

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:34 Remember, if you listen to the show on your Apple podcast app, you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. With that, please enjoy this week's episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:51 In 1609, while in search of a rumored, Northeast passage to Asia, the English explorer and navigator, Henry Hudson landed on what is, modern day New York City.

New Speaker: 00:01:05 Though written accounts exist of Hudson's encounters with local tribes. Native accounts have been handed down to us through oral tradition, often transcribed much later by missionaries and settlers.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:01:19 In 1765, a Moravian missionary who lived for many years among the Delaware and Mohican tribes recorded a native account of the first meeting:

Demetri Kofinas: 00:01:31 "Some Indians who had been out fishing where the sea widens spied, at a great distance, something remarkably large swimming or floating on the water. It was agreed among those who were spectators that as this phenomenon moved towards the land, it would be well to inform all the Indians on the inhabited islands. Chiefs from scattered tribes who arrived in numbers concluded the strange appearance to be a large canoe or house in which the great Supreme Being himself was coming to visit them."

Demetri Kofinas: 00:02:07 Such descriptions by native peoples of their first encounters with White settlers were common throughout the Americas. The first men to bring news to the great Aztec King Moctezuma, of Spanish ships described what he saw from the gulf coast as "towers or small mountains floating on the waves of the sea." In other accounts, natives looked from the shore and thought the awesome, approaching ships were giant white seabirds or floating islands.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:02:40 There are even theories that the Arawak, the first tribe to encounter Columbus' ships off the coast of Hispaniola could for a time see only their ripples across the horizon, unable to picture what was for them unprecedented, unimagined, alien.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:03:01 What all these people had in common was that they were unable to name, let alone recognize a force of creative destruction so vast and boundless that it would make their worlds unrecognizable, their homes uninhabitable, their lives unlivable. They were unable to see the ships and their crew for what they were. The vessels of conquerors, pillagers and looters of unsullied lands, unable to name them, they welcomed them, agents of their own annihilation.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:03:36 This week on Hidden Forces Shoshana Zuboff, Digital Natives, the unprecedented, and finding home in The Age of Surveillance Capitalism.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:04 So, Dr. Zuboff, I was just telling you before we turned on the microphones how much I valued reading your book. What was your objective in writing it, and why the name Surveillance Capitalism?

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:04:18 I think the larger project here, and the reason why I called this new market form, surveillance capitalism, is that it's mechanisms are designed to be hidden, that it's a backstage operation. Its mechanisms are designed to keep us in ignorance. The result of that is that even though it's something unprecedented, it's very hard for us to detect it in our midst.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:04:51 So, my aim has been to unveil piece-by-piece the actual mechanisms, what it is, how it works, why it strives to remain hidden in secret, why our ignorance is its bliss, if you will.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:11 You also talk about this concept of radical indifference in the context of what you call "Instrumentarianism," which is to surveillance capitalism what totalitarianism was to industrial capitalism. How does that fit in?

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:05:27 Well, a lot of people have, you know, in the sense of unease that we have with the direction that the digital has taken under surveillance capitalism, people know that we're being monitored and we're being tracked. There's a lot of reference to Big Brother, and a lot of reference to concepts like digital totalitarianism.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:05:53 I thought it was important to really ask the question, "What is the kind of power that surveillance capitalism produces?" Because really, it's not a totalitarian power. Totalitarianism is a form of power based on, first of all, terror, murder. Totalitarianism aims to control individuals from the inside out. It wanted you to believe what it wanted you to believe, and it wanted to control your thoughts, and your feelings, and your emotions, and it wanted you to conform to everything that it held as ideologically correct and necessary. It was willing to murder you on the way to that conformity, and purging the human species for the sake of this kind of perfection inside and out.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:06:53 The kind of power that's created by surveillance capitalism is really very, very different. What I found interesting is that when totalitarianism bursed upon the world in the 1930s and 1940s, it was also an unprecedented form of power. People couldn't recognize it in their midst because it was so unprecedented, so bizarre. It demands and claims we're so unimaginable and intolerable that really, people couldn't get their arms around it or believe that it was even real until the evidence of the murder and the terror and the Gulags and the concentration camps, and so forth.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:07:36 Well, the kind of power that's created by surveillance capitalism is equally unprecedented, but not with the same kind of violence. It's a much more subtle and abstract kind of violence, but because of its unprecedented nature, it has also been very challenging to perceive, to name, to grasp, to understand, to predict. So, this has been a big part of my work, to try and fill in those blanks.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:08:12 The nature of instrumentarian power, since you bring up radical indifference, is that it's a power that is used to really shape, tune, herd the behavior of individuals and populations toward the kinds of commercial outcomes that surveillance capitalists and their business customers seek.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:08:39 It uses the instrumentation of the ubiquitous digital architecture that now surrounds us in our daily lives. It uses that instrumentation as the means to a global capability for behavioral modification that can push us, and herd us, and shunt us in the direction that it wants us to go for the sake of its commercial outcomes.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:09:10 The thing is here that it doesn't care what we do. It doesn't care what we believe. It doesn't care what we feel. It doesn't care if we are in great pain. It doesn't care if we are experiencing great

