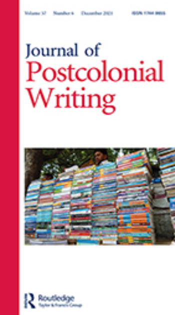

Journal of Postcolonial Writing

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpw20

Thinking the delirious pandemic governance by numbers with Samit Basu's *Chosen Spirits* and Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*

Tereza Østbø Kuldova

To cite this article: Tereza Østbø Kuldova (2022): Thinking the delirious pandemic governance by numbers with Samit Basu's *Chosen Spirits* and Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*, Journal of Postcolonial Writing, DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2022.2040801

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2040801

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 01 Apr 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjpw20

JOURNAL OF POSTCOLONIAL WRITING
https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2022.2040801

Thinking the delirious pandemic governance by numbers with Samit Basu's *Chosen Spirits* and Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*

Tereza Østbø Kuldova

Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of technocratic near-real-time data-driven governance, in that new rules, measures, and prohibitions have been introduced and revoked in response to predictive statistical and epidemiological models, graphs, charts, and aesthetically powerful data visualizations. Pandemic governance has enforced an extreme governance by numbers. The real has come to mirror the structure of dystopian fiction. In his analysis of governance by numbers, Alain Supiot shows how this form of governance ushers in a return of ties of allegiance and the re-emergence of feudalism in new guises. While the rise of technocratic autocracy and security regimes has been remarked upon, the simultaneous return of bonds of allegiance has been to a large degree overlooked. And yet it appears in recent postcolonial dystopian literature from India, Samit Basu's *Chosen Spirits* and Prayaag Akbar's *Leila*, which this article reads as illuminating the extreme endpoint of this delirious governance.

KEYWORDS

Postcolonial dystopia; governance by numbers; India; inequality; COVID-19; ties of allegiance

> Dystopia is pornographic, Olamina. You see it and shiver but it's also kind of fun because it's happening somewhere else, to someone else, you know? It requires distance. Some of us are actually sitting in the fucking middle of it and we may never learn to care in time. This isn't dystopia. This is reality. (Basu 2020, 141)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments across the globe rapidly developed new intelligent surveillance technologies and embraced near-real-time data-driven governance – in close collaboration with private tech companies – relying on lockdowns, behavioural engineering, vaccine and immunity passports, building on pre-existing digital surveillance infrastructures. New rules, prohibitions, regulation, laws, measures, and penalties have been introduced, eased, and reintroduced in response to predictive statistical and epidemiological models, graphs, charts, indicators, and aesthetically powerful data visualizations – seductive for their simplicity, elegantly removing context and ambiguity. Our health and behaviours have become the target of "regulatory capitalism" (Levi-Faur 2017) reliant on technocratic expert systems. As with 9/11, COVID-19 has led to the intensification of data-sharing across governmental and private–public infrastructures, now in the name of the war on the virus. The enforcement of governance by numbers (Supiot

CONTACT Tereza Østbø Kuldova tereza.kuldova@oslomet.no Oslo Metropolitan University, Stensberggata 26, 0170, Oslo, Norway

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

2017) has been accelerated, accompanied by the utopian faith in smart technology and data analytics to solve our problems, predict the future, and optimize ourselves out of the crisis.

Numbers have informed governance decisions and made media headlines, fuelled by a renewed naive faith in neopositivism and in the power of "objective", "neutral", and "hard" data and bits of information to optimize social outcomes (Spoelstra, Butler, and Delaney 2020) – an epistemology that disregards decades of critiques of positivism. After all, more information can result in less understanding and, paradoxically, a lesser ability to govern rationally (Postman 1993; Tsoukas 1997). Contact tracing and quarantine apps have been introduced, as in South Korea, under the banner of "smart governance" and "smart justice" (Choi, Lee, and Jamal 2021), often backed by the expanded powers of law enforcement, as in Poland (Bartoszko 2020). Many citizens subject to this expanded neoliberal surveillance and datafied security regime in western liberal democracies have felt for the first time the state's technocratic governance and monopoly on violence, as well as the extended powers of corporate actors, on their own bodies – an experience otherwise common among those excluded and marginalized, or else, those subject to what Catherine L. Besteman (2020) terms the "militarized global apartheid". In India, 45 out of 100 smart cities "renamed their Integrated Command and Control Centres into 'COVID-19 war rooms' to monitor and track the spread of infected bodies and their encounters" (Datta 2020, 234). While inequalities increase, as many have been pushed into unemployment and poverty because of lockdowns and restrictions, and tech corporations have accumulated even more wealth and power, sealing their "digital dominance" (Moore and Tambini 2018; Tiku and Greene 2021), the pandemic crisis has created an opportunity to re-imagine governance. Or rather, it has accelerated the global expansion and reach of technocratic data-driven governance underpinned by a "cybernetic imaginary" (Supiot 2017) into new domains – a vision backed by powerful transnational organizations, international development actors, and corporations.

Alain Supiot (2017) has argued that this cybernetic imaginary "enacts the dream of an arithmetically attainable social harmony", producing an "idea of normativity not as legislation but as programming", where "people are no longer expected to act freely within the limits laid down by the law, but to react in real time to the multiple signals they receive" (10). In other words, producing a utopia of techno-social engineering where humans are imagined as programmable and optimizable through real-time governance, behavioural "nudging" (Thaler and Sunstein 2009), and smart choice architectures devised by experts, and legitimized by reference to science, data, and numbers. This article contends that we need to pay far closer attention to the normalization of this form of governance by numbers and its potentially totalitarian endpoint. Further, this article argues that dystopian literature, particularly from postcolonial settings, can help us think about this endpoint.

By and large, questions of technology and science in governance have been posed from a technical perspective, or, at best, in terms of legal and ethical issues – rather than being discussed as matters of principled political debate. But some researchers are asking critical questions; it is my goal here to build on these insights, while using the power of literature to expand our critical imaginary of governance by numbers. Critical algorithm studies scholars highlight many concrete instances of algorithmic injustice (O'Neil 2016; Noble 2018; Amoore and Piotukh 2016), legal scholars offer their views on the

consequences of code-ification of law (Susskind 2018), and science and technology researchers reveal the complexities of human–machine interactions, unsettling notions of data neutrality (Egbert and Leese 2020). But few have thought about the consequences of the transformation of the legal order through governance by numbers.

