), the super-panopticon (Poster 1990), the ban-opticon (Bigo 2006), the control society (Deleuze 1992) the surveillant assemblage (Ericson and Haggerty 2000), etc.

Recognizing this shortcoming in the literature, Murakami Wood challenges “the potentially totalizing descriptive power of ‘surveillance society’...[to] argue that there is an immense cultural and geographic variety of surveillance societies” (2009: 181). Indeed, even the NSA’s global surveillance system is a product of a specific organizational history and a particular kind of social space. The NSA is perhaps the most secretive agency in the 16 member US intelligence community. For much of its history, it was virtually unknown to the public: “Some Washington wags have been known to say the initials stand for No Such Agency; those inside the wall have another definition: Never Say Anything” (Bamford 1983: 357). Both the tone of some of the NSA documents leaked by Snowden and the audacious nature of its collection efforts speak to a long history of secrecy and a social environment or field characterized by impunity and bravado. In other words, there are social determinates to all surveillance systems, even those that appear to be uncomplicatedly driven by powerful technological developments.

For this reason, I put forward this synthesis of Pfaffenberger’s technological dramas and Bourdieu’s field theory as a conceptual framework that can elaborate and enliven the tendency within Surveillance Studies that emphasizes the way human agents and organizational cultures mediate surveillance. I think this is a fruitful line for future research. Instead of theorizing global surveillance in grand terms, we should ask smaller questions that get at the precise nature of specific surveillance systems. What social relations animate surveillance practices? What political projects do they advance? How these are practices enacted, resisted and differentially institutionalized? How do they resonate across different professional fields and institutional domains? What is the unforeseen emergent property produced by the concatenation of the multiple forms of social power mobilized by relevant actors with a stake in the game? Not only are these questions more analytically precise, they also present opportunities to address the limitations of assemblage theory and engage in a wider theoretical conversation. Most importantly, these questions are politically important. They reveal important tensions in the bureaucratic field—and within and between assemblages—that can provide insight into the secretive world of state surveillance and perhaps even identify potential openings for positive change.

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