joy. All it cares about is that whatever we are doing, whatever we are thinking, whatever forms of action we are taking, that we are doing those things in ways that it can capture the behavioral data from those activities, translate those behavioral data into predictions, sell those predictions into new markets that trade exclusively in behavioral futures, in predictions of what we will do now, soon, and later, sell those to its business customers who have a vested interest in knowing our future behavior.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:10:10 So, this is a completely different direction where our behavior becomes simply instrumentalized on the way to achieving commercial outcomes for business customers interested in the future of our behavior. This is the essence of instrumentarian power. I call this "radical indifference" because instrumentarian powers' attitude toward us, its point of view, if you will, is a point of view where it really doesn't care about us. It just cares that it has access to the data that leaches from our activities, that it can use for its predictions.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:11:03 The result of that is what I call radical indifference. There was a memo that was produced by a Facebook executive named Andy Bosworth, that was released accidentally at some point just a little over a year or two ago, where he was actually coaching his team on what I would call the operations of radical indifference.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:11:31 The way he put it was the economic imperative for Facebook is growth. Growth comes from connection. I'm paraphrasing, of course, because I'm not reading this memo right now. Essentially, he said, "Look, if people connect on Facebook, and they use that connection to create a terrorist plot, and people get killed, we continue to connect because connection is growth, and that's our life. If people use connection on Facebook to fall in love and get married and live happily ever after, we continue to connect because connection is growth, and growth is our imperative."
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:12:15 So, here, he's illustrating the point of view of radical indifference. It may lead to terror and death. It may lead to love and happiness. We can't care about that. We don't care about the content of behavior, the content of connection, the content of what happens on our platform. All we care about is the fact of connection that we get the data from all of that connection because that's the data that drives economic growth for Facebook as a premier surveillance capitalist.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:12:51 So, Bosworth was acting as a very responsible, accountable, excellent surveillance capitalist, and beautifully illustrating the

