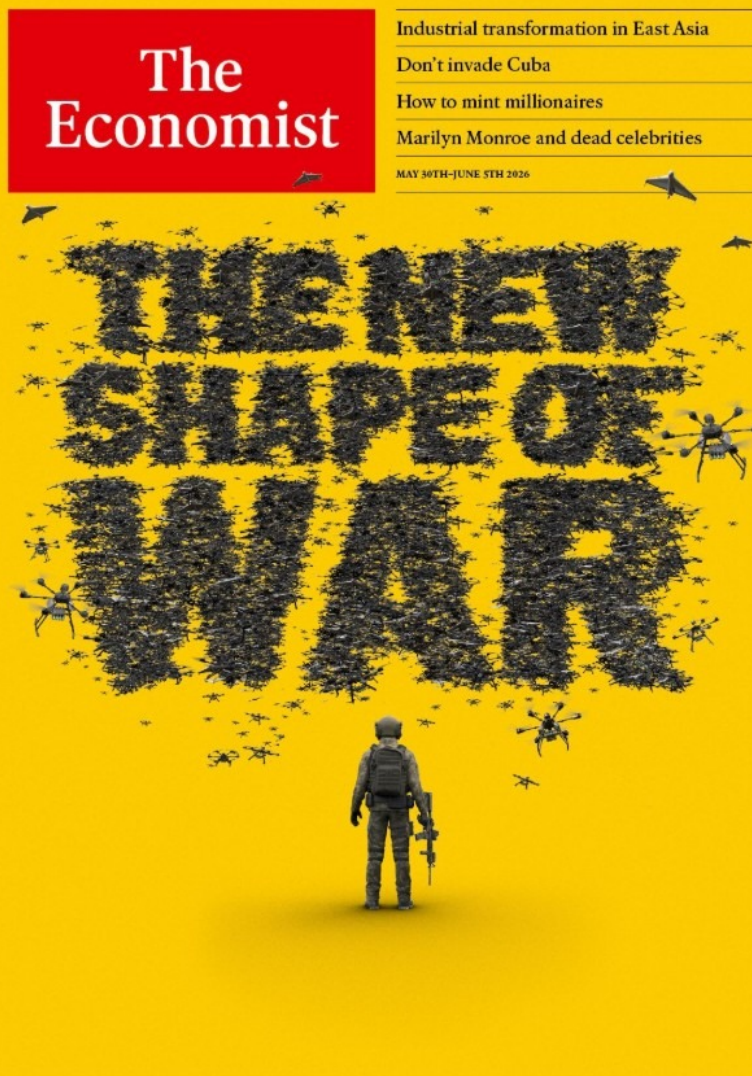




THEORETICAL ARTICLE

The Sociology of the Onopticon

Vertical Socialisation, Compulsory Inclusion and Homovictimus

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“My paradigm is not a paradigm of the Truth; it is a paradigm of Reality.”

Figure 1. *The Economist*, 'The Eye War', cover image, 30 May-5 June 2026. The image is used here as a cited object of critical and academic analysis; all rights remain with *The Economist*. The associated leader argues that smart military technologies make war a less rational choice, though this article contests the direction of that argument.

Abstract

This article argues that contemporary power can no longer be understood merely as a regime of surveillance, discipline, behavioural modulation or data extraction. Its more decisive form lies elsewhere: in the technical pre-structuring of the conditions under which human beings access the world. I call this regime the **Onopticon**. The Onopticon does not simply observe subjects after they act; it organises, in advance, the conditions under which they may be recognised, ranked, processed, delayed, financed, treated, targeted, sanctioned or refused.

The article develops **vertical socialisation** as the everyday social form of the Onopticon. Vertical socialisation refers to the increasing dependence of social life on asymmetrical infrastructures: state portals, payment systems, health platforms, welfare databases, labour-management systems, credit scoring, border technologies, sanctions lists and military targeting interfaces. The point is not that all such systems are identical. It is that they increasingly impose the infrastructural conditions under which individuals can appear as intelligible, legitimate and actionable subjects.

The article proposes five mechanisms through which this process operates: **translation, classification, thresholding, interface mediation and exit cost**. These mechanisms are not merely administrative procedures. They are forms of pre-decisional reality-production. The subject is not only processed inside a system; the world that confronts the subject is itself processed in advance.

