

Homovictimus and the Onopticon Regime: Compulsory Infrastructural Inclusion and Psychological Governance

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Abstract

Critiquing the paradigms of "exclusion" and the "digital divide" that dominate contemporary discussions on digitalization, this article proposes a novel conceptual framework—the Onopticon—to elucidate the current operational logic of power. The core argument posits that contemporary digital domination does not function by leaving the subject outside the system. Rather, it compels individuals to integrate into specific infrastructures to survive in public and economic spheres (compulsory infrastructural inclusion). Instead of presenting an exhaustive empirical induction, this study develops a macro-theoretical framework. It demonstrates these underlying mechanisms through selected contemporary cases. Ontologically distinct from classical, Panopticon-derived surveillance models, the Onopticon regime operates on three primary axes: the pre-modeling of behavior, the foreclosure of alternative option spaces via infrastructural dependence, and the conversion of biological and psychological vulnerabilities into systemic inputs. The subject position produced by this regime is neither the rational Homo economicus nor the entirely passive, agency-less "data subject." Instead, it is the Homovictimus. This tragic agent conducts cost-benefit analyses under asymmetric conditions and seeks pragmatic gains. Yet, out of structural necessity, they ultimately participate in their own infrastructural assimilation. The article analytically examines the mechanisms of this theoretical framework through recent data in the U.S. credit system, the convergence of technology and finance in the food sector, and the operational tension between legal safeguards and practical vulnerabilities in the EU Artificial Intelligence Act. Finally, it explores infrastructural sovereignty by distinguishing between the deliberate weaponization of infrastructure and the accidental civic paralysis caused by global IT outages.

Keywords: Onopticon, Homovictimus, algorithmic governmentality, compulsory infrastructural inclusion, weaponization of infrastructure, right to opacity.

1. Introduction: The Fallacy of Exclusion and the Onopticon as a Theoretical Proposition

In the contemporary order defined by global networks and platformized everyday life, the individual can no longer be conceptualized merely as a citizen, worker, or consumer. Anxieties surrounding the "digital divide" and "being left outside the system" have been superseded by a much more structural form of domination. Today's individual is compelled to connect to specific digital-institutional infrastructures simply to participate in public and economic circulation. Although this incorporation is often framed in neoliberal discourse as a "voluntary value exchange," it functions as a de facto imperative when considering the severe civil and economic excommunication costs of remaining offline.

This article does not claim an empirical induction; rather, it introduces a new conceptual framework based on the principle of "compulsory infrastructural inclusion" to explain contemporary digital domination. The focal point is the evolution of surveillance—from an episodic practice of data collection into the infrastructure-driven pre-imposition of the subject's ontological behavioral horizon. By defining the logic of this new power apparatus as the Onopticon, and the subject position it engenders as Homovictimus, this paper illustrates how these mechanisms operate across selected empirical domains.

2. Regime Logic: The Onopticon's Departure from Surveillance Literature

While analyzing the transition from disciplinary societies to societies of control, Gilles Deleuze (1992) diagnosed that individuals had ceased to be indivisible physical wholes, transforming instead into passwords and "dividuals" within networks. The contemporary resonance of this foundational insight necessitates a radical paradigm shift in surveillance literature.

To date, surveillance studies have expanded through concepts such as the Panopticon (producing discipline through external observation), the Synopticon (the many observing the few), the Banopticon (the exclusion of risk groups via profiling), and the Omnipicon (total, ubiquitous recording). Diverging from panoptic visibility, banoptic exclusion, and omniptic total recording, the Onopticon designates a regime wherein surveillance practically manages the subject's behavioral horizon via infrastructural dependence. Extending Antoinette Rouvroy's (2013) thesis of algorithmic "pre-emption," this regime is anchored in three specific pillars:

The Pre-modeling of Behavior: The a priori structuring of the subject's behavioral horizon, actively accounting for bodily responses and psychological predispositions.

The Foreclosure of Alternatives via Infrastructural Dependence: The transition of surveillance from a screen-based practice to environmental structuring (e.g., cashless societies, the technologization of food regimes, or mandatory biometric transitions), effectively eradicating offline or analog alternatives.

The Translation of Biological and Psychological Vulnerabilities into Systemic Inputs: Human drives, pleasures, and bodily responses are not bypassed; rather, they are calculated, processed, and incorporated to ensure the seamless operation of the infrastructure.

