

Paul Cetnarski, Strelka Institute, Moscow, Interviewer

David H. Price, Saint Martin's University, Lacey, Washington

Interviews conducted via Skype.

Interviewed on November 19, 2014

Obey. On the flooding surveillance in times of shrinking privacy.

biography:

David H. Price (born 1960) is an American anthropologist. He studied anthropology at Southern Methodist University, the Texas Christian University and the Tulsa University (Ph.D. 1993), and is a professor of anthropology at St. Martin's University in Lacey, Washington. His primary research area is the history of anthropology, along with various interactions between anthropologists and military/intelligence agencies. /Wikipedia Author of *Weaponizing Anthropology: Social Science in Service of the Militarized State*; *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists*; *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* and many more.

pull-up quotes:

1. 1. "Surveillance in many ways is a voluntary system where people provide data willingly and they don't really even necessarily think about it."
2. 2. "There are examples taking the systems apart, but there has to be kind of crisis, there has to be sort of collapse. And that what freaks out about Snowden revelations, I would have thought that would have been the collapse to do it, but it just keeps going on."
3. 3. "There is this idea of dual-use, so if you are working on an antidote for bacteria or virus, you need to consider that while you're trying to fix something, it is possible that someone can take your results and use them as a weapon. That's what we need to think about surveillance technology."

captions:

- ¥ 001 Security check at Berlin-Schönefeld airport. After 9/11 the personal control changed dramatically, after 13 years it seems that no one remembers how it looked like before. (GNU Free Documentation License) Ralf Roletschek/wikipedia
- ¥ 002 Dr. Richard R. Boone of Wimberley, Texas, interviews local residents of the Baraki Barak District in Afghanistan's Logar province, to find out about their attitudes and daily lives, April 17. Boone is a psychologist and Department of

- Defense civilian deployed to Afghanistan as a member of the Human Terrain System. Boone says that by gathering this information from average people, HTS members can save lives on a civilian-oriented battlefield. (CC) U.S. Army/flickr
- ¥ 003 Taken during the evening protest against the government austerity policies on November 12th in Montreal. Police were unable to make any arrest, not for the lack of trying. The Anonymous is a perfect example of a modern activist group. (CC) Gerry Lauzon/flickr

Interview:

PC: I would like to start from looking through the books that you have written. Is it possible to extract any pattern through Second World War, Cold War or 9/11 events that is coherent for surveillance or privacy phenomena?

DHP: Throughout 20th century there has certainly been a pattern of increased desires to make populations legible, readable and tractable for variety of reasons. In USA electronic surveillance first came out particularly with telephone. Starting from 1920s with the prohibition, there were people smuggling alcohol- bootleggers that were monitored by the telephone. Even though what they were doing was illegal, the American public was outraged that this kind of surveillance could happen. And so it has been a history of law enforcement and government officials weakening public resistance to surveillance.

Let's compare, the software company Lotus 1-2-3 in the mid 1980s announced that they are going to take a digital phonebook and sell it on CD-ROM platters. When story on this came out in Wall Street Journal, the American public got outrage that this is invasion on privacy. However the things that with came Snowden revelation emerged, they were stunning and 20 years ago American government would have fallen if this came out. But now, people got upset for a while, and now it's so of faded into the background radiation of the daily life without people really thinking what it means.

In USA the real change happened very soon after 9/11 attacks. There was enough fear within the American public that was really nurtured by American government, that makes it very easy to get Americans to see this as normal. But at the same time not just the government surveillance, but all global populations are worn down by the convenience of commerce surveillance. All our online lives are commoditized and this is shocking how quickly it happened, how quickly people became known to the fact that we are leaving digital footprints whenever we go online. I see it as a process of socialization just accepting it as a normal thing- that our presence and

habits are being monitored. So that would be sort of big global trend that I see.

PICTURE 001

PC: I would like to go a little bit further and ask about HTS*, the system has found it's origin in comprehensive surveillance of societies. This program, at the beginning was a really promising one, but right now is broadly criticized by American Anthropology Association and by you as well. Could you take us through pros and cons of the idea of mapping society?