The central subject-form of this article is **Homovictimus**. Homovictimus is not the excluded victim standing outside the system. It is the subject who must enter the system in order to live, work, receive care, make payments, travel, be recognised or appeal. Yet this subject is admitted only in a form that can be processed. The distinctive violence of contemporary power is therefore not simple exclusion, but **compulsory inclusion**: the subject is taken inside, but only as data, risk, profile, eligibility case, payment object, performance unit, sanctioned entity or targetable trace.

The article applies this framework to labour regimes, welfare infrastructures, financial sanctions and military technologies. It reads *The Economist's* 'The Eye War' cover as a visual condensation of the Onopticon in war: a regime in which the central question is no longer simply who fires, but who is rendered visible, classified and targetable. It also analyses Cuba's suspension of Visa and Mastercard transactions and the US sanctions imposed on ICC judge Nicolas Guillou as instances of a **financial Onopticon**, in which payment infrastructures determine who may participate in economic circulation.

Keywords: Onopticon; Homovictimus; compulsory inclusion; vertical socialisation; financial Onopticon; infrastructural imposition; managerial processability; strategic opacity; conditional horizontality; labour regime; sanctions; payment infrastructures; drone warfare.

Conceptual Set

This article develops a conceptual vocabulary for analysing contemporary power as a regime of pre-structured access, compulsory inclusion, infrastructural imposition and managerial processability. The following concepts form the analytical core of the argument.

Concept	Definition	Analytical function
Onopticon	A regime that does not merely observe subjects, but pre-structures the conditions under which they may access, appear, act, pay, appeal, be classified or be targeted.	Names the broader regime of power.
Vertical socialisation	The organisation of social life through asymmetrical infrastructures such as welfare systems, health platforms, payment networks, labour-management systems, sanctions lists and targeting interfaces.	Names the everyday social form of the Onopticon.
Infrastructural imposition	The compulsory routing of social life through technical, legal, financial, medical, administrative and digital systems that determine access, recognition, payment, care, work, appeal or mobility. Not every mediation is an imposition; mediation becomes imposition when access is compulsory, alternatives are weak, exit is costly and recognition depends on processability.	Explains how infrastructure ceases to be a neutral mediator and becomes a condition of existence.
Compulsory inclusion	The condition in which subjects are not simply excluded, but required to enter systems in order to live, work, receive care, pay, travel or be recognised.	Replaces simple exclusion as the central logic of contemporary domination.
Managerial processability	The capacity of a subject to be rendered intelligible to institutions as data, risk, eligibility, performance, sanction status, transaction object or target.	Explains how the subject becomes administratively actionable.
Homovictimus	The subject compelled to enter systems in order to live, yet admitted only in a form that can be processed, classified, delayed, sanctioned, financed, targeted or refused.	Names the subject-form produced by compulsory inclusion.
Translation	The conversion of lived experience into categories recognised by the system.	First mechanism of infrastructural power.
Classification	The sorting of subjects into actionable categories such as risk, eligibility, score, cost, sanction status or target.	Produces institutional legibility.
Thresholding	The tying of access to documents, scores, status, verification, payment permission or procedural conditions.	Determines who may pass and who is delayed, blocked or refused.
Interface mediation	The organisation of relations through screens, forms, dashboards, terminals, platforms, portals or targeting systems.	Explains how the world appears through technical filters.
Exit cost	The practical cost of leaving a system on which one has become dependent.	Explains why inclusion becomes functionally compulsory.
Conditional horizontality	The persistence of human bonds under conditions set by vertical infrastructures.	Avoids the false claim that horizontal relations disappear completely.
Strategic opacity	The limited capacity of subjects to resist full visibility, calculability and processability.	Names a residual form of resistance.
Financial Onopticon	The determination of economic circulation through payment systems, banks, card networks, sanctions, compliance databases and transaction infrastructures.	Extends the Onopticon to finance and sanctions.
Negative inclusion	The condition in which a subject is included in a system as a prohibited, risky or non-transactable entity.	Explains sanctions-based inclusion without recognition.

The Onopticon names the regime. Infrastructural imposition names its mode of operation. Vertical socialisation names its everyday social form. The five mechanisms describe its process. Compulsory inclusion names its dominant logic. Homovictimus names the subject it produces. Strategic opacity names the residual possibility of resistance.

1. Introduction: From Surveillance to Pre-Processed Life

Contemporary power is still capable of watching, disciplining, nudging and extracting data. Yet these familiar terms no longer reach the deepest level of its operation. The more consequential transformation lies in the fact that the conditions under which one may access the world are increasingly prepared before one acts.