point of view of surveillance capitalism, which is radical indifference.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:08 This was something I was wondering about when I was reading your book. The aim as you state here is to obtain this data and to compute it in order to make more accurate predictions. The more accurate the predictions, the more profitable the enterprise. Aren't the most accurate predictions, if you were to follow this logic to its final destination, the most accurate predictions are those which you have a hand in formulating?
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:13:31 Yes.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:32 In other words, if you are to herd this hive - you've described as a hive - if you were directing the behavior of the automata that are in the system, then you can perfectly predict in the final iteration their behavior. Isn't that the final state of the system, a perfectly controlled, automated system?
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:13:53 All right. So, I think it might help a little bit if I gave a quick definition of surveillance capitalism, and just very quickly the architecture of its economic imperatives, and then come back to this question because it's the apotheosis of the economic imperatives. Is that all right?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:14:13 Yeah, and I've been told you don't forget, which is actually great because I would forget. Yes.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:14:19 [Laughter] I don't forget. So, I would define surveillance capitalism this way for our listeners. There are many respects in which surveillance capitalism diverges from the history of market capitalism, but in this one respect that's essential to its definition, it follows in the pattern of how capitalism has evolved over the centuries. Historians have described this process as capitalism continuously claims things that live outside of the market dynamic and it drags them into the market dynamic, converts into commodities that can be sold and purchased.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:15:01 So, famously, industrial capitalism claimed nature. Nature lives in its own time and space. The meadows, the waters, the oceans, the forests live in its own time and space, but industrial capitalism claimed nature for the industrial dynamic to have it reborn as real estate, as land, as water that could be sold and purchased in a commodity fashion. At the time that that happened, that was a radical breakthrough in the whole structure of life.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:15:36 Also, industrial capitalism took the idea of work, which was something that people did in their homes, in their gardens, in their fields, in their cottages, and it brought that into the market dynamic to be reborn as labor, that could be sold and purchased in the marketplace.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:15:55 Surveillance capitalism does something similar, but now with a dark twist. What it does is it claims private human experience as a source of free raw material, raw material, which is translated into behavioral data. Those data then combined with advanced computational capabilities, the dark satanic mills, if you will, of surveillance capitalism, what we call machine learning, machine intelligence, artificial intelligence, combined with these computational capabilities in order to produce predictions of our future behavior.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:16:39 This began in the context of online targeted advertising. The specific behavior that they wanted to predict was whether or not we would click through particular ad. That's a piece of human behavior, clicking, maybe trivial in the larger scheme of things online, clicking, but their aim was to predict that bit of behavior. Those online targeted ad markets, if you just zoom out a little bit, those were markets where people were trading in these behavioral futures. "Who's going to click on my ad? If I put my ad where they tell me to, will I get the clickthrough rates?" So, they're betting on future human behavior.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:17:24 This became the essence, the mechanisms of the economic logic that is surveillance capitalism. Begun at Google, migrated to Facebook, became the default option in Silicon Valley, and is now migrating across many sectors of our economy, many different industries.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:17:45 Well, you have a starting point that you identify in the book, which is I think 2001 or thereabouts, what you described as a crisis in Silicon Valley after the bursting of the bubble, and Google needed to find a business model that could make their company profitable, and this was born out of Google, and then has spread and become a logic, an economic logic as described it for the rest of the economy.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:18:09 That's right. So, it now has a life of its own, and it should not be confused with either one company like Google or two companies like Google and Facebook. It's in the insurance industry. It's in the retail industry. It's in the healthcare industry. It's now on the automotive industry. It's a kind of virus that is spreading through these different sectors and transforming each sector as it moves through.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:18:38 Early on, the competitive dynamic in this new logic is around the quality of prediction. So, what's going to come out of that black box of this computational machinery that tells us what people are going to do now, soon, and later? Early on, the competition for predictions begin to delineate a new kind of economic imperative. There are several of these economic imperatives.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:19:11 The first, of course, was scale, that you needed a lot of behavioral data in order to make powerful predictions. So, you need a volume of these behavior data flows. Again, as competition heated up, pretty soon, volume was not enough. Now, it also became variation. So, you need both scale and scope. You need a lot of behavioral data, but you need different kinds of behavior data.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:19:41 So, now, we're going to get you offline. We're going to give you a mobile phone.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:19:45 Android.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:19:47 Give you an Android at the least possible cost, so that there is no friction presented to the continuous flow of behavioral data. So, that Android has to be understood as simply a supply chain interface for behavior data. It was debated within Google. Some people said, "See, now we have a way of competing with Apple and with the iPhone, and we can make money on our devices, and have margins on our devices. We don't have to make a lot of money on data." Other people said, "No, no, no, no, no, because we have discovered this powerful logic that is just driving unbelievable volumes of revenue growth. So, what we want to do is lower every single barrier to the flow of behavior data."

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:20:36 So, the voices that won in this debate were the voices that said, "Hey, if we could give Android away for free, let's do that," because all it is is a supply chain interface for behavior data that goes with you wherever you are in the world, your voice, your camera, your contacts, all the stuff on your phone, but also, your location, where you're going, who you're going with, what you're doing, what restaurant you're entering, and so on, and so forth.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:21:03 Ultimately, your face, your voice, all these other ways of getting depth insight into you from the more emotional, personality-related characteristics of yourself. So, now, we have economies of scale, and economies of scope, but prediction competition continues, more people coming on stream, more people

searching for these behavioral data, more people trying to get a dominant position in these new prediction markets.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:21:38 So, the next horizon, as it were, becomes something that really is new under the sun, economies of scale, economies of scope. This next one I call economies of action. The idea here, as you so rightly anticipated, is that the very best predictive data comes from actually intervening in the state of play, and finding ways to use, as we said before, the digital surround, all the instrumentation in the digital milieu, what people talk about ubiquitous computing to use all of these instrumentation, to usually, gently nudge, coax, tune, herd subliminally shape and modify your behavior in the direction that we want you to go to fulfill our commercial goals, and the commercial goals of our customers in these behavioral futures markets.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:22:43 So, the very most powerful means of predicting is to actually be shaping your behavior, and this is when the digital architecture that now pervades our lives, our daily lives has been repurposed as a global means of behavioral modification. This has resurrected an old paradigm of behavioral modification that really our societies rejected in the 1960s, in the 1970s when the great leaders of behavioral modification like the scientists, my former professor at Harvard, B. F. Skinner, considered the father of radical behaviorism.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:23:29 Which is the incarnation of that, the economic incarnation.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:23:32 This is the economic incarnation of that now on the scale of whole populations.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:23:39 There's a great of B. F. Skinner's. I don't know if I got it from your book, but it resonated with me, "It is not a matter of bringing the world into the laboratory, but of extending the practices of an experimental science to the world at large."
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:23:52 Yes, I do cite that in the book. That is exactly the reversal that we've been through here, where in the '60s and '70s, behavioral modification was being applied to captive audiences in prisons, and hospitals, and schools. There was a wide congressional senate inquiry. The American people were up in arms rejecting these practices.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:24:19 An auspicious group of senators that formed this committee included Edward Kennedy and Sam Ervin, and the very famous senators came down on this, and finally concluded that behavioral modification was an affront to the ideal of the