Supiot is a notable exception. In his legal anthropological analysis of governance by numbers, Supiot shows how the decline of the figure of equality before the law and of the social state has resulted in the "return of ties of allegiance" and re-emergence of feudalism and servitude in new guises. Hence, there is also no contradiction between authoritarian leaders and technocratic governance; these modes of governance are perfectly compatible. The key paradox of the quest for impersonal forms of power (whether legitimized in the name of protecting lives from terrorism or a virus) is that it has made personal dependence and bonds of allegiance reappear (Supiot 2017). Recent anthropological, criminological, and legal works support this line of argument, showing that where the social state has been hollowed out and replaced by the security state and technocratic governance, organized crime groups, gangs, and other non-state actors tend to insert themselves into governance, offering protection and social security to those who submit to them, while intimidating others (Kuldova 2019; Winlow, Hall, and Treadwell 2017; Lea and Stenson 2007). Alas, when confronted by impersonal governance backed by the concentrated power of experts, few dare challenge the reigning "scientism", especially the idea that science can answer moral and political questions (Postman 1993).

"This isn't dystopia. This is reality" (Basu 2020, 141)

Postcolonial dystopian literature, characterized so well by Mrinalini Chakravorty (2015) as "delirious", captures the very surreal contradictions and "irrevocable destructions wrought by globalized modernity" (268) and the power of capital. It does so while unsettling the "developmental narrative of how dystopia is usually conceived" (269) by, among others, its presentist character, playing out as a rule in the (near) "now". It is not only "surreally tragic in its indictment of present conditions" (278), but also in its capacity to ponder the links between capital, technology, and governance in a "delirious" manner, so to speak. In Chakravorty's words, it challenges "the idea that modernity is reasonable and that its rational terms are beneficial" (277), revealing the moments when reason flips into unreason, when what could be deemed a rational concern with security becomes fanatical and irrational, even totalitarian. And when our obsession with decontextualized information, data points, and indicators undermines our ability to create meaning and symbolic order and thus to meaningfully govern ourselves (Postman 1993; Tsoukas 1997), an ontological insecurity emerges, limiting the possibilities for resistance.

The two postcolonial dystopic novels discussed here – Samit Basu's (2020) *Chosen Spirits* and Prayaag Akbar's (2017) *Leila* – capture the convergence of governance by numbers and the simultaneous emergence of new bonds of allegiance which Supiot identifies, making us feel the resulting social injustices and dehumanization in a way that social theory cannot. Additionally, they reveal how this "rational" governance by numbers tends to flip into its opposite, a delirious form of governance. I offer an analytical and original reading of the foregrounded *background* from which both novels draw their power. COVID-19 has made this convergence acutely visible: we

read simultaneously of the emergence of "autocratic technocracy" (Windholz 2020) and of how "the pandemic is putting gangsters in power" (Kennedy and Southerm 2021). These two processes are often considered separately, but it is imperative toconsider them together; in this sense, these postcolonial dystopias have already revealed their anticipatory potential in troubling the distinction between the real and the imaginary.

Dystopias can be read as tales of warning – but in the case of a postcolonial dystopia, they speak to an all too real "present" (Chakravorty 2015). Basu's *Chosen Spirits* oscillates between allusions to real events and a near-future dystopia of New Delhi in the 2030s, but, as the author remarks, "the truth is that the real world will probably be much harsher: this book is set not in a dystopia, but in a best-case scenario" (2020, 197). Put differently, the novel reveals the dystopian in the present; that is, that which many would like to push into the future, but which is already here. Speaking of his dystopian novel, *Leila*, set in near-future India, which is divided by walls into residential sectors based on religion, caste, and community, animated by the fundamentalist ideology of purity, and integrated into biometric technologies, Akbar (2017) remarks that it points to the "uncomfortable truth about 'our already-dystopian cities'" (quoted in Chatak 2017). Both novels disrupt the linear or developmental narrative in favour of what could be deemed a postcolonial realist dystopia marked by a temporal "delirium" (Chakravorty 2015), which in Basu's case adds to its already delirious narrative form. While Basu's novel is a wild ride through a world of extreme inequality, invasive surveillance, social media distortions, climate change, right-wing fundamentalism, and technocratic governance, Akbar's portrays fundamentalism and inequality through the utopian promises of security, purity, and luxury in gated communities.

Both novels speak in their own way to the same phenomena. Both exaggerate features of technocratic governance, security and surveillance regimes, and neo-feudal bonds of allegiance to create their fictional worlds of extreme inequality and dehumanizing governance, where truth is systematically overlaid – be it by media, commercial messaging, or ideology. Both feature upper-middle-class heroines forced to confront their complicity in the reproduction of structures of oppression, while the most dramatic horrors play out in the background. Mark Fisher's (2009) remarks about *Children of Men* (2006) can be echoed here: these dystopias read "more like an extrapolation or exacerbation of our" world rather "than an alternative to it", where

> ultra-authoritarianism and Capital are by no means incompatible: internment camps and franchise coffee bars co-exist […] public space is abandoned, given over to uncollected garbage and stalking animals […] there is no withering away of the state […], only a stripping back of the state to its core military and police functions (2).