The subject today is not merely observed. It is pre-configured. It encounters services, institutions, welfare systems, payment networks, labour regimes, border controls, platforms and military environments through already organised technical passages. Before the subject speaks, submits, requests, travels, pays or resists, the field in which that action becomes intelligible has often already been structured.

This article names that regime the **Onopticon**. The Onopticon is not a digital continuation of the Panopticon. The Panopticon centres on visibility, discipline and internalised self-regulation. The Onopticon centres on access, eligibility, pre-classification and the structuring of possible worlds. Its guiding question is not “Who is being watched?” but rather: **Who may access what, under which conditions, through which interface, and at what cost?**

The article’s contribution is to locate this regime sociologically. The Onopticon is not presented as a purely abstract theory of sovereignty. Its everyday social form is what I call **vertical socialisation**: the increasing organisation of human relations through infrastructures that are asymmetrical, opaque, standardising, compulsory and costly to exit.

The primary question is therefore no longer simply:

Do people still relate to one another?

The more precise question is:

Through which infrastructures are those relations made possible, legible and actionable?

In this article, the “processed subject” does not refer to a psychological type. It refers to an infrastructural position. The processed subject is the applicant, patient, worker, claimant, traveller, debtor, target, customer, sanctioned person or data profile whose social existence depends on passing through a series of technical and institutional filters.

The sharper formulation is this: the human being is not merely asked to exist, but to become processable in order to be recognised.

2. The Onopticon: Sovereignty as the Structuring of the Field of Decision

Vertical socialisation is the everyday social form of the Onopticon. The Onopticon, by contrast, names the broader horizon of power in which that social form becomes intelligible.

In the Onopticon, power does not merely decide. It organises the world that will later appear before decision-makers. A legal decision may still formally belong to a court, a caseworker, a commander, a state agency or a human official. Yet the field of decision - what appears as relevant, risky, urgent, suspicious, eligible, targetable or sanctionable - has already been arranged by technical infrastructures.

This shifts the terrain of power. The central issue is no longer only prohibition, exploitation, surveillance or algorithmic error. The deeper problem is that reality itself is increasingly formatted before it reaches the site of decision.

In this sense, infrastructural imposition is not a sociology of tools, but a sociology of compulsory passage and pre-decisional reality-production.

3. Homovictimus: The Subject of Compulsory Inclusion

Homovictimus does not name a passive victim, nor a merely psychological figure of suffering. It names the subject produced by contemporary infrastructural power: a subject not primarily abandoned outside the system, but rendered vulnerable by being compelled to enter it.

The decisive mechanism is not simple exclusion. It is **compulsory inclusion**. In many domains, the modern subject cannot remain outside the system. To receive health care, earn wages, apply for welfare, make payments, hold a bank account, travel, use digital identity, appear on platforms or submit an appeal, the subject must enter specific infrastructures. Yet this inclusion is not neutral. One is admitted only insofar as one can be rendered legible to the system.

The core of Homovictimus is therefore this:

The subject is not thrown outside; the subject is admitted only after being converted into a processable form.

Within this process, the subject appears not as a whole person, but as data, risk, eligibility, score, status, application, account, payment object, sanctions profile, health record, performance unit or target category. The person is included; but inclusion is purchased at the cost of fragmentation.

Homovictimus is not powerless in the simple sense. It may act rationally. It may open a bank account, use a health platform, apply for assistance, comply with a performance system or submit identity documents. Yet the very rationality of this participation exposes it to asymmetrical rules, opaque classifications, technical thresholds and high exit costs.

Homovictimus is related to Agamben's account of bare life and inclusive exclusion, but it departs from it in a crucial respect. In Agamben, sovereign power includes by excluding through law. In Homovictimus, the knot is

more infrastructural: payment systems, digital identity, welfare portals, health platforms, labour-management systems, sanctions lists and security networks. Formal rights may remain intact. Yet when the infrastructural passages that allow those rights to be exercised are closed, slowed or reclassified, the subject may be unable to move, pay, appeal, work or be recognised.

Homovictimus is therefore the subject of infrastructural imposition: not excluded from the system, but compelled to enter it in a form that can be translated, classified, thresholded, interfaced and made costly to exit.

Homovictimus emerges when four conditions converge:

Condition	Explanation
Compulsory entry	The subject must enter a system in order to participate in social, economic or institutional life.
Conversion into processable form	The subject is recognised only as data, risk, eligibility, status, performance, sanctions profile or case file.
High exit cost	Leaving the system entails loss of care, income, movement, rights, payments, visibility or security.
Residual individual responsibility	The system processes the subject, but errors, failures and risks are returned to the individual as responsibility.