3. Subject Position: Why Neither Homo economicus Nor the Passive Data Subject?

The subject position engineered by this system is Homovictimus. This subject cannot be the classical Homo economicus who conducts independent cost-benefit analyses utilizing boundless market rationality, as the sphere of action has already been infrastructurally dictated. Conversely, defining the individual merely as a thoroughly passive "data subject" subjected to data exploitation without any agency represents an incomplete sociological reading. Even under highly asymmetric conditions, individuals continue to exercise independent cost-benefit analyses and engage in active micro-resistances—such as opting for open-source software, asserting data protection rights (e.g., GDPR), utilizing VPNs or ad-blockers, and employing data obfuscation practices.

Despite this agency, Homovictimus remains a tragic actor who, through the neoliberal "manufacturing of consent" highlighted by Nikolas Rose (1996) and Byung-Chul Han (2017), actively participates in their own assimilation. The individual integrates into alternative biological regimes or digital infrastructures motivated by the belief that they are becoming more eco-conscious, healthier, more technologically compliant, or simply to reap the pragmatic benefits offered by the system. At this blurred boundary between voluntarism and coercion, Homovictimus reproduces their own ontological capture in order to survive.

4. Mechanism Demonstrations

The operationalization of this theoretical framework and the realization of "compulsory infrastructural inclusion" can be demonstrated through structural trends across four distinct domains:

4.1. The Financial Regime: Pragmatic Participation and Predatory Inclusion

While traditional surveillance analyses focus on exclusion, recent methodological revisions (CFPB, 2025) to the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's initial reports (CFPB, 2015) indicate a steady decline in the proportion of "Credit Invisibles" lacking sufficient data trails (from 11.0% in 2010 to 2.7% in 2020). This growing trend of registration within the financial system serves a pragmatic function, particularly by enabling historically marginalized lower classes to access mortgage mechanisms and participate in wealth-building processes. Reducing the individual's pursuit of utility within an asymmetric system entirely to passive victimization ignores the genuine survival strategies of social actors.

Nevertheless, this surge in inclusion rates cannot be interpreted merely as a frictionless triumph of democratization. Through a secondary sociological lens, the system—rather than keeping the lower classes out—offers them financial participation while simultaneously entangling them via high-interest algorithmic scoring and asymmetric debt mechanisms. This operates a dynamic of "predatory inclusion" (Seamster & Charron-Chénier, 2017). In an order where remaining outside the system equates to economic paralysis, assimilation ceases to be an empowering right and transforms into the infrastructural prerequisite for structural exploitation.

4.2. Food Technology: Designing the Architecture of Biological Choice

The recent convergence of the technology, finance, and food sectors (Howard, 2022) exposes the biological orientations of the Onopticon. The strategic shift by global food conglomerates (e.g., Cargill, 2026) to place "Sensory Science" at the core of their R&D—prioritizing consumer pleasure, sensory response, and repurchase intent in product design—constitutes a potent structural trajectory. Coupled with the massive capital influx into cultivated meat start-ups from major data-finance actors (GFI, 2023), this indicates that biological preferences and environmental concerns are increasingly being calculated, steered, and rendered market-compliant by techno-financial rationality.

4.3. Law: Legal Liability and the Operational "Moral Crumple Zone" Tension

The law is not entirely impotent against the Onopticon regime. A legal examination of the 2024 EU Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act reveals that the overwhelming majority of obligations regarding risk management, data quality, cybersecurity, and technical documentation rest directly on the technology Providers/Developers. The Act provides a robust protective legal framework that imposes liability firmly on the developing corporation rather than shifting it entirely to the human deployer.

However, the structural handicap of the Onopticon regime manifests in the operational field despite this clear legal framework. The Act's requirement for the training of natural persons operating high-risk systems and "human-in-the-loop" oversight creates a practical conundrum. As observed in the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB, 2019) assessment of the 2018 Uber autonomous vehicle fatal crash, even when corporate design flaws are recorded in official narratives, operational attention frequently concentrates on the ultimate human operator. This trend suggests that while legal texts may bind developers, the complex nature of automation paves the way for the operational generation of a "moral crumple zone" (Elish, 2019) upon frontline operators. They are effectively forced to practically absorb the systemic failures of the infrastructure on the ground.