Dystopias identify and exaggerate features of existing realities, bringing them to extreme conclusions, thus laying out possible bleak future scenarios (Bhattacharyya 2014). They force us to consider the "extreme case" by being in a sense "radical realizations of particular ideals and potential" (Mikkelsen 2020, 2). First and foremost, dystopias bring the systemic (governance, injustice, and power relations) into the foreground. As Tom Moylan (2000) observes,

> dystopia's foremost truth lies in its ability to reflect upon the causes of social and ecological evil as systemic. […] In its purview, no single policy or practice can be isolated as the root problem, no single aberration can be privileged as the one to be fixed so that life in the enclosed status quo can easily resume. (xii)

Dystopias refuse technocratic solutions, cost-benefit analysis, cosmetic solutions, precisely because they explore the dehumanizing consequences of technocratic governance, economic reductionism, and techno-social engineering. They foreground injustices and violations of human rights and dignity, asking fundamental political and moral questions, and positioning dilemmas as a matter of principle, thus striking at the core of what it means to be human vis-à-vis a world of machines or/and dehumanizing governance. The conflict is often between an oppressive, *omniscient*, and *omnipotent* government and an individual character or a group that faces, or witnesses, injustice at its hands and aims to resist it. Dystopias foretell the dangers of taking principles of governance to the extreme, in the form of technocratic governance by experts and/or machines. They warn of the ways in which expert rationality can flip into its opposite – irrationality – and of hyper-focus on singular issues that are impossible to argue against, whether health, security, or prosperity. Considering the autocratic technocracy of pandemic governance, these warnings could not be more acute.

The language of literature, art, interpretation, and humanities often stands in opposition to the mechanistic, instrumental, pragmatic, and seemingly rational language of science and technology, namely that of governance and power. Problems arise when the latter is not balanced by the former. Today, we are witnessing the assault of scientism on the arts and humanities. "In extreme forms", Jason Blakely (2020) writes, "scientism even tries to actively ban or eliminate other ways of knowing and experiencing as prescientific and illegitimate. The humanities, history, literature, the arts, philosophy, and religion are all disparaged as a kind of soft or even magical thinking" (xxviii). Dystopias such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's (1972) *We* and Aldous Huxley's (2000) *Brave New World*, inspired by *We*, confront us with the consequences of scientism's drive towards the elimination of the language of humanities and art. Simultaneously, they reveal technocratic governance itself to be an instance of magical thinking – with its aesthetics and ritual practice, such as the worship of mathematical simplicity. In doing so, dystopias reveal how fundamental questions are erased, impossible to be asked and answered through the concepts of technocratic language and how the "technopoly", or "totalitarian technocracy", to use Neil Postman's (1993) notion, becomes a Faustian bargain for humanity. But these questions force themselves through, driving the narratives of these works as they reveal the violence and injustice resulting from the only permissible abstract expert language through which one can see oneself, the Other and the world. Techno-social engineering by experts, conducted in the name of one ideal or the other – security, health, happiness – is brought to its logical conclusion where the ideal turns into its opposite as the language of the humanities is displaced.

There is little doubt that we are increasingly being governed by anticipatory, techno-social engineering reliant on real-time data flows that such dystopias warn us about, and that are becoming ever more delirious. Governance by numbers integrates the ideology of free market capitalism, predictive economic modelling, behavioural economics, and the utopian "techno-solutionist" visions pushed by Silicon Valley (Morozov 2013); its magical language is spoken not only by states, accelerated by the pandemic state of

exception, but also in workplaces, on digital platforms, and in private life. Or as Frischmann and Selinger (2018) put it in *Re-engineering Humanity*, "instrumental reason is valorized to such a degree that it has become fetishized" (11). In her iconic article "Sex and Death Among Defense Intellectuals", Carol Cohn (1987) analyses an instance of "technostrategic language", which, in her case, is embraced by nuclear deterrence theorists. What fascinates Cohn, and no doubt dystopian writers as well, is "the extraordinary abstraction and removal from what I knew as reality" (688) of this techno-strategic language, "the elaborate use of abstraction and euphemism, of words so bland that they never forced the speaker or enabled the listener to touch the realities of nuclear holocaust that lay behind the words" (690). The language of power, of "clean bombs" and "surgically clean strikes" that "'take out' – i.e. accurately destroy" (692), Cohn observes, "can only be used to articulate the perspective of the users of nuclear weapons, not that of the victims" (706).

Simultaneously, techno-strategic language prevents its speakers from asking certain questions; words such as "peace" are excluded and to utter them is "to brand oneself as a soft-headed activist instead of an expert, a professional to be taken seriously" (Cohn 1987, 709). Techno-strategic language can be likened to the algorithmic choice architectures, or else a mode of "design-based regulation" built into algorithmic structures which nudges us and our decisions, while limiting the scope of our possibilities and political imagination with "troubling implications for democracy and human flourishing" (Yeung 2017, 118). For techno-strategic language to work, reality must be abandoned in favour of abstraction; techno-strategic (and technocratic) language, according to Cohn, was "invented largely by mathematicians, economists, and a few political scientists. It was invented to hold together abstractly, its validity judged by its internal logic. Questions of the correspondence to observable reality were not the issue" (1987, 709).

When abstractions detached from reality inform governance, humanity and human creativity are eliminated, resulting in societal and civilizational mismeasure (Hummel 2006). Zamyatin's *We* confronts us with a dystopian society where Taylorist principles of scientific management underpin One State's totalitarian governance seeking to engineer and mathematically optimize happiness, reducing its citizens to numbers – such as the main character called D-503 – who must submit to this mathematical order. Even things that cannot be calculated become calculable: One State simply assigns + and –, positive and negative designations, to all possible experiences, people, and events, eliminating any confusion and presenting the result as an objective, neutral, mathematical judgment. This is, indeed, reminiscent of how today's automated filtering of harmful online content, based on binary classification, functions – removing context, cause, and intent, relying on correlations and probabilistic judgement. The process, like most algorithmic decision-making, is similarly "black boxed" (Pasquale 2015). The human labour and exploitation that goes into training machine learning algorithms is rendered invisible (Altenried 2020) along with the biases that are coded into algorithmic systems, while the results are presented as neutral and objective. In *We*, mathematics is worshipped, but the Utopia of scientifically engineered happiness fast becomes dystopian.