The relationship may be put succinctly:

The Onopticon prepares the world; Homovictimus is the subject compelled to enter that prepared world in processable form.

4. Infrastructural Imposition and Pre-Decisional Reality

Infrastructural imposition refers to the condition in which human relations are not merely mediated by technical, legal, financial, medical, administrative, digital or labour-management systems, but compelled to pass through them in order to become recognisable, actionable or legitimate. It includes application forms, welfare eligibility systems, credit scores, patient records, sanctions lists, payment networks, labour contracts, performance dashboards, targeting interfaces and identity platforms.

Not every mediation is an imposition. Mediation becomes imposition when access is compulsory, alternatives are weak, exit is costly and recognition depends on processability. Where such conditions hold, infrastructure no longer functions as a neutral channel. It becomes a compulsory passage.

When a person is categorised as “eligible”, “risky”, “low-performing”, “sanctioned”, “creditworthy”, “dependent”, “suspicious”, “targetable” or “non-compliant”, the effect is not merely descriptive. The classification shapes which door opens, which payment is processed, which claim is delayed, which appeal is available, which service is denied and which body becomes actionable.

The Onopticon operates through infrastructural imposition: it does not simply observe the subject, but compels the subject to enter pre-structured passages in order to appear at all.

Infrastructural imposition therefore operates as a field of sovereignty:

The decision may appear to belong to the human agent; yet the world in which that decision is made has already been prepared by infrastructure.

5. Five Mechanisms of the Onopticon

The Onopticon operates through five recurrent mechanisms: **translation, classification, thresholding, interface mediation and exit cost**.

Mechanism	Sociological operation	Onoptic function
Translation	Lived experience must be converted into categories recognised by the system.	Life is made technically legible.
Classification	The subject is sorted as risk, score, eligibility, cost, performance, sanctions status or target.	The subject is placed into action-able clusters.
Thresholding	Access depends on documents, scores, records, status, contracts, verification or payment permission.	Vital passages are tied to technical conditions.
Interface mediation	Relations are conducted through screens, forms, platforms, dashboards, terminals or algorithmic systems.	The field of decision is prepared by the interface.
Exit cost	Leaving the system remains formally possible but practically costly.	Inclusion becomes compulsory through dependency.

These mechanisms do not always unfold in a fixed order. In welfare, translation may come first. In finance, classification may precede self-description. In labour, contractual status may pre-structure the worker's experience. In war, interface mediation and classification can immediately become matters of life and death.

6. The Interface as a Filter of Reality

The interface is not merely a surface of contact. It is a filter of reality.

A doctor encounters the patient not only face to face, but through medical records, risk panels, appointment systems and diagnostic protocols. A welfare officer encounters the claimant through eligibility fields, income declarations and documentary insufficiencies. A bank encounters the customer through credit scoring, compliance screening and transaction history. A manager encounters the worker through performance dashboards, contract type and disciplinary records. A military operator encounters the battlefield through sensors, target lists, maps and screens.

The interface therefore does not simply mediate relations. It pre-orders the world in which relations become possible.

The human being may still decide. But the world that appears before that decision may already have been technically composed.

7. Infrastructural Reason: Processing the Subject and the World

Infrastructural reason is the technical-managerial logic that treats human beings primarily as cases, profiles, users, applicants, risk scores, transaction objects, targets, costs or performance units.

Yet its operation extends further:

Infrastructural reason does not only process the subject; it processes the world that will confront the subject.

The more fundamental questions are therefore not only:

- How is the subject classified?
- Which data are treated as valid?
- Which behaviours are treated as risky?

They are also:

- Which world appears before the decision-maker?
- Which reality becomes visible?
- Which relation becomes suspicious?
- Which payment gateway is closed?
- Which body becomes targetable?
- Which event becomes actionable?

Infrastructure is not a neutral tool. It is a logic for producing the world.

8. Vertical Socialisation

Vertical socialisation refers to the increasing dependence of social existence on asymmetrical infrastructures. It does not imply that the state, market, hospital, platform, payment network and military interface are identical. They are not. A hospital protocol is not the same as a social media algorithm; a welfare application is not the same as a drone-targeting system; a credit score is not the same as a labour contract.