*The **Human Terrain System (HTS)** is a United States Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) support program employing personnel from the social science disciplines – such as anthropology, sociology, political science, regional studies and linguistics – to provide military commanders and staff with an understanding of the local population (i.e. the "human terrain") in the regions in which they are deployed. /wikipedia

DHP: I like the connection that are you are making between general concept of surveillance and what HTS project is supposed to be. The public presentation of it is this: there is an anthropologist or trained social scientist that would be imbued within military units, primary in Afghanistan and Iraq. We had a lot of problems with that, it might be that individuals are under surveillance but the entire culture is under surveillance and moreover- there is a serving system for that. It was a flood program from the start, it was ethically flood, it was politically questionable, and the technology for it never quite work in the way they wanted it, because it had this bizarre high-tech dreams that people will be carrying these handheld devices, that would flawlessly connect through satellites, and half-way around the world people will gather the data.

PICTURE 002

PC: Is it possible to transfer that idea to the civic realm? We already experienced such technological shifts in the history.

DHP: This is the way it would be sold to us. If for example our cars have constant tracking technology, we will have one famous case of a someone being kidnapped or going off the road in an ice storm and ending up in a ditch, and if only they would have the tracking technology the baby in the car would have been saved. But I don't really see these as making the world safer in any sense. But that is what we were told, there is this dream that we can develop systems that would prevent the crime through greater surveillance. The idea that surveillance can prevent crime is laughable,

what surveillance can do is after the crime you may have footage, you may be able to track people. There is this dream of total information awareness, this idea soon after 9/11 that you can collect all the data and prevent things. Now there are some things with surveillance, e.g. car monitoring that you can monitor and change traffic patterns. But I see those largely trivial as compared to damages to freedom of movement, freedom to not being monitored. I'm very skeptical that this sort of technology would be used largely in those sorts of things.

PC: Nonetheless, to that point we are talking about the surveillance aimed towards regular civilians. When WikiLeaks appeared, and when Julien Assange started to claim that he is able to reveal classified documents to the public, basically the government became surveilled. Everything twisted turned around.

DHP: I think that initially it was a shock. Both with the important work Julien Assange had done in terms of making this stuff available, and then a second wave of shock came with Snowden. But it didn't last long! I think, maybe globally people had a lot of fears confirmed, that they already had what was going on with United States and surveillance and sort of larger global project and thing like that. But here within US when the first WikiLeak thing came out- people were shocked. But just a few years later that shock is sort of gone and this is where this 'New Surveillance Normal' is all sort of there. I find it creepy, not a little bit creepy... *that we can know all of those things and people internalize it.* Even with these revelations I think the real outcome has been in the United States that people sort of came to accept it. I find it outrageous to live in a country where the police can conduct broad surveillance without a court.

PC: And every single time when new event occurs our surveillance ideology is shifted and governments and institutions are using this gap to fill them with new tools of control, the term of privacy becomes redefined...

DHP: ...and I think that it will continue! Time ago Xbox first came out with camera that you cannot turn off, people were outraged, and eventually they embedded that camera can be turned off. It won't be that way next time, the next stage will be "yeah but the game is so great, you can't play without it". And for reasons of convenience we'll do that and that really has been a step all along in a course that electronic generation isn't the same as biological generation. The technology has changed so quickly and it's so seductive, and so fun and it's so convenient that it makes it really easy for us to get these things up.

PC: The same phenomenon we can observe with Google or Facebook accounts. Now we are experiencing, let's call it bottom-up surveillance, where we are rendering information about each other. Do you think that this trend will continue?

DHP: Absolutely, and in some sense it isn't really new. I remember talking to a friend of mine, who spent a long time in Russia, and talking to him about this, he laughed and said: yes, and this is the secret of American system, the American system people willingly give this stuff away thinking to get something. American system in many ways is this voluntary system where people do this thing willingly and they don't really even necessarily think about it.

PC: And do you believe that there is a kind of ongoing surveillance system that we are not aware of?