Technologies, too, are subject to the "'double hermeneutic effect', in which an interpretation of the world shapes the very interpretations that comprise it" (Blakely 2020, xxvi). As Supiot explains, governance by numbers intensifies the fantasy of the governing machine and "ensnares managers and workers alike in feedback loops governed by

numerical representations of the world increasingly disconnected from experience"; it replaces "territory with the map, and action with reaction" (169), leading to intellectual and institutional breakdown. Zamyatin's *We* addresses this effect of governance by numbers, anticipating the extremes of Soviet planning and the ideology of instrumental scientific calculation. Neo-liberal governance by numbers goes one step further than Soviet planning:

> [A]s in economic planning, calculation replaces law as the basis of the norm's legitimacy. But the norm is now akin to a biological norm or a computer programme, it results from the interaction of individual calculations and it results *from within*. This interiorisation, or eradication of heteronomy, is precisely what governance means: whereas *government* implies a commanding position above those governed, and the obligation for individual freedoms to observe certain limits, *governance* starts out from individual freedoms, not to limit but rather to programme them. (Supiot 2017, 115–116; original italics)

We is in this sense a dystopia of "government" by numbers. Basu's and Akbar's near-future postcolonial dystopias, instead, speak to "governance" by numbers, where legislation becomes "replaced by programming and rules by technical regulation" (Supiot 2017, 284). Distinctions between states, corporations, the private and the public are erased, and, with them, the notion of public interest and of commons disappears. Supiot's prediction is that "the establishment of calculations of individual utility as the sole norm – flying in the face of democratic principles – will generate new forms of violence". A world where new bonds of dependence and networks of allegiance will emerge, both legal and illegal, where "people will inevitably pledge allegiance to any group claiming to provide" physical and economic security, "be it clans, religious factions, ethnic identities or mafia networks" (284–285).

Basu's novel is driven by this double movement between the ever-proliferating technological "hypernudging" as a form of regulation and governance by design (Yeung 2017) that promises technologically optimized security and happiness alongside the dissolution of public interest and a shared horizon. Joey, the main character, tries to navigate a world of information glut, nudged by algorithms, while working as a "Reality Controller", staging "real" lives of Flowstars (a kind of real-time Instagram) for the consumption of the hyper-segmented audiences and thus in the business of nudging and capturing the attention of others. In this world, private and conflicting interests rule, and violence and exploitation are omnipresent – it is a world where surveillant technologies promise to deliver happiness and security, but the reality is one of new bonds and allegiance or "a loyalty-based economy" (Basu 2020, 8). Gang leaders, oligarchs, corporations, political unions, residence associations, and more – demanding loyalty, allegiance, or ransom for protection – all make an appearance in *Chosen Spirits*. The novel captures a world spinning out of control the more we try to control it, one of intellectual and institutional breakdown: the accelerating informational glut intertwined with different forms of algorithmic governance is mirrored in the dizzying range of particular interests, loyalties, groups – most of them either above or outside the law – all of which compete to subject others.

This world without a shared unifying narrative and purpose is reflected in the novel's delirious form, which similarly bombards the reader with snippets of information, glimpses into the world, but with something always lacking. As such, the novel perfectly

captures the hollowing-out of meaning and morality through its very form. We follow Joey and her friend Rudra who tries to escape from his elite privilege, superficiality, and corruption. But through their passivity and shallowness, their complicity in society's disorientation and weak attempts at resistance, we encounter the ways of this world – the novel being more intriguing for its setting than its plot. The same can be said about Akbar's *Leila*, where the middle-class heroine Shalini searches for her daughter, from whom she has been separated by an increasingly totalitarian regime. Our concern is not with the plot or characters of these novels, but rather the foregrounded background from which they draw their power. Both Basu and Akbar point to the convergence of governance by numbers and the new ties of allegiance, the representation of a future that is "no longer one of revolution but of catastrophe" (Supiot 2017, 285).

Techno-solutionism, surveillance capitalism, and "Reality Controllers"

Let us now approach Basu's delirious dystopia through a digression into the present pandemic governance and utopian technosolutionist promises of control. In the 1960s, Robert C. Elliott (1963) analysed the rising fear of utopia being actually realized and turning into dystopian nightmares: "in anti-utopia it is the life of the future, created in response to man's longing for happiness on earth, that is the evil […] utopia itself has become the enemy" (241). This is reflected in the dystopian and apocalyptic narratives that dominate the literary marketplace (Gidley 2017). While little is left of utopian literature, we *are* surrounded by utopian texts: namely, commercials – in particular those selling technologies that promise to predict, shape, and optimize futures, creating a seamless and harmonious world without friction; technologies that embody the utopian promise of automated control of reality. In the world of "surveillance capitalism", there are few problems – manufactured or real – that cannot be solved by data extraction and big data analysis; every minute detail can be captured, controlled, predicted, optimized, tweaked – in the name of profit (Zuboff 2019). The war on the virus has in many ways taken precisely this form of "technological solutionism" (Morozov 2013), often of new intelligent surveillance products (Bedi 2020): selfie-demanding quarantine apps (Datta 2020; Bartoszko 2020); smart wristbands, as in Hong Kong, Israel, or the Cayman Islands (Connolly 2020); biometric surveillance in the form of thermal facial recognition technology and "smart wearables" (Norris 2021); digital immunity and vaccine passports (Phelan 2020); digital IDs collating GPS tracking with health status data and digital footprints, such as the Chinese "health code" (Shi et al. 2021); intrusive workplace surveillance such as IBM's Watson Works; remote employee monitoring products; or inventions pushed by the World Economic Forum, such as smart masks that display your speech on the phone as text and translate it into different languages (WEF 2020b), or measure your breathing rate.

The National Health Service (NHS), using Palantir – Peter Thiel's secretive data-mining company backed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – to deliver COVID-19 data analysis, remarked on its blog that the software will enable "disparate data to be integrated, cleaned, and harmonised in order to develop the single source of truth that will support decision-making" (Gould, Joshi, and Tang 2020). Single source of truth (SSOT) may be a concept from information systems theory, but it is ideologically revealing, speaking to the

imaginary of both "truth" and control in data-driven governance. During the COVID-19 "infodemic", new algorithmic modes of combatting fake news, misinformation, and untruth have proliferated, challenging legal protections on freedom of expression; some governments have even resorted to "criminalizing expression about Covid-19 or government's response to it" (Pomeranz and Schwid 2021). The same technologies that created deepfakes and fake social bots now promise to automate truth arbitration. But deception is a "constitutive element of these technologies" that "provide an *illusion* of intelligence" (Natale 2021, 2–3; emphasis in original), hence, rather than delivering on these promises, they are bound to fuel confusion. And yet both reality and what can be uttered about it are to be governed and controlled by them. What is the endpoint of such pandemic governance? Do these technosolutionist utopian promises result in a delirious dystopian form of governance?