Yet these systems converge at a structural level:

- the subject becomes visible to the system without the system becoming equally visible to the subject;
- lived experience must be translated into system-readable form;
- behaviour is processed as score, risk, document, cost, eligibility, performance, sanctions status or target;
- human relations are routed through forms, screens, platforms, professional languages, payment systems or targeting interfaces;
- exit from one system usually entails dependency on another;
- the space for ambiguity, opacity and non-calculability is narrowed.

Vertical socialisation is therefore the everyday sociological appearance of the Onopticon.

9. Compulsory Inclusion: Not Exclusion, but Processable Admission

The mature form of the Onopticon is not simple exclusion. It is compulsory inclusion.

Health systems provide a clear example. Their expansion is usually justified through care, coordination, efficiency and modernisation rather than violence. The subject is not punished; it is admitted. Yet the conditions of admission are determined by platforms, records, protocols and risk classifications. To receive care, one must enter the system. Once inside, one appears according to the system's logic.

Compulsory inclusion is not benevolent inclusion. To be admitted into a system does not always mean to be recognised. Often it means to become processable. The subject enters the health system as patient record, the banking system as risk profile, the workplace as performance unit, welfare as eligibility file, payment infrastructure as transaction object, and the battlefield as targetable trace.

The subject is not kept outside. The subject is brought inside - but only in a form that the system can process.

This is where Homovictimus emerges.

10. Conditional Horizontality

Horizontal socialisation refers to relatively direct, reciprocal and situated relations among people: family, friendship, neighbourhood, love, common labour, unions, care networks and collective struggle.

Yet the horizontal is not inherently emancipatory. Families can suffocate; communities can exclude; unions can bureaucratised; peer groups can enforce norms violently. The issue is therefore not whether a relation is horizontal in itself, but whether it remains reciprocal, contestable, context-sensitive and open to exit.

In contemporary societies, horizontality rarely exists in pure form. The more accurate term is **conditional horizontality**: people still build real relations, but the visibility, circulation, durability and recognition of those relations are increasingly conditioned by vertical infrastructures.

Form	Definition	Examples
Functional horizontality	Social ties tolerated or encouraged by the system.	Volunteering, user communities, managed care networks.
Residual horizontality	Ties not fully absorbed by the system.	Friendship, kinship support, informal workplace solidarity.
Counter-horizontality	Relations that use or reverse system tools in order to contest them.	Unions, strikes, legal campaigns, platform-based protest.

Resistance is fragile, but not absent. Conditional horizontality can support, compensate for or challenge vertical systems.

11. Labour Regimes and the Institutional Contraction of Horizontal Solidarity

One of the most measurable domains of vertical socialisation is labour. The workplace is a major site of horizontal relation. Yet workplace horizontality is not spontaneous. It is institutionalised through trade unions, collective bargaining, workplace representation, strike rights, professional associations and secure employment.

Over the last half-century, many of these institutions have weakened. OECD/AIAS data indicate that average trade union density across the OECD fell from roughly 30 per cent in 1985 to around 15 per cent in 2023/24, while collective bargaining coverage fell from 47 per cent to 33.6 per cent over the same broad period. This is not merely a fall in membership. It indicates a contraction of workers' capacity to produce collective voice within the workplace (OECD, 2025a).

In the United States, the union membership rate stood at 10.0 per cent in 2025 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026). In Brazil, IBGE reports that unionisation fell from 16.1 per cent in 2012 to 8.4 per cent in 2023, before rising slightly to 8.9 per cent in 2024 (IBGE, 2025). In Turkey, May 2025 labour statistics show a sharp public-private split: 76.63 per cent of workers in the public sector were union members, compared with 7.15 per cent in the private sector (Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, 2025).

From the perspective of vertical socialisation, de-unionisation is not only an economic shift. It is a transformation in the form through which the worker becomes socially and institutionally legible. The worker increasingly confronts problems through individual performance review, human-resources procedure, contract status, disciplinary process, payroll records or litigation, rather than through collective bargaining or workplace representation.

The outsourced worker as Homovictimus

Consider the outsourced cleaner in a public institution. The worker is materially present in the institution, maintains its daily operation and contributes to the continuity of public service. Yet legally and administratively the worker may not be recognised as part of the public workforce. Recognition depends less on labour performed than on subcontract, tender, payroll system and service specification.