autonomous individual, which was essential for democracy and an affront to democratic society itself. They forbade any kind of federal funding to go to any kind of program that used behavioral modification on its populations.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:24:56 Now, we fast forward a few decades later, and here we have under the auspices of private capital, private surveillance capital the entire digital infrastructure for which as we began our conversation about home, for which most of us harbored so much hope for an empowered and democratic future. This entire digital architecture now is being hijacked by a new form of capitalism, a mutation of capitalism, a rogue capitalism that uses the digital now as a global means of behavioral modification for the narrow commercial ends of the others not us, business customers, not the people whose behavior and experience is at stake. Our problems are not being solved. Our problems are simply being instrumentalized for the sake of other's commercial gain.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:25:59 A lot of things have come to my mind as I'm listening to you talk. One of them has to do with Skinner's black box, and that these algorithms are black box. That relates to something you've written in the book, which is that these companies demand to know everything about us, and we can know nothing about them. It's interesting play on words.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:18 Also, there's this imagery that keeps coming to my mind. It isn't exactly the spider's web. Again, there's this surreal quality to what comes across from your writing or from the implications of your writing, maybe. There's a lot of imagination that's left to the reader. So, maybe it is my own imagination, but there's this dark, nightmarish quality of a spider's web, where almost like a deer drinking from a river, and it gets tangled up in it. It feels like we're getting tangled up in this web.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:49 That comes up a lot when you talk. That's something that I think often about. Do you feel that way at all? Does it feel like we're getting entangled and meshed in this architecture that is being driven by this economic logic of surveillance capitalism?
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:27:06 It's very interesting the way you bring this up because as I've been going around talking to groups of people on this subject, I'm finding the same kind of pattern over and over again, where people talk about a sense of anxiety, and unease, a lot of control, a feeling of manipulation, concerns about freedom, concerns about sovereignty, a sense that they need to resist, but not really having a clear grasp of what to resist or how or whom.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:27:45 So, it's this foggy, amorphous, cloudy thing that is closing in around us that's making us feel anxious and uneasy like things are not okay. More and more, we feel like we have to hide from it, but how to hide? Where to hide? The response that I'm getting with the word surveillance capitalism is that here, finally, we have a way of naming this thing that we're entangled in.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:28:19 Just in the idea of naming, being able to see it clearly, being able to discern its mechanisms, being able to perceive the logic, see how it operates, see how it functions, even though it doesn't change it immediately, it complete changes the experience of it because once we can name it and once we have language about it, we start to be empowered, and we start to be able to see where it ends and where we begin.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:28:52 We start to be able to imagine a space in which there can be resistance, and where there can be combat, and we can come together and talk and name and develop our bonds of collective action that can reinstate some form of combat that we have been robbed off precisely because these mechanisms. So much capital has been devoted to ensuring that these mechanisms are invisible. So much skill has been devoted to making sure that the rhetoric in this space of surveillance capitalism is misleading.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:41 ... and cloaked in inevitability.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:29:43 ... and rendered as though it was an inevitable consequence of digital technology. So, it's laden with euphemism, with the rhetoric of emancipation, with very artfully employed misdirection, telling us it's one thing when it's really another thing, masses of engineering skill and capital devoted to making sure that these mechanism operate in a way that consistently comprehensively bypasses individual awareness, so that our ignorance is engineered by these vast accumulations of capital and skill that are now trained on our experience.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:30:35 So, out of all of that, we have been robbed of the right to combat. We have been robbed of our decision rights. We have been robbed of a choice to participate or not in indeed every single piece of research. Going back to the early 2000s shows that when people are informed of the nature of these backstage operations, they want nothing to do with them. They do not want to be entangled. They want to be protected, but more and more, a surveillance capital has come to own and operate almost all of the spaces of the internet.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:31:16 There is no place to go. There is no place to escape. The alternatives have been foreclosed. Therefore, our means of social participation, just the basic kinds of things we need to do everyday, whether it's getting our health data from our physician or getting our grades from our children's teachers or making arrangements with our friends and family for dinner. There's the basics of the social participation force us to march through the same channels that are surveillance capitalism supply chains.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:31:51 So, social participation and surveillance capitalism are increasingly conflated, and their alternatives are foreclosed. Therefore, we feel resigned and we feel helpless, and racing around all of this as you've already hinted at is a larger category error that has been imposed on us. That's the idea that this is the only way that digital can be.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:22 I think it's a powerful idea, though. I think that's something that the more I meditated on that, it grew an importance. This point that we're made to believe that what we encounter today is technology.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:32:34 It is technology.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:35 It isn't surveillance capitalism.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:32:37 It's not economics. It's technology.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:40 That's the wolf in the sheep's clothing. That's the puppeteer behind the puppet. The puppet is the technology. The puppeteer are the surveillance capitalists.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:32:48 That's right. The puppet is this whole milieu of digital instrumentation.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:52 That doesn't have to be governed by this type of logic.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:32:57 That can be anything we want it to be. It was. Demetri, it was.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:59 I agree. I mean, I remember what the 1990s was like.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:33:02 That's right.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:02 It was nothing like this.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:33:02 There was a window before surveillance capitalism broke upon the public imagination when Google was finally IPO in 2004, and