Basu's *Chosen Spirits* might help us here; it confronts us with "New" New Delhi, where surveillance capitalism, real-time governance by numbers, and new bonds of allegiance march hand in hand, and where "Reality Controllers" like Joey curate real-time "Flows" of the perfectly shallow Flowstars to conceal oppressive realities on the ground: blasphemy laws, fights over limited resources such as water, mass de-citizenings, re-education camps, mafia and gang rule, curfews, data-driven home invasions, post-human upgrades, gene-testing prison camps, organ-growth sweatshops, voter-list erasures, lynchings, police violence, perfect child breeding projects, and more. The task of the Reality Controllers is to keep the Real at bay. Joey's father "often complains that his life has turned into some kind of totalitarian reality show: she's fairly sure he still doesn't understand that managing one is his daughter's job" (Basu 2020, 14).

Despite these efforts to conceal, "everyone knows", but the vast majority look the other way. The novel channels the disavowal of the "entitled young upper-caste upper class corporate-job safety-first liberal(s)" (Basu 2020, 182), betraying the structure of "cynical ideology" that sustains the oppressive relations (Žižek 1989). Basu generates a sense of permanent discomfort through his delirious writing, which stems from this cynical disavowal, and the cacophony of different forms of oppression, behavioural manipulation, technological optimization, reality manipulations, surveillance, exploitation, and violence, perpetrated by different actors with conflicting interests. Power rests on surveillance, monitoring, and prediction. Successfully navigating this reality demands tracking permissible utterances in real time, a micro-customization of the self, and accurate responses to the governance by a multitude of actors.

In a single paragraph, Basu captures the intertwined dynamic of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff 2019), real-time technocratic governance, and the emergence of new bonds of allegiance; all designed to control, demanding loyalty and compliance, while constantly changing the rules of the game:

> It's your house spying on you now [...] it isn't just the government snooping any more, but a peak-traffic cluster of corporations, other governments, religious bodies, cults, gangs, terrorists, hackers, sometimes other algorithms, watching you, measuring you, learning you, marking you down for spam or death. [...] in New New Delhi the only crime was nonconformity, and conformity was fast-shifting, ever-angry chimera that must be constantly fed. (Basu 2020, 12–13)

This cacophony of networked actors that insert themselves in multiple, often contradictory ways into "governance", which Basu captures so well here, creating new allegiances, precisely reflects the logic of governance by numbers. The totalitarian in dystopian literature typically takes the shape of an oppressive state and centralized authority, with a unified ideology and agenda, allowing for both coherence and a degree of predictability. Orwell's *1984* has often been referenced when discussing today's China, where technocracy, propaganda, and fear are supported by new digital surveillance technologies, and where the Party is the "artistic director" of the China Dream, forcing all "to merge in the great utopia" (Strittmatter 2020, 25). Basu's novel draws us into a much more likely world of "post-Orwellian" totalitarian *governance* underpinned by a "regime of surveillance" (Giroux 2015), where the state is one among many actors that govern people. In such a world, the Chinese model of the Social Credit System progressively gains traction, and totalitarian technologies become desirable. As attempts at a democratic implementation of similar social credit systems in "New" New Delhi have failed, the elites and thought leaders discuss that

> "[t]his time, the new idea is the old idea: we're just buying the Chinese systems wholesale" […] This time, […] it'll be wholly secret, wholly automated, based on every transaction, every observed adherence to or violation of every unwritten rule, every movement, every word spoken or messaged, every act of consumption, participation or expressed emotion, and then categorised and filtered, obviously, by […] family, his community, his friends, his biometrics and his overall performance relative to the ideal life he should be living as a Good Citizen. (Basu 2020, 49–50)

In the regime of surveillance, privacy becomes both impossible and obsolete – and with it also democracy. In his essay "The Obsolescence of Privacy", Günther Anders [1958] 2017 analyses precisely this function of surveillance technology:

> [E]very society that allows itself the use of such [listening/surveillance] devices inevitably acquires the habit of considering humans as fully exposable and as entities that are allowed to be exposed […] *where bugging devices are used as a matter of course, the main precondition of totalitarianism has been established and totalitarianism is achieved.* (24–27; emphasis in original)

These Indian postcolonial dystopias capture this totalitarian endpoint of surveillance capitalism as a mode of governance. While the Chinese Social Credit System (wherein citizens are reduced to a number based on an algorithmic analytic of trustworthiness, with rights assigned and revoked in real-time [Strittmatter 2020]) serves as inspiration, states like India, which consider themselves democracies, are headed closer towards hybrid models, where corporate and state power are mixed, and where different interest groups compete for; a model of "hybrid surveillance capitalism" (Østbø 2021).

In portraying the smooth alignment of authoritarian, technocratic forms of governance with neo-liberalism, these novels reach the same conclusions, revealing neo-liberalism's and technopoly's contempt for democracy. They unpack the crisis of social institutions and return of tribalism and communalism – a world without limits, without solidarity, and without an "efficient Symbolic Order" (Hayward and Hall 2020), and so also a world of securitized walls and gates.