Mechanism	Outsourced labour
Translation	Labour becomes service quality, shift fulfilment or contractor obligation.
Classification	The worker appears as subcontracted personnel or cost item, not as public worker.
Thresholding	Rights depend on contract, tender duration and employer status.
Interface mediation	Relations are routed through contractor, payroll, shift schedule and service protocol.
Exit cost	Leaving entails income loss, insecurity and return to similar precarious work.

The outsourced worker is Homovictimus within the labour regime. The worker is not outside the institution, but compulsorily included in it under a form that denies full recognition.

OECD data on public procurement also show the relevance of purchased goods and services within public-sector operation. In 2023, public procurement expenditure across the OECD stood at 12.7 per cent of GDP (OECD, 2025b).

12. Welfare, SyRI and the Dutch Childcare Benefits Scandal

Welfare is not merely a regime of domination. It can protect individuals from family coercion, community violence, market exposure and economic desperation. Yet welfare has a second face: in order to be protected, the subject must be defined, documented, classified and made eligible.

The Dutch childcare benefits scandal makes this visible. Amnesty International's report *Xenophobic Machines* states that the Dutch tax authorities used an algorithmic decision-making system to create risk profiles of people applying for childcare benefits, with the stated aim of detecting inaccurate or potentially fraudulent applications at an early stage (Amnesty International, 2021).

In this case:

- need is translated into application categories;
- parents are classified through risk profiles;
- assistance is thresholded through eligibility and documentation;
- contestation is routed through letters, forms, digital systems and legal procedures;
- erroneous classification can generate debt, impoverishment and institutional harm.

The parents are not outside the welfare state. They are inside it. Yet their inclusion does not guarantee recognition as rights-bearing citizens. They are processed as eligible or risky applicants.

The SyRI judgment demonstrates that such processes are not inevitable. The District Court of The Hague held that the SyRI legislation did not comply with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, because it failed to strike the fair balance required for a justified interference with private life (Rechtspraak, 2020). Van Bakkum and Zuiderveen Borgesius (2021) analyse the case as a significant early judgment concerning digital welfare fraud detection and fundamental rights.

The deeper point is not simply that a bad decision may be made. The issue is that the field of suspicion may be generated before any legal decision is taken.

13. Financial Onopticon: Payment Gateways, Sanctions and Negative Inclusion

The Onopticon does not operate only in welfare, labour, health or war. One of its most severe forms appears in financial infrastructure. To live in contemporary society is not merely to possess legal identity. One must make payments, receive payments, maintain accounts, use cards, book accommodation, access digital services and remain economically mobile.

Payment systems are therefore not merely conveniences. They are infrastructural borders.

Reuters reported that Cuba's central bank announced the suspension of Visa and Mastercard transactions from 6 June 2026, citing US sanctions and the decision of a foreign partner to limit operations. Reuters also reported that such transactions had historically been processed through a foreign bank and Fincimex, which is linked to GAESA (Reuters, 2026).

The significance of this case is not simply that Cuba faces economic pressure. It is that a state may be constrained not through invasion but through payment gateways. The space of economic circulation can be narrowed through the compliance behaviour of global financial infrastructures.

The case of Nicolas Guillou shows the same logic at the individual level. In an interview with *Le Monde*, the French ICC judge sanctioned by the United States stated that sanctions had effectively blacklisted him from much of the world's banking system and had affected access to digital services, banking, payments and reservations (Le Monde, 2025).

Here the subject is not imprisoned or physically attacked. Yet the capacity to circulate as an economic subject is broken.

This requires an extension of Homovictimus. **Financial Homovictimus** is the subject who must participate in payment infrastructures in order to live, work, travel or receive services, but who is rendered non-transactable through sanctions lists, risk scoring, compliance systems or payment-network decisions.

This is not ordinary exclusion. The subject does not become invisible. On the contrary, the subject becomes hyper-visible as a prohibited transaction object. This is **negative inclusion**: the subject is registered inside the system as a person with whom one must not transact.

Mechanism	Cuba	Guillou
Translation	Trade and payment relations are translated into sanctions risk.	Judicial activity is translated into prohibited transaction risk.
Classification	Institutions and intermediaries are placed into risk categories.	The judge is classified as a sanctioned individual.
Thresholding	Payment gateways are restricted or closed.	Banks, platforms and card systems refuse or restrict service.
Interface mediation	Tourism, trade and services depend on payment interfaces.	Hotels, cards, platforms and banks operate through compliance interfaces.
Exit cost	Alternative payment routes are costly and fragile.	Everyday economic circulation is disrupted.