we got a chance to see the incredible revenues that flowed from this economic logic in just a few short years. Between 2000 and 2004, Google's revenue line increased by 3,500 and 90%.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:28

That's a remarkable number.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:33:30

That's just astonishing, and that was on the back of this economic logic. Look, in the year 2000, a group of really smart designers and engineers and data scientists at Georgia Tech published a really interesting big report on what they called the Aware Home. That's what today we think of as the Smart Home. The Aware Home was going to do all the things that we want a Smart Home to do today. It was going to give us data to make our homes more efficient, and data about our behavior that could help us with our health, and our fitness, and so on and so forth.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:34:10

Anyway, when they got down to the schematics for the Aware Home, the schematics were pretty simple. It was a closed loop. It was the devices built in to the home itself. It was one node. The other node was the occupant of the home. The occupant or the occupants, those are the only people who receive the data. They decided if it would be shared or not, and they decided how to make sense of it. They decided what to do with it. It was a simple, closed loop that was empowering.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:34:50

Similarly, in the telemedicine field, telemedicine in the year 2000, 2001, 2002, same goals that we have today, but conceived as a simple, closed loop, the physician, a server typically located in a hospital, and the patient at home in her or his bed or bedroom or living room or wherever, a simple, closed loop where it was the person who receive the data, the person who had the decision rights over those data.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:35:26

Just a couple of year ago, 2017, a couple of scholars at the University of London did an analysis of the Nest thermostat. As you know, Nest is owned by Google. They concluded that for a moderately vigilant consumer to install one Nest thermostat in the home requires that person to review a minimum of 1,000 privacy policies and user contracts, and user agreements because the thermostat, of course, is collecting all kinds of behavioral data. It also becomes a hub for other smart devices in the home that are feeding it with behavioral data. It could be your mattress. It could be your dishwasher. It could be your television set. It could be your stereo system.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:36:16 Then all these data are not only going to Nest, but they're going to Nest third-parties. Nest takes no accountability for what the third-parties do. Each third-party shunts the data to third-parties, and they take no accountability, and those third-parties and their third-parties and so on and so forth in an infinite regress.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:36:36 Then, of course, it turns out that if you don't agree to these thousands of contracts, you slowly lose the functionality of the product. Nest warns maybe the smoke alarm won't work. Maybe you end up with frozen pipes. So, the very reason that you bought the thermostat in the first place is obviated, is deleted because the real point of the thermostat is as a supply chain interface for behavioral data, not to serve your needs in your home for you, for your family, for your energy cost, for your health, everything else that you had hoped for.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:37:22 So, this is where we now have smart products. It means that we're no longer really working on the product. We're simply using the product as a supply chain interface, personalized services. We're no longer working on the service to really help you and solve problems in your life. The service is a supply chain interface for behavioral data, and that's the direction that surveillance capitalism is taking our economy.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:37:53 A phrase that has become popular recently is that you're not the customer, you're the product, but you make the point that you're not really the product, you're actually the resource to be extracted. What's interesting about this is that now, we're getting to a point where not only are we the resource to be extracted as you say, we're the data that leaches from our sorrow, but we are now to be increasingly guided. It's a two-way mechanism.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:38:23 It's monitoring and actuation. That's what the data scientists call it. The first phase is monitoring. We can know everything through the digital surround. We can know everything, but then the data scientists describe a later phase called actuation, where we can actually use the same devices that let us know everything. We use that knowledge to now actuate real action, real behavior in the real world of people and things.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:38:55 It's an interesting, interesting is not the right word. I'm trying not to be alarmist because your book is not alarmist. Like I said, it is an intimate read, and it actually has a very ... I don't even want to use the word positive message because that also sounds fake. It is positive. It feels genuinely positive, but many of us have been in situation where there've been people in our