Seamless security, social sorting, and "purity for all"

In such a world, one must have protection. Where the state is failing in providing basic needs and protection, organized crime groups, gangs, mafias, rogue politicians, clans, businessmen, and others tend to step in. New bonds of allegiance and dependence emerge. In *Chosen Spirits*, gated communities, and Residence Welfare Associations have become securitized and weaponized. Physical and digital walls dominate these dystopias. Surveillance and security regimes inevitably result in different forms of gating, enclosures, and expulsions (Sassen 2014). The logic of securitized gated communities, merging with the consumerist dreams of luxurious living – or else "guarded luxotopias" (Kuldova 2017) – is presented here as the extreme, flipping into a dystopia. Simultaneously, these novels capture the elites' fears of the masses rising – the multi-billionaire owner of Cartier, Johann Rupert, once remarked that this is what keeps him awake at night (Withnall 2018) – social warfare, mass unemployment, widespread misery, all wrapped in tech utopian narratives. The rich are already building secure, hidden, and luxury post-apocalyptic bunkers (Stamp 2019), while the middle class is securitizing their gated communities, keeping undesirables, suspect, and low class outside their walls. Basu captures intensely the sense of apocalyptic fear that fuels this gating and segregationist logic:

> The walls are going to crack, because a tide of people will try to break them, just billions of people who are useless, lost in the world, people who are angry and desperate to survive: they're going to try to take everything down with them, burn it all. Climate change will break walls. The robots will break walls. New diseases, tech disasters […]. They're coming, all at the same time, until one day there's only one wall, and the people inside it are gods, and the people outside it are monsters, or dead. It's going to get fucking mythological. I'm going to be inside the wall. (2020, 125)

COVID-19 stimulated further securitization of gated communities, helped by tech-solutions. Apps like MyGate, "India's No. 1 Security and Community Management App", have seen rapid expansion, embraced by gated communities and businesses across India (Mathur 2020).

These apps promise convenience; smart, secure living; and "seamless gates" – the utopian promise of integration, anticipation, and efficiency – gated communities where everyone, every detail, and every financial transaction are monitored, evaluated, and optimized. Closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras; security guards trained in using the app; residents using the app to communicate with each other, pay their bills, manage community accounts, start opinion polls and track responses, raise complaints, order maintenance, book amenities, shop through e-commerce integrations within the app, organize events, remote-manage kids' checkout at the gate, approve, auto-approve, and pre-invite visitors – delivery persons, workers, maids, drivers, and others – but also rate, profile, and book them. These are some of the many features. Extra features have been added during COVID-19 – displays of a health metre of visitors, or the marking of flats with residents in quarantine.

The vision behind the app that performs more than 15 million validations at the gate per day, according to the chief executive officer (CEO), founder, and former air force pilot, Vijay Arisetty, is to "reduce friction at the gate", "enhance convenience", "seamlessly connect the external and internal world", and "increase security and eliminate

trust deficit" ("Up Close with Vijay Arisetty" 2019). Trust is reduced to a personal trustworthiness rating – thus becoming its opposite: control. By default, nobody can be trusted; everyone must be illuminated through self-exposure or surveillance technologies. The "transparency society" can flip into an inhumane society of control (Han 2015). Ratings, numbers, codes, graphs, charts, and more play a key role in both the management of gated communities, and local and global governance; these numbers legitimize intrusive surveillance and new forms of "social sorting" (Lyon 2003). The utopian promise of apps such as MyGate is a world where "our lives will be increasingly *rateable*, subject to scores, ratings and rankings that pit us against each other for access to social goods" (Susskind 2018, 127, emphasis in original), and where (predictive) algorithms will "determine the terms of access to social goods" (268). When equality before the law disappears and "social sorting" (Lyon 2003) is institutionalized, securitized walls breed the need for bonds of allegiance.

Akbar's *Laila* and its Netflix adaptation as a miniseries by Deepa Mehta (2019) confront us with the securitization and purification of gated communities brought to their logical endpoint: intrusive surveillance is utilized to reinforce social segregation and sorting. The vision is one of a society divided into sectors, protected by walls that keep those within "uncontaminated" and pure – a society permanently threatened by class warfare, identity politics, communitarianism, and violence. Elitism, in which the main character Shalini is complicit, has actively produced this tribalism, to which she herself, as many others, falls victim. The dystopian promise is one of "Purity for All", enforced violently by the all-powerful Council that insists on dividing people in its name. Behavioural conditioning and programming are prevalent: " 'We protect our people from what-all goes on outside', the second guard said. 'Filth in air. In character'. Two fingers of his right hand went across his chest. 'Purity for all' " (Akbar 2017, 36). Gating becomes a way of securitizing morality through discrimination and the inhumane expulsion of all deemed impure, but in *Leila* Akbar reveals this as a shallow form of staged morality, and a mere legitimation strategy for the brutalities of capitalist exploitation and the greed that drives the economy:

> Anyone who can afford it hides behind walls. They think they're doing it for security, for purity, but somewhere inside it's shame, shame at their own greed. How they've made the rest of us live. That's why they're always secluding themselves, going higher and higher. They don't want to see what's on the ground. They don't want to see who lives here. (159)

Even here, the most intriguing element of the novel lurks in the background, the protagonist being simultaneously complicit, impotent, and victimized, and yet still relatively privileged.

Conclusion: Delirious pandemic governance?

The "war on the virus" has led to the rise of real-time data-driven governance by numbers underpinned by the promises of technosolutionism, while generating new and reinforcing old inequalities, expulsions, and conflict lines, and, with them, new bonds of allegiance. The daily "flows" of real-time data, disconnected news stories, social media outrages, and polarizing messages are increasingly taking on a delirious form. The more

we try to control the virus, the more uncontrollable the outcomes and harm resulting from control measures become. Or as Hartmut Rosa (2021) puts it, modernity's "drive and desire toward controllability ultimately creates monstrous, frightening forms of uncontrollability" (ix).

Further expansion of the surveillance and security regime is presented by governments as a trade-off for gradually opening up. The demand is for more regulation, more control, more measures: either we submit ourselves and our data to a regime of intrusive surveillance, or we face endless self-isolation and other "expulsions" (Sassen 2014). The endpoint of this logic is surveillance, segregation, and demonization of those who refuse to comply with the latest rules and dictates which are increasingly built into technological and algorithmic architectures, and issued by a multitude of governmental, private, and hybrid actors. Those who comply secure a relative but likely only temporary freedom, possibly revoked – along with what used to be fundamental human rights – at any moment by a decision informed by the latest predictive model. The endpoint is a delirious form of governance disoriented by "flows" of data, where reason flips into unreason, security into insecurity, and common good into tribalism and expulsions. Basu and Akbar make us experience through the literary power of their novels precisely such a near-future dystopian world. Sensitivity to multiple forms of expulsions, foregrounding the background of these novels raises fundamental questions: are we not sacrificing our privacy, equality, fundamental rights, and liberties on the altar of techno-optimized purity, health, and security? Is the endpoint totalitarian? Do we wish to live in a world where a minority lives hermetically sealed lives in "guarded luxotopias", while the majority suffers injustices, exploitation, violence, and harms? Is this the best world we can imagine?