DHP: I assume so. In some sense when the Snowden revelations came out, a lot of us have been thinking about this kind of surveillance for a long time. Yes, it's sort of what we thought and it's scarier what we thought, but it's a general pattern that you would expect. And I assume that it will continue going further until it doesn't. I don't know what it will take, but history is full of examples of people taking apart the monitoring system. After WWII, much of western Europe did things like taking apart phone bills, before WWII for example in Holland, when you got your phone bill it would show all of the numbers that you called. And that was used very efficiently by the Nazis to find a resistant network. And after the war that was taken apart, and phone bill just shows the zones that you called. There are examples of people taking the systems apart, but there has to be kind of crisis, there has to be sort of collapse. And that what freaks me out about Snowden revelations, I would have thought that would have been the collapse to do it, but it just keeps going on.

PC: So maybe that is the shift that surveillance needs, new exposure to stretch the terms of privacy, and cover the previous disclosure. What kind of supportive technology is the newest one operating in military or civic theaters?

DHP: Drone surveillance is incredible. In its capability, in a very automatic sense, to track people, there is a very intelligent software in some of those systems where you can basically click on the car or person and basically track them indefinitely. This sort of surveillance system is very important. The drones and Network-centric warfare are using analysis with JSOC teams, it was very important for the shifts that happened in the Iraq.

PC: Right now in the cities the drones were used only as a tool in journalism, delivery and other non-violent ways. Is it possible to imply more sophisticated system in a metropolitan realm in a fully neutral way?

DHP: Again, this is like those others monitoring systems. Although people are so opposed to them, because there is awareness that you start from one reason and then you use it for something else. In most cases cities are able to keep drones out of those uses, but I suspect it will take one more kid in the mountains, and then they will say: look, we found him with a drone, now we can use it for everything. I am very skeptical that this technology can retain the firewall when you only use it only for traffic management or finding people.

PC: So maybe beside militarized surveillance, there are other fields like sociology or anthropology that can improve metropolitan life in terms of collecting and interpreting data?

DHP: One way is to get people involved in local decision making and there is hope for greater electronic democracy and greater communication. And there are projects like that, people can turn the surveillance on the state or on the police department. There is a lot of potential for those things, but as surveillance grows, many of these laws are being shut down because it turns out that State doesn't want to be watched anymore than we than it is.

PC: But still we have this rebel trend, leaded by hackers and activist, e.g. right now one of the biggest webpage serves as a tool to crack the data. People were forced to find a way to bypass law and surveillance, they faced the crisis and they took the system apart, as you mentioned previously.

DHP: There will always be activist movement! There will always be people who will make the State visible, and realize these things, but they will be increasingly criminalized. 40 years ago we had very important leaks about Vietnam, the people were not arrested and threatened with treason, when you watch what is happening with Assange and Snowden you will realize that the stakes are much higher and people need to pay for doing this. But people will continue to do this.

PICTURE 003

PC: To sum it up- we can observe two opposite forces- activists that are willing to bypass the surveillance, and other one where governments are

looking for specialists from civic realms that can improve the efficiency of surveillance, like a story in one of your papers when you reviewed 4 anthropologists working during the WWII for surveillance.

DHP: And it's usually pitched in a positive light, you can help to prevent, e.g. anthropologists working for governments and private bodies that do things like tracking epidemics! They are biological, but things are spread socially by networks. So it's attractive and not necessarily a negative thing to get anthropologists involved in those sort of projects. However all this is sort of dual-use, you can develop things for one reason and then use for another. And the book about CIA, Pentagon and anthropology during the Cold War, that I've just finished is titled: *Dual-use anthropology*. Because what I'm looking at is how thing develops for one reason but gets used for another. And that is sort of history of technology, there is this idea of dual-use, so if you are working on an antidote for bacteria or virus, you need to consider that while you're trying to fix something, it possible that someone can take your results and use them as a weapon. That's what we need to think about technology, maybe we are doing surveillance for good reasons but don't assume that everyone will use it always in that sense.