4.4. Infrastructural Sovereignty: Weaponized Exclusion and Accidental Paralysis

The expansion dynamic of the Onopticon regime can be understood through the following axiom: Concentrated techno-financial-logistical capacity tends to actualize itself as an infrastructural imposition under conducive political and crisis conditions. This illustrates that infrastructure is not

longer a neutral technical convenience, but a distinct form of structural power that dictates the civic realm as a necessity. This dynamic manifests in two theoretically related but operationally distinct forms: deliberate weaponized exclusion and accidental infrastructural paralysis.

Weaponized Infrastructural Exclusion: This sovereign power manifests first through deliberate infrastructural excommunication—the weaponization of interconnectedness. High-status cases reveal this general logic most starkly. The unprecedented deplatforming of Donald Trump following the events of January 6, 2021, demonstrates a paradigm shift. In this instance, tech oligopolies unilaterally suspended the communicative and political infrastructure of a sitting U.S. President (Meta Oversight Board, 2021; Twitter, 2021). Regardless of the political context, the fact that private infrastructure providers possess the authority to instantaneously inflict digital expulsion proves that infrastructural access is the ultimate prerequisite for public existence. Trump's subsequent reinstatement under new corporate guidelines (Meta, 2023) further underscores that remaining visible in the contemporary public sphere is contingent upon infrastructural compliance.

Similarly, infrastructural exile operates as a devastating geopolitical weapon within financial networks. The 2025 U.S. sanctions against French International Criminal Court (ICC) Judge Nicolas Guillou encapsulate this phenomenon. As Guillou articulated regarding his isolation, the punishment transcends traditional legal boundaries: "you are effectively blacklisted by much of the world's banking system" (Le Monde, 2025). This intentional exclusion of an international legal figure from fundamental financial transacting transforms modern exile into an infrastructural blockade. These high-profile cases illustrate a broader truth: traditional legal or political status cannot bypass infrastructural expulsion.

Accidental Infrastructural Paralysis: Distinct from deliberate weaponization, this structural dependence also reveals itself through accidental logistical failures. During critical infrastructural outages (e.g., the global CrowdStrike IT collapse; Reuters, 2024), individuals experience an involuntary, generalized loss of infrastructural recognition. The scale of dependency ensures that an accidental server crash yields a logistical paralysis comparable in civic effect to targeted exclusion.

Crucially, whether through deliberate weaponization or accidental logistical paralysis, the outcome is a profound loss of infrastructural recognition. An individual's right to life is not legally suspended when they are expelled from a banking network or stranded during a software crash. Therefore, establishing a literal equivalence between this civic paralysis and Giorgio Agamben's (1998) *Homo sacer*—which signifies "bare life" under direct biopolitical threat of death—would constitute a technical misalignment. However, the concept serves as a highly functional heuristic analogy to analyze the limit situation of infrastructural vulnerability. The absolute isolation experienced by an international judge cut off from global banking, a head of state erased from the digital public square, or a citizen unable to process payments during a server crash demonstrates a shared reality. Contemporary civic existence is radically conditioned by technological access. To be completely expelled from the infrastructure is, therefore, to be reduced to a condition approaching infrastructural bare life.

5. Conclusion and the 'Right to Opacity' as a Normative Horizon

This study has theorized the shifting context of contemporary digital domination through the concepts of the Onopticon and Homovictimus. While individuals' active resistance practices and the pragmatic benefits of systemic inclusion cannot be dismissed, it is evident that mere personal privacy practices remain entirely insufficient against the compulsory inclusion generated by complex

infrastructures. By examining how infrastructural dependence subjugates subjects ranging from marginalized "credit invisibles" to the apex of political and judicial authority, a genuine ontological defense requires the construction of a three-tiered structural armor based on Édouard Glissant's philosophical legacy of the right to opacity:

At the Individual Level: The subject's right to radical objection and "unreadability" against statistical profiling and algorithmic predestination.

At the Technical Level: While the source codes of systems (transparency) must be opened to public scrutiny, the subject's personal data (opacity) must be cryptographically shielded from the infrastructure utilizing architectures such as "zero-knowledge proofs" (ZKPs).

At the Political Level: Decoupling biometric, financial, and communicative systems from being absolute "infrastructural prerequisites" for fundamental life rights (e.g., credit, food access, civic mobility), and legally safeguarding functional analog alternatives to prevent both infrastructural weaponization and accidental excommunication.

Therefore, true freedom should not be sought in the impossible fantasy of remaining completely outside the system, but in the structural and institutional interventions designed to constrain the epistemic architecture of infrastructural sovereignty.

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