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was funded by the Research Council of Norway under project no. 313626 – *Algorithmic Governance and Cultures of Policing: Comparative Perspectives from Norway, India, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa* (AGOPOL).

Notes on contributor

Tereza Østbø Kuldova is research professor at the Work Research Institute, Oslo Metropolitan University. She is a social anthropologist and author of *How Outlaws Win Friends and Influence People* (2019), *Luxury Indian Fashion: A Social Critique* (2016), co-editor of *Crime, Harm and Consumerism* (2020), *Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs and Street Gangs* (2018), and *Urban Utopias: Excess and Expulsion in Neoliberal South Asia* (2017), in addition to numerous articles. She currently works on algorithmic governance, surveillance, corruption, and artificial intelligence in policing.

ORCID

Tereza Østbø Kuldova http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7810-7233

References

Akbar, Prayaag. 2017. *Leila*. London: Faber and Faber. (Kindle).
Altenried, Moritz. 2020. "The Platform as Factory: Crowdwork and the Hidden Labour behind Artificial Intelligence." *Capital & Class* 44 (2): 145–158. doi:10.1177/0309816819899410.
Amoore, Louise, and Volha Piotukh. 2016. *Algorithmic Life: Calculative Devices in the Age of Big Data*. London: Routledge.
Anders, Günther. [1958] 2017. "The Obsolescence of Privacy." *CounterText* 3 (1): 20–46. doi:10.3366/count.2017.0073.
Bartoszko, Aleksandra. 2020. "Accelerating Curve of Anxiousness: How a Governmental Quarantine-App Feeds Society with Bugs." *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 4 (1): E7–E17. doi:10.5617/jea.7861.
Basu, Samit. 2020. *Chosen Spirits*. Faridabad: Simon and Schuster.
Bedi, Aneesha. 2020. "Geo-mapping, CCTV Cameras, AI – How Telangana Police Is Using Tech to Enforce Covis Safety." *The Print*, June 2. https://theprint.in/india/geo-mapping-cctv-cameras-ai-how-telangana-police-is-using-tech-to-enforce-covid-safety/433856/
Besteman, Catherine L. 2020. *Militarized Global Apartheid*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Bhattacharyya, Saurabh. 2014. "The Theme of Dystopia in Indian Fiction in English: An Exploration." *UGC Funded Minor Research Project; Executive Summary of the Final Report*. Kolkata. http://www.cssmberachampa.org/UploadedFiles/156942AExecutive%20Summary%20MRP%20Saurabh%20Bhattacharyya.pdf
Blakely, Jason. 2020. *We Built Reality: How Social Science Infiltrated Culture, Politics and Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Chakravorty, Mrinalini. 2015. "Of Dystopias and Deliriums: The Millenian Novel in India." In *A History of the Indian Novel in English*, edited by Ulka Anjaria, 267–281. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Chatak, Lopamudra. 2017. "Urban Ghettos in Delhi and Mumbai are Creating Isolated, Insular Experiences: Prayaag Akbar, Author." *The Economic Times*, April 29. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/urban-ghettos-in-delhi-and-mumbai-are-creating-isolated-insular-experiences-prayaag-akbar-author/articleshow/58430844.cms
Choi, Jiyoung, Seunghoon Lee, and Tazim Jamal. 2021. "Smart Korea: Governance for Smart Justice during a Global Pandemic." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 29 (2–3): 541–550. doi:10.1080/09669582.2020.1777143.
Cohn, Carol. 1987. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." *Signs* 12 (4): 687–718. doi:10.1086/494362.
Connolly, Norma. 2020. "COVID Wristbands: How They've Worked in Hong Kong." *Cayman Compass*, September 18. https://www.caymancompass.com/2020/09/18/covid-wristbands-how-theyve-worked-in-hong-kong
Datta, Ayona. 2020. "Self(ie)-governance: Technologies of Intimate Surveillance in India under COVID-19." *Dialogues in Human Geography* 10 (2): 234–237. doi:10.1177/2043820620929797.
Egbert, Simon, and Matthias Leese. 2020. *Criminal Futures: Predictive Policing and Everyday Police Work*. London: Routledge.
Elliott, Robert C. 1963. "The Fear of Utopia." *The Centennial Review* 7 (2): 237–251.
Fisher, Mark. 2009. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Winchester: Zero Books.
Frischmann, Brett, and Evan Selinger. 2018. *Re-engineering Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Gidley, Jennifer M. 2017. *The Future: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Giroux, Henry A. 2015. "Totalitarian Paranoia in the Post-Orwellian Surveillance State." *Cultural Studies* 29 (2): 108–140. doi:10.1080/09502386.2014.917118.
Gould, Matthew, Indra Joshi, and Ming Tang. 2020. "The Power of Data in a Pandemic." *Technology in the NHS Blog, Gov UK*, March 28. https://healthtech.blog.gov.uk/2020/03/28/the-power-of-data-in-a-pandemic/
Han, Byung-Chul. 2015. *The Transparency Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hayward, Keith J., and Steve Hall. 2020. "Through Scandinavia, Darkly: A Criminological Critique of Nordic Noir." *The British Journal of Criminology* 61 (1): 1–21. doi:10.1093/bjc/azaa044.
Hummel, Ralph P. 2006. "The Triumph of Numbers: Knowledges and the Mismeasure of Management." *Administration & Society* 38 (1): 58–78. doi:10.1177/0095399705284202.
Huxley, Aldous. 2000. *Brave New World*. New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
Kennedy, Lindsey, and Nathan P. Southern. 2021. "The Pandemic Is Putting Gangsters in Power." *Foreign Policy.com*, February 15. https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/15/the-pandemic-is-putting-gangsters-in-power/
Kuldova, Tereza. 2019. *How Outlaws Win Friends and Influence People*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Kuldova, Tereza. 2017. "Guarded Luxotopias and Expulsions in New Delhi: Aesthetics and Ideology of Outer and Inner Spaces of an Urban Utopia." In *Urban Utopias: Excess and Expulsion in Neoliberal South Asia*, edited by Tereza Kuldova and Mathew A. Varghese, 37–52. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Lea, John, and Kevin Stenson. 2007. "Security, Sovereignty, and Non-State Governance 'From Below'." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 22 (2): 9–27. doi:10.1017/S0829320100009339.