lives who are somewhat manipulative. They can manipulate us a little bit.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:21 There's an experience of being around someone like that or in a relationship with someone like that, where things don't feel right. Something feels off. There is this unease. There is this anxiety. I find this to be very relatable to where we are today. I feel that this is a shift where we went from this period where the entire attention was focused towards harvesting data. So, now, we're increasingly that data is being put to use in actuation.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:52 You've, of course, used one great example, well, a few. Actually, two I really liked. Three, maybe two with Facebook, one with the voting, and the other more pernicious with the happiness and the sadness.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:40:04 The emotional contagion.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:40:04 The emotional contagion, and then the other, more disturbing in the context of instrumentarianism, the case of Pokémon Go. So, maybe you can also tell our listeners who aren't familiar with these case studies what they are because, again, they're significant for where we're going in this discussion.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:40:23 Yeah. You're absolutely right. Well, Facebook conducted two what they call massive scale contagion experiments. One was to see if they could affect real world voting behavior. In this case, it wasn't telling you to vote for, but just getting you to go vote. So, it was like a pre-Cambridge Analytica run through on this kind of thing. Their second massive scale contagion experiment was around seeing if they could actually change the emotional valence of a person, make you happier or make you sadder.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:41:03 The whole idea here was could we use subliminal cues in the online environment to affect changes in your real life in the real world in one case, getting more people to go vote than would have voted without the subliminal cues, and the other case, making some people happier and making other people sadder.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:41:31 When they went to write up these experiments in the scholarly journals, reputable, very reputable scholarly journals that publish these studies, the researchers both from Facebook and from Academia boasted that not only one had they discovered that you could unloose an emotional contagion through the online media that would change real life in the real world, but two, that you could do that by continuously and

comprehensively bypassing individual awareness, that people never could see it coming. They never knew it was happening.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:15 That's the thing that's so scary, and that's what I feel like we feel in a subconscious way when we discuss this unease and this anxiety.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:42:22 Yes, that's right. That's absolutely right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:24 This feeling of being manipulated without our knowing.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:42:26 That's right. It's right that we feel unease because it is happening. I mean, people who are on Facebook, the news feed is like a version of this all the time because the news feed is a complex algorithm. That news feed is constantly being manipulated in order to engender the maximum engagement from you on the site.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:42:53 So, this is all an exercise in this kind of manipulation, but some of it like these massive scale experiments begin to show us a sense of its ambitions not only toward just collecting our data online, but toward society itself, toward how surveillance capitalism moves toward the real world, toward organizing real populations as we move through our real lives in our cities, in our countries, in our societies to tune and herd and coax us in the real world toward its guaranteed outcomes.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:43:38 That's where Pokémon Go comes in. Pokémon Go as you know was an augmented reality game developed and incubated at Google, spun off at the last minute for its introduction to the world, but Pokémon Go really was a population level experiment in how we use now this digital architecture to herd populations through the real places and our real cities toward the guaranteed outcomes that our business customers want.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:44:14 In the case of Pokémon Go, which was nominally owned by a company called Niantic Labs, which also came out of Google run by John Hanke who was behind Street View. Before that, he was behind Google Earth. Before that, he invented the satellite system that was invested in by the CIA that then was bought by Google that became Google Earth.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:37 That's an important piece also just to throw it in there is the surveillance state component, and how important 9/11 was and the terrorist attacks were to enabling this not just in the regulatory front, but also for the culture to get to this place

where people say, "I don't have nothing to hide. Why do I care?"