The border of sovereignty is no longer only at the checkpoint or the port. It is also at the card terminal, the payment network, the compliance database and the dollar-conversion infrastructure.

Guillou's wider claim is particularly important: without military, health, financial and digital sovereignty, the rule of law itself becomes difficult to guarantee (Le Monde, 2025). This strengthens the central argument of the article: legal independence is fragile without infrastructural independence.

Contemporary sovereignty determines not only who may be seen, but who may transact. The financial form of the Onopticon removes the subject from circulation without killing it, cuts a state from revenue without occupying it, and turns a judge into a prohibited banking object without formally suspending law.

14. The Eye War: Interface-Mediated Warfare and the Illusion of Smart War

The Economist's 'The Eye War' cover is a visual condensation of the Onopticon in war. The image no longer represents battle through territory, flag, tank or heroic soldier. It represents war as distributed vision: drones, sensors, swarms and targeting infrastructures. The associated leader argues that smart technologies make war a less rational choice (The Economist, 2026a).

The "eye" in the image is not the human eye. It scans, detects, classifies, tracks, correlates and produces targets. The soldier beneath it is no longer the sovereign figure of classical war imagery. The soldier is a body rendered visible, classifiable and targetable by sensor networks and decision-support systems.

Interface-mediated warfare

Interface-mediated warfare is the replacement of direct enemy encounter by sensors, targeting software, drone swarms, data fusion and decision-support interfaces.

Mechanism	Battlefield equivalent
Translation	Human movement is converted into signal.
Classification	A body, vehicle or structure is placed into a risk or target category.
Thresholding	Strikeability is tied to confidence scores, zones, patterns or rules of engagement.
Interface mediation	The operator sees the battlefield through screens, maps, lists and sensor feeds.
Exit cost	Visibility increases vulnerability; invisibility becomes technically difficult.

The question of modern war is therefore not simply who fires. It is:

Who is rendered visible?

And more sharply:

Who is constituted as targetable reality?

Not small actors, but great-power delusion

The Economist's visual intuition is strong, but its argumentative framing is limited. By emphasising the increased defensive capacity of smaller and weaker states, the leader risks displacing the central problem. From the perspective of the Onopticon, smart war is not primarily made irrational because weaker actors can now resist more effectively. It becomes irrational because major powers mistake technical visibility for political understanding.

Smart military technology generates five illusions.

First, it produces a **cost illusion**. Remote and unmanned systems make war appear politically cheaper. They suggest that violence can be externalised, automated or contained without generating the domestic political costs associated with mass mobilisation, casualties or occupation.

Second, it produces a **control illusion**. Seeing more is mistaken for controlling more. Yet sensor density is not political comprehension. The technical eye can expand visibility while narrowing interpretation.

Third, it produces a **temporal illusion**. Faster detection and faster classification compress the time available for political judgement. The decision appears urgent because the interface has already generated an actionable event.

Fourth, it produces **responsibility diffusion**. The decision appears human, but target-production is distributed across sensors, software, intelligence feeds, confidence scores and interface design.

Fifth, it produces **technological arrogance**. The great power confuses the world produced by its technical eye with reality itself.

Smart technology does not simply make war foolish. It enables powerful actors to imagine war as intelligent. The stupidity of war begins when technical vision is mistaken for political reason.

15. Strategic Opacity: The Limited Resistance of Homovictimus

If the Onopticon renders subjects increasingly visible, classifiable and actionable, resistance cannot consist only in demanding transparency from systems. Such transparency remains necessary. One must know how risk scores are produced, how eligibility is determined and how appeals are processed. Yet the subject also requires a counter-right: the right not to be fully transparent to the system.

This is **strategic opacity**.

Strategic opacity is not a romantic defence of invisibility. It does not mean that the subject should always remain undocumented or outside systems. It means that the subject should have some control over what becomes visible, to whom, in which context and for what purpose.

Strategic opacity matters because visibility does not always produce recognition. It may produce care, but it may also produce suspicion. It may produce assistance, but also debt. It may produce access, but also sanction. Homovictimus must become visible in order to be recognised, yet becomes processable once visible.

Strategic opacity is possible under three conditions: alternative channels of relation; collective protection; and limits on the system's appetite for data. It fails when a single system becomes the sole gateway to care, work, payment, welfare, travel or legal recognition.

The resistance of Homovictimus is not to remain outside the system entirely, but to enter without being wholly converted into the system's object.

16. When Infrastructure Becomes Doctrine

At an advanced stage, infrastructure does not merely operate. It justifies itself.

Technical systems often enter social life through the language of efficiency, speed, security, coordination, service quality and cost reduction. Yet after a certain threshold, they cease to appear as tools and begin to present themselves as necessities. They generate not only operations, but doctrines.

This doctrinal language typically speaks in terms of modernisation, integration, risk reduction, scalability, predictability and strategic capacity. These terms appear technical and neutral. Yet they often function as the legitimacy language of infrastructural power. “Efficiency” may conceal what experiences are excluded. “Security” may conceal who is constructed as risk. “Integration” may conceal which passages become compulsory.

Infrastructure becomes doctrine when technical preference speaks as political necessity.

This occurs in three stages:

1. **Instrumentalisation:** a system is introduced to solve a practical problem.
2. **Compulsorisation:** the system becomes the passage through which rights, services, payments or visibility are accessed.
3. **Doctrinalisation:** the system explains not only how it works, but why it is unavoidable.

Its most dangerous feature is that it does not appear as ideology. It appears as realism: “there is no alternative”, “scale requires it”, “data are necessary”, “security demands integration”. Thus contestable political choices are presented as technical necessity.

When infrastructure becomes doctrine, technical preference begins to speak as political destiny.

17. Pain, Documentation and Passage-Dependent Life

Modern institutions do not abolish pain. They alter the conditions under which pain becomes recognisable.

One does not merely suffer; one must document suffering. Illness becomes report, poverty becomes application, insecurity becomes contractual status, violence becomes legal file, unemployment becomes registered case.

The broader transformation is this:

Pain does not merely become documentation; life becomes tied to passages.

These passages include health systems, welfare portals, employment contracts, digital identity, credit scoring, platform visibility, border systems, public procurement, payment networks and security infrastructures.

A person may remain biologically alive while being unable to pass through the systems that make contemporary social life possible. This is the field in which Homovictimus emerges: the living subject whose recognition depends on technical passage.

18. Limits and Research Agenda

This article offers a theoretical-mechanism model rather than a completed empirical study. Its claims require empirical extension across domains.

Future research should examine:

- how welfare needs are translated into administrative categories;

- how health platforms prioritise patients;
- how credit scoring shapes housing and mobility;
- how de-unionisation converts collective workplace experience into individual performance management;
- how outsourcing fragments the identity of public labour;
- how sanctions and payment systems create non-transactable subjects;
- how drone and targeting systems narrow the field of decision in war;
- when strategic opacity is possible;
- when conditional horizontality becomes counter-horizontality;
- whether infrastructure firms operate merely as vendors or as interfaces of sovereignty.

The Onopticon should not be assumed to operate identically everywhere. It should be treated as a research programme.

19. Conclusion: Vertical Socialisation as the Everyday Form of the Onopticon

This article has argued that the transformation of contemporary socialisation should not be understood as the disappearance of horizontal relations, but as their increasing infrastructural conditioning. Vertical socialisation names the condition in which the subject must pass through interfaces, classifications, thresholds, payment systems, performance records and data representations in order to work, receive care, move, pay, appeal or be recognised.

The Onopticon raises this argument to the level of sovereignty. The issue is not only that subjects are processed by systems. It is that the world facing the subject is already processed before it appears.

The Economist's 'The Eye War' cover condenses this logic in the military field. Modern war is shaped not only by firepower, but by the capacity to see first, classify faster and establish a targetable field before the political consequences of violence can be properly thought. Smart war does not abolish stupidity. It can make war appear intelligent enough to lower the threshold of folly.

The Reuters report on Cuba and the *Le Monde* interview with Nicolas Guillou reveal the same logic in financial form. The Onopticon determines not only who can be seen, but who can transact.

The final thesis is therefore this:

Vertical socialisation is the everyday social form of the Onopticon. The human being is no longer merely watched or classified by institutions; the world it may access, the thresholds it must cross, the categories through which it may be recognised, the payments it may make, and the appeals it may submit are increasingly prepared in advance by technical infrastructures.

The harder formulation is this:

The most severe form of contemporary power is not to cast the human being outside, but to compel it inside systems in which it must become processable in order to live.

Homovictimus is the name of this limit-form: the subject not excluded from the system, but compulsorily included in it; converted into processable form; rendered responsible for the risks of that conversion; and made vulnerable precisely through the infrastructures it must enter.

The hardness of contemporary domination lies not in excluding the human being, but in compelling it into systems that make it processable. Homovictimus is the victim-subject of this inclusion.

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