

From Heterogeneous Geography to the Homogenisation of the Subject: The Ontology of Human Conquest

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Author's Note

Readers engaging with Hakki Tan's recent articles - particularly with concepts such as Onopticon, Homovictimus, and the Reality Paradigm - are advised to undertake retrospective readings of the author's earlier work. These concepts should not be treated as isolated theoretical terms, but as elements of a broader conceptual framework developed across a longer intellectual trajectory.

Abstract

This article examines the historical and ontological transformation of conquest from territorial expansion to the infrastructural organisation of human existence itself. Classical forms of conquest primarily operated through the occupation, administration, and partitioning of heterogeneous geographies. Contemporary forms of power, by contrast, increasingly target the subject as an operational field to be measured, classified, optimised, and rendered calculable through algorithmic infrastructures. The article argues that contemporary digital systems no longer merely regulate behaviour externally; they increasingly pre-structure the horizon of possible action through platforms, interfaces, recommendation systems, risk scoring architectures, and predictive infrastructures.

To conceptualise this transformation, the article develops the concepts of Onopticon and Homovictimus. Onopticon refers not simply to a regime of surveillance, but to an infrastructural reality paradigm that organises the conditions under which reality becomes visible, actionable, and computationally processable. Homovictimus designates the contemporary subject whose desires, affects, resistance, and even attempts at withdrawal are recursively translated into operational value within systems of visibility and optimisation.

The article further argues that contemporary homogenisation does not primarily occur through the elimination of difference, but through the translation of all differences into a shared operational grammar of calculation, prediction, routing, optimisation, and exploitation. Simultaneously, the article insists that the conquest of human existence does not abolish territorial conquest; rather, digital infrastructures remain materially dependent upon extractive geographies, energy systems, rare-earth minerals, data centres, and global labour asymmetries.

Finally, the article introduces opacity not as a liberal demand for privacy, nor as a technical programme capable of fully escaping digital infrastructures, but as an ontological remainder that

cannot be completely translated into operational logic.

Keywords: Onopticon; Homovictimus; Reality Paradigm; algorithmic governance; infrastructural power; digital colonialism; surveillance capitalism; operational grammar; opacity; transhumanism; predictive systems; platform capitalism; digital labour; Global South; ecological limits; model collapse; data extraction; control society.

1. Introduction: The Exhaustion of Spatial Frontiers and the Direction of New Conquest

For centuries, political power was primarily analysed through the conquest, administration, and partitioning of territory. Empires expanded through geography; sovereignty materialised through borders, roads, fortifications, logistical networks, taxation systems, and military infrastructures. Classical political history was therefore inseparable from the organisation of space.

Yet contemporary power increasingly operates through a different axis. The issue is no longer merely the expansion of territory, but the infrastructural organisation of human existence itself. As the geographical frontier approaches saturation, conquest mutates rather than disappears. The strategic object of power shifts from land to subjectivity; from territorial occupation to operational integration.

This article argues that we are witnessing an ontological transition from the conquest of heterogeneous geography to the homogenisation of the subject through algorithmic infrastructures. Contemporary systems no longer primarily seek to prohibit action through direct coercion. Rather, they increasingly pre-structure the conditions under which action becomes possible, visible, measurable, and optimisable.

When territory is conquered, borders change. When human existence is conquered, reality itself is rewritten.

The argument developed here should not be understood as a conventional privacy critique or a technological dystopia. Nor does it attempt to provide a completed empirical inventory of digital systems. The phenomenon under analysis remains historically unfinished. This article therefore proceeds as a structural and ontological diagnosis of an emerging reality paradigm.

2. Territorial Conquest and the Heterogeneity of Geography

Classical conquest always encountered resistance from geography itself. Mountains, rivers, climate systems, local languages, religious structures, and regional customs produced friction against imperial standardisation.

Territorial domination therefore required flexible and asymmetrical administrative arrangements. Empires historically governed through layered sovereignty: provinces, protectorates, dominions, tributary systems, autonomous zones, and intermediary elites. Power could never operate everywhere with identical intensity.

However, territorial conquest was never purely spatial. Colonial systems also sought to reorganise subjectivity itself through missionary institutions, disciplinary education, forced

assimilation, linguistic restructuring, and behavioural regulation. The conquest of the Americas, missionary schooling systems, and colonial civilising projects all targeted forms of interiority long before digital infrastructures emerged.

The contemporary transformation should therefore not be interpreted as the invention of human conquest, but as a mutation in its scale, operational speed, infrastructural depth, and technical architecture.

3. From Surveillance to the Reality Paradigm: Onopticon

Classical disciplinary systems organised visibility.

The Panopticon made the subject observable.

Onopticon goes further.

It does not simply observe behaviour. It pre-organises the horizon within which behaviour becomes possible.

Recommendation systems, interface architectures, predictive analytics, ranking systems, navigation systems, behavioural scoring, and algorithmic filtering do not merely present neutral information. They shape the operational field through which decisions emerge.

Platforms no longer govern primarily by forbidding.

They govern by arranging probability.

Onopticon is therefore not merely a surveillance mechanism. It is a reality paradigm.

The subject is not only watched. The world in which the subject acts is formatted in advance.

Search engines organise visibility. Social platforms organise relevance. Recommendation systems organise desire. Risk architectures organise institutional trust. Predictive systems organise anticipation.

The contemporary subject increasingly inhabits pre-structured environments in which possible trajectories are ranked before action takes place.

4. Homogenisation Through Operational Grammar

Contemporary homogenisation does not primarily occur through making everyone identical.

Digital infrastructures frequently preserve - and even intensify - visible difference. Platforms encourage personalised feeds, individualised recommendations, customised identities, and niche communities. The system therefore appears radically heterogeneous at the level of experience.

Yet this heterogeneity operates inside a shared operational grammar.

Differences are translated into the same operational grammar:

Measure.
Classify.
Predict.
Route.
Optimise.
Exploit.

Cultural specificity becomes operational input. Personality becomes profile architecture. Attention becomes behavioural surplus.

Thus homogenisation occurs not at the level of content, but at the level of process.

Simultaneously, Onopticon fragments shared reality itself. Echo chambers, algorithmic micro-publics, filter bubbles, conspiratorial clusters, and personalised informational ecosystems increasingly dissolve common epistemic ground.

However, fragmentation is not the opposite of homogenisation.

These fragmented realities continue to operate through the same infrastructural logic: they are measured, classified, predicted, routed, optimised, and exploited. The system homogenises operationally while fragmenting experientially.

5. Stratified Sovereignty and Infrastructural Power

Contemporary power cannot be reduced either to the nation-state or to private platforms alone.

Sovereignty increasingly operates through strata of infrastructural dependency: states, corporations, cloud architectures, financial systems, data brokers, logistics networks, security apparatuses, and regulatory regimes.

The term strata is crucial here. These formations do not merely sit beside one another as separate layers. They interlock through contracts, technical dependencies, data-sharing arrangements, procurement systems, security partnerships, regulatory concessions, and infrastructural lock-in.

This does not imply seamless coordination.

Onopticon is not a perfectly unified centre. It is a contested infrastructural field.

States, technology corporations, platforms, intelligence systems, and regulatory bodies frequently conflict with one another over data governance, security, commercial interests, platform regulation, and geopolitical control.

These conflicts still unfold within the same operational architecture: calculability, access management, visibility modulation, risk modelling, and infrastructural dependency.

Contemporary sovereignty becomes distributed, stratified, and partially opaque.

The subject increasingly struggles to identify a singular locus of accountability.

6. Material Infrastructure and Digital Colonialism

The mythology of the cloud conceals the material foundations of digital infrastructures.

Algorithmic systems require extraction.

Data centres depend upon enormous quantities of energy and water. Artificial intelligence infrastructures rely upon rare-earth minerals, lithium, cobalt, semiconductor supply chains, fibre-optic cables, logistics corridors, and planetary-scale industrial systems.

The conquest of geography has therefore not disappeared.

Rather, territorial extraction increasingly functions as the infrastructural condition for the conquest of subjectivity.

Microchip geopolitics surrounding Taiwan, cobalt extraction in the Democratic Republic of Congo, lithium frontiers in South America, undersea cable infrastructures, and platform-controlled logistical systems reveal the persistence of territorial power beneath digital abstraction.

This process also produces asymmetrical forms of digital labour.

The Global South increasingly supplies invisible forms of infrastructural labour: content moderation, data annotation, platform logistics, click work, mineral extraction, and outsourced computational maintenance. While affluent users encounter algorithmic personalisation as convenience and optimisation, large segments of labour populations experience algorithmic governance through intensified operational discipline.

For warehouse workers, delivery drivers, platform labourers, and extractive workers, digital governance often resembles an intensified neo-Taylorism governed by metrics, time compression, and behavioural tracking.

Human conquest therefore unfolds unevenly across class and geography.

7. Homovictimus: The Capturable and Victimised Subject

Homovictimus should not be understood simply as a passive victim.

Nor should the term be reduced to capturability alone.

It names a subject who is both captured and victimised: harmed not primarily by exclusion, but by compulsory operational inclusion.

The concept designates a broader condition of capture, exposure, and dispossession.

The contemporary subject increasingly becomes valuable insofar as emotional life, behaviour, resistance, loneliness, outrage, preference, and social interaction can be rendered computationally processable.

Desire becomes recommendation input.

Anger becomes engagement.

Loneliness becomes market.

Resistance becomes visibility.

Even sabotage frequently generates operational traces.

This does not mean that all resistance is meaningless, nor that systems function perfectly. Algorithmic infrastructures regularly malfunction, hallucinate, misclassify, collapse, and generate unintended consequences.

Yet contemporary systems possess a remarkable capacity to metabolise behavioural traces into operational value.

Homovictimus therefore refers less to absolute victimhood than to the contemporary condition of persistent capturability and structural injury.

The term Homovictimus deliberately combines the figure of the human with the condition of being victimised. Its emphasis is not only on capture, but on the injury produced when life is made continuously available for operational processing.

8. Technical Opacity, Ontological Opacity, and the Limits of the Machine

Technical opacity and ontological opacity must be distinguished.

Encryption systems, anonymous infrastructures, zero-knowledge proofs, adversarial machine learning, and data poisoning techniques may obstruct specific forms of visibility. Such techniques can create friction, blindness, and operational instability within digital systems.

However, Onopticon frequently operates not through semantic interpretation alone, but through rhythms, relationality, metadata, behavioural patterns, and probabilistic structures.

Technical concealment therefore does not automatically produce ontological exteriority.

At the same time, contemporary systems are not omnipotent.

Artificial intelligence systems regularly exhibit contextual blindness, model collapse, hallucination, infrastructural fragility, and computational overload.

Not all data becomes operationally valuable.

Large quantities of contemporary data infrastructures produce noise, entropy, storage burden, dark data, and unusable informational excess.

The machine encounters limits.

Moreover, ecological and thermodynamic constraints impose additional boundaries upon endless computational expansion. Infinite optimisation confronts finite planetary infrastructures.

Onopticon therefore remains powerful but not absolute.

9. The Transhumanist Threshold

The contemporary conquest of subjectivity increasingly intersects with transhumanist discourse.

Human optimisation is no longer framed exclusively through discipline or coercion, but through enhancement, augmentation, efficiency, wellness, cognitive performance, predictive medicine, biometric integration, and neuro-technological adaptation.

The subject is encouraged to become interoperable with technical systems.

This threshold marks a significant transformation in the logic of power.

The objective is no longer simply obedience, but optimisation.

Human capacities themselves become infrastructural variables.

In this sense, transhumanism should not be understood merely as a technological future scenario, but as an emerging operational logic in which biological life increasingly becomes integrated into systems of measurement, enhancement, prediction, and optimisation.

10. Class, Ecology, and Event

Contemporary digital power does not operate uniformly.

The infrastructural experience of affluent users differs profoundly from that of precarious labour populations.

For upper and managerial classes, algorithmic systems often appear as convenience, personalisation, optimisation, and frictionless experience.

For precarious workers, platform labourers, warehouse employees, delivery drivers, and extractive workers, digital infrastructures frequently manifest as continuous measurement, behavioural compression, operational discipline, and temporal control.

The conquest of subjectivity is therefore stratified.

Furthermore, digital infrastructures remain ecologically bounded.

The fantasy of limitless computation collides with energy systems, water dependency, extraction regimes, and planetary thermodynamic limits.

The machine does not float above material reality.

Finally, no predictive system fully eliminates contingency.

Pandemics, wars, infrastructural collapse, uprisings, ecological disasters, black swan events, and radical political ruptures expose the incompleteness of algorithmic anticipation.

Onopticon may structure probability, but it cannot fully abolish historical unpredictability.

11. Opacity as Ontological Remainder

Opacity should not be reduced to a liberal demand for privacy.

Nor should it be romanticised as a complete exit from infrastructural systems.

Any fully codified programme of resistance risks re-entering operational logic as measurable behaviour.

Opacity instead designates a remainder.

It refers to the dimension of existence that resists total operational translation.

The human subject may become increasingly measurable, predictable, and computationally integrated, yet never entirely reducible to infrastructural formatting.

This remainder is neither purity nor transcendence.

It is the persistent incompleteness of operational capture.

The issue is therefore not whether the subject can stand fully outside the system.

Rather, the issue concerns the impossibility of total translation.

Conclusion

The contemporary historical transformation examined in this article should not be understood as the disappearance of territorial conquest, but as its mutation into a broader infrastructural regime targeting human existence itself.

The conquest of geography increasingly functions as the material foundation for the conquest of subjectivity.

Contemporary power no longer merely disciplines bodies or surveils populations. It increasingly organises the operational conditions through which reality becomes actionable, visible, calculable, and governable.

Onopticon names this transformation.

Homovictimus names the condition of life emerging within it.

Yet the contemporary infrastructure of power remains incomplete.

Its systems produce fragmentation alongside homogenisation, overload alongside optimisation, and operational visibility alongside zones of irreducibility.

When territory is conquered, borders change. When human existence is conquered, reality itself is rewritten.

But this rewriting is never complete.

The human subject, social conflict, ecological finitude, technical entropy, and historical contingency continue to interrupt the dream of total operational capture.

The future of political and philosophical thought may therefore depend less upon fantasies of complete escape than upon understanding the unstable limits of operational capture itself.

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