Levi-Faur, David. 2017. "Regulatory Capitalism." In *Regulatory Theory: Foundation and Applications*, edited by Peter Drahos, 289–302. Australia: ANU Press.
Lyon, David. 2003. *Surveillance as Social Sorting: Privacy, Risk and Digital Discrimination*. London: Routledge.
Mathur, Nandita. 2020. "Covid Triggers Spike in Demand for Security Apps for Gated Societies." *Mint*, September. 7. https://www.livemint.com/technology/tech-news/covid-triggers-spike-in-demand-for-security-apps-for-gated-enclaves-11599474698745.html
Mehta, Deepa, Pawan Kumar, and Shanker Raman. 2019. *Leila. Miniseries*. Mumbai and Los Gatos, CA: Open Air Films and Netflix.
Mikkelsen, Henrik Hvenegaard. 2020. "Out of the Ordinary: Monsters as Extreme Cases among Bugkalot and Beyond." *Journal of Extreme Anthropology* 4 (2): 1–19. doi:10.5617/jea.8107.
Moore, Martin, and Damian Tambini, eds. 2018. *Digital Dominance: The Power of Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
Morozov, Evgeny. 2013. *To Save Everything, Click Here*. New York: Public Affairs.
Moylan, Tom. 2000. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Natale, Simone. 2021. *Deceitful Media: Artificial Intelligence and Social Life after the Turing Test*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York: New York University Press.
Norris, Michele L. 2021. "Thanks to COVID-19, the Age of Biometric Surveillance Is Here." *The Washington Post*, March 22. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/thanks-to-covid-19-the-age-of-biometric-surveillance-is-here/2021/03/22/04b24f76-8b24-11eb-a6bd-0eb91c03305a_story.html
O'Neil, Cathy. 2016. *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. New York: Crown.
Østbø, Jardar. 2021. "Hybrid Surveillance Capitalism: Sber's Model for Russia's Modernization." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 37 (5): 435–452. doi:10.1080/1060586X.2021.1966216.
Pasquale, Frank. 2015. *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms that Control Money and Information*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Phelan, Alexandra. 2020. "COVID-19 Immunity Passports and Vaccination Certificates: Scientific, Equitable, and Legal Challenges." *The Lancet* 395 (10237): 1595–1598. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31034-5.
Pomeranz, Jennifer L., and Aaron R. Schwid. 2021. "Governmental Actions to Address COVID-19 Misinformation." *Journal of Public Health Policy* 42 (2): 201–210. doi:10.1057/s41271-020-00270-x.
Postman, Neil. 1993. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2021. *The Uncontrolability of the World*. Cambridge: Polity.
Sassen, Saskia. 2014. *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Shi, Lei, Chen Shi, Xun Wu, and Liang Ma. 2021. "Accelerating the Development of Smart City Initiatives Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of Health Code in China". *Journal of Asian Public Policy* 29: 1–18. March. doi:10.1080/17516234.2021.1902078.
Spoelstra, Sverre, Nick Butler, and Helen Delaney. 2020. "Measures of Faith: Science and Belief in Leadership Studies." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 30 (3): 300–311. doi:10.1177/1056492620901793.
Stamp, Elizabeth. 2019. "Billionaire Bunkers: How the 1% are Preparing for the Apocalypse." *CNN Style*. August 7. https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/doomsday-luxury-bunkers/index.html
Strittmatter, Kai. 2020. *We Have Been Harmonised: Life in China's Surveillance State*. Exeter: Old Street Publishing.
Supiot, Alain. 2017. *Governance by Numbers: The Making of a Legal Model of Allegiance*. London: Bloomsbury.
Susskind, Jamie. 2018. *Future Politics: Living Together in a World Transformed by Tech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Thaler, Richard H., and Cass R. Sunstein. 2009. *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. London: Penguin Books.
Tiku, Nitasha, and Jay Greene. 2021. "The Billionaire Boom." *The Washington Post*, March 12. https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/03/12/musk-bezos-zuckerberg-gates-pandemic-profits/
Tsoukas, Haridimos. 1997. "The Tyranny of Light: The Temptations and the Paradoxes of the Information Society." *Futures* 29 (9): 827–843. doi:10.1016/S0016-3287(97)00035-9.
"Up Close with Vijay Arisetty, Founder and CEO of MyGate, India's First Gated Security App." 2019. *Yourstory, YouTube*, November. 20. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWRza0IW6fI&t=636s
Windholz, Eric L. 2020. "Governing in a Pandemic: From Parliamentary Sovereignty to Autocratic Technocracy." *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 8 (1–2): 93–113. doi:10.1080/20508840.2020.1796047.
Winlow, Simon, Steve Hall, and James Treadwell. 2017. *The Rise of the Right: The English Defense League and the Transformation of Working Class Politics*. Bristol: Polity Press.
Withnall, Adam. 2018. "Cartier Boss with $7.5 Billion Fortune Says Prospect of the Poor Rising up 'Keeps Him Awake at Night'." *The Independent*, March 23. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/cartier-boss-7-5bn-fortune-says-prospect-poor-rising-keeps-him-awake-night-10307485.html
World Economic Forum (WEF). 2020b. "This Smart Phone Mask Displays Your Speech as Text on a Phone." October. 1. https://www.weforum.org/videos/19505-a-japanese-robotics-startup-has-invented-a-smart-mask-that-translates-into-eight-languages-uplink
Yeung, Karen. 2017. "'Hypernudge: Big Data as a Mode of Regulation by Design." *Information, Communication & Society* 20 (1): 118–136. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2016.1186713.
Zamyatin, Yevgeny. 1972. *We*. New York: Avon Books.
Žižek, Slavoj. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso.
Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. London: Profile Books.