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:44:56 Right. That's a key piece of this. The interest of the surveillance state were critical to incubating and nurturing, and these fledgling companies with their really cool, amazing, new surveillance capabilities that bypassed awareness and so forth, and making sure that there was very little, if any, law that impeded their growth and their development, so that these capabilities would be there when the state needed dip in because these capabilities were allowed to grow and flourish under the auspices of private capital free from constitutional constraints, free from other kinds of democratic law that, ultimately, even our intelligence agencies are accountable to.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:45:42 So, in the case of Pokémon Go, what we saw was that, at first, it seemed like, "How is Pokémon Go making money?" Well, it's making money because people buy doodads for their Pokémon creatures, and they buy banners, and tokens to get them up to the next level of the game.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:46:00 Digital banners.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:46:01 These various accessories that enhance the game. Ultimately, what became clear was that Pokémon Go, Niantic Labs, had convened its own behavioral futures markets. So, it had establishments in the city, the pizza joints, the restaurants, the bars, the McDonald's franchises, the other kinds of services, places where they may fix your car, where you might want to go shopping. All these place were paying Niantic Labs for guaranteed footfall.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:46:37 So, now, again, you see the exact same structure as what we talked about before in the online targeted advertising. Online targeted advertising were paying for a piece of future behavior, which is a clickthrough. Now, we're in the real world, on the real streets, in the city, in the parks, in and out of homes, in and out of cars. We're paying for a piece of future behavior. This time, it's not clickthrough, it's footfall. It's you're real body in a real place, spending real money in my restaurant, in my shop, whatever it might be.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:47:14 So, now, we have come full circle now to how we learn to herd populations through the real places of our real lives toward others' guaranteed commercial outcomes, all of it outside of our awareness while we think that we're just playing Pokémon Go. This, of course, is a rehearsal. It's a dry run for the model of the smart city, which Google calls the Google City. It's what

citizens in Toronto are contesting this very day as the public officials of Toronto have seeded to Google a part of the waterfront to develop and Eric Schmidt when he heard about this great coo that they had landed said, "Oh! Now, it's our turn."

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:48:11 Our turn means that if it's our turn, it's private capitalists turn, it's surveillance capitalists turn to run the city instead of what? Instead of democracy's turn, instead of the citizens' turn. It means that democracy's turn is up and now, it's surveillance capitalism's turn to run the city, to replace politics with computation, to replace citizens with statistics, to replace the city with the idea of a population.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:48:44 This is where we begin to see the economic imperatives driving an economic logic inexorably offline into the real world, beyond scale, beyond scope, into our action, into our behavior, into our society itself.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:04 That's a terrifying image. I know, again, we're not trying to draw comparisons, but there is at least on an emotional level, it generates feelings and images related to a totalitarian state. I understand that it's not, but emotionally, it feels overwhelming in that way.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:49:25 Well, it feels totalitarian because it feels like a place of no escape.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:28 Yeah, an overwhelming power and control over our lives.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:49:32 It feels like a place of absolutism because computational truth replaces politics. Human kind is not meant to live in absolutism. Uncertainty is a feature of the human condition, and that's why we invented language, contracts, law, society as a way of combining together and collaborating together in order to minimize the downside of uncertainty, which is inevitable in the future.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:50:13 As we do that, building our trust, building our bonds, learning how to work together, learning how to solve problems. This is the social fabric. This is how social trust is created. Then if we imagine a world of computational certainty, we no longer have to do that. We no longer have to work together. We no longer have to debate and contest. We no longer have to collaborate. We no longer have to problem solve. We no longer have to put our shoulders together in the face of uncertainty and make our way to the future together. We just rely on the absolutism of

the computational answer. That becomes a new form of profoundly antidemocratic absolutism.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:01 Also, you touched on this earlier. We're just talking about the distinction. So, totalitarianism uses force in the fear of violence that's generated from the threat of violence to compel people to moderate their behavior. This is something where the behavior is moderated by those who have the power instead of it being from the outside and it's from the inside out.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:51:23 Well, you're right. The whole essence of totalitarianism is that terror is used to shape behavior, but that's why I think this distinction is so important instrumentarian power. It's the instrumentation that is used at an arm's length to shape behavior and you don't know it. You're not aware of it. You're not afraid of it. You're not terrified. No one is trying to cut your head off or send you to the Gulag or the concentration camp.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:51:58 So, as I've reiterated a few times now, the surveillance capitalists are very proud of the fact that these systems are designed to bypass awareness, so you never know it's happening. You never know it's coming. Therefore, you are robbed of the right of combat. Resistance is annihilated at the root because we don't know that it's happening to us.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:52:27 So, it's a slow burn. It's a slow burn, and you go out and walk on the streets outside the studio. Everybody is walking on the sidewalk looking at their phone. It's already entrained.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:43 So, you hinted at this before and you've talked about it at length in your book, but societies of human beings are complex systems. That's because freewill is a feature of the system. The economic systems that we have today, you mentioned Hayek in the book, for example. Hayek deals with the information problem. This is what prices are for. It's because we can't perfectly know as human beings what the price of something should be, and so the market manifests that price in a sense.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:53:13 These economic systems that we've developed, they don't seem that they could work in this society, in this type of a system. I also wonder, and I think you make the point in your book, I wonder also about democracy as a system. In other words, democracy requires freewill also. You point some statistics on your book about this loss of faith in democracy in Western countries. There's also more and more talk about universal basic income. You make the point about General Motors, at the height of the great depression, employed more people than

Google and Facebook at the height of their market capitalizations.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:53:48 I think what's clear from reading your book is that there is no way to actually live under such a system and have these systems of government and economics that we have. You devoted a good deal of time in the book, I don't know that we'll get time to talk about it here, about solutions, ways of basically resisting because you talk about it in terms of resistance. You also talk about outrage and finding our outrage and naming and shaming.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:54:14 I think there are a lot of positive lessons there. I don't know if you want to comment on any of that before we go because I know you have to get going, Prof. Zuboff.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:54:22 Well, you've raised so many important points, and I think the big picture here is that I mentioned at the very beginning when we're talking about the definition of surveillance capitalism that there are many ways in which surveillance capitalism seems to diverge quite dramatically from the history of capitalism, the one you mentioned.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:54:43 The whole idea of why do we have to have free markets, why do we have to have free enterprise, why all the emphasis on freedom, going all the way back to Adam Smith, and this is the theme that Hayek, Friedrich Hayek, the architect of neoliberalism took up. The whole idea was that we can never know what is going on in the market. It's so complex that it's deeply mysterious, ineffable. Therefore, every actor has to have maximum freedom to do the best they can to make the best judgments they can because no one can see the totality.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:55:19 Well, now, in this new regime that we've been discussing, we have a situation where the totality is visible. Yet, surveillance capitalists are still demanding absolute freedom. So, here's the great contradiction. What I say in the book is that they know too much to qualify for freedom, that the whole justification for freedom, for the freedom of the market was that we cannot know.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:50 Well, this is also, you touched on this with the divisions of learning in society, right? This is what you mean by the division of learning in society.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:55:56 Yes. So, now, the fact that they know too much to qualify for freedom, we've entered the 21st century, which is a century in

which the key principles of social order are really about the division of learning, not much less so now about the division of labor, right? It's less about, "What do I do?" than "What do I know?" The key questions for the division of learning in society, "Who knows? Who decides who knows? Who decides who decides?"

Demetri Kofinas: 00:56:31

The basic philosophical questions, "Who will guard the guardians?"

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:56:34

That's right, knowledge, authority and power, the essential questions. So, now, we're entering the 21st century with these huge institutional creations of surveillance capitalism that have amassed these asymmetries of knowledge, these concentrations of knowledge that really are unprecedented in human history. They know everything about us. We know almost nothing about them. Their knowledge-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:57:07

That's a remarkable statement.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:57:08

... is about us, but it's not for us. So, these are very peculiar, unprecedented asymmetries. The knowledge that they have accumulated is not knowledge that they will and in many cases, even can share because this is now embedded in these machine systems that create the predictions that drive the markets. So, this is what and Durkheim talked about the philosophers, sociologist Durkheim, who first wrote about the division of labor in society as the axial principle of the 20th century. He wrote about these things can go haywire, and you can have an abnormal division of labor, where elite power takes control of the economic machinery, and things are very unequal in the way they're divided, the way these opportunities to participate and contribute are divided.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:58:10

Feudal systems.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:58:11

Feudal systems, elite systems. Well, now, we're finding ourselves early stages of creating the 21st century society, division of learning in society already pathologically shaped by these deep asymmetries of knowledge and the deep asymmetries of power that accrues from that knowledge.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:58:36

Power.

Shoshana Zuboff: 00:58:38

Right. So, what this means is that in addition to economic inequality, we're introducing a whole new access of inequality into 21st century society, which is the inequality of "Who

knows? Who decides who knows? Who decides who decides who knows?" The answer to these questions are now lodged in the terrain of the surveillance capitalists. What I say is that is not okay. That is an intolerable situation. It's a situation that no 21st century citizen should face.

- Shoshana Zuboff:** 00:59:20 It is now up to us to name this, to grasp it, to call upon, insist upon the resources of our democratic institutions, which have largely slept while surveillance capitalism has flourished, and to insist that democracy retake the high ground, that it's democracy that decides the division of learning in society, that it's democracy that decides the future, that it's democracy that oversees the trajectory of the digital, that it's democracy that invites new competitors to take hold of the digital in ways that actually can fulfill its promise of empowerment and emancipation and democratization.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 01:00:13 Our democracies have to be reinvigorated, resuscitated in order to understand what has happened, intervene, interrupt, outlaw this new economic logic in its very specific mechanisms, so that the way is opened again where the digital is freed from its enslavement to the surveillance capitalism, if you will, in this parