

# 1.11 Media and Surveillance

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## Our goal is to examine the impact that cameras and constant surveillance have on us

18th century theorist Jeremy Bentham proposed what he thought would be the ideal prison. The *Panopticon* (Pan=all and opti=sight) would be circular, with the inmates housed in the rooms along the perimeter of the circle. A single guard would be placed in a room at the center of the circle. The walls of the room would be made of one-way mirrors, allowing the guard to see into the each cell whenever he wanted.

What does this mean? The inmates would never know when they were being watched; thus, they would always have to be on their best behaviour.

### Surveillance Culture

Some have argued that our culture's obsession with cameras has turned our culture into a *panopticon*. Consider the following:

- How many times are you on camera at school each week? (count each time, please...)
- How many times in a week do you take a picture of yourself or your friends?
- How many places you visit (stores, arenas, work, etc) have cameras?

Consider, too, the following facts:

- According to the Telegraph, there is now "one surveillance camera for every 11 people in Britain"
- Surveillance cameras in England have been used for everything from seeing if parents were lying about which school district they lived in to "checking up on dog owners whose animals were suspected of fouling"
- Street view on Google Maps is incredible, but it also demonstrates that nearly everywhere humans live is under Google's (and our) surveillance



This is a "street view" image of the bakery across from my old apartment in Seoul, South Korea. On the full-sized version of this image, we can make out the products in the window and read the signs on the panes of glass. On one hand, this amazing (I can go anywhere and see anything with technology); on the other, it is also troubling (what does this mean for privacy?)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cjlb3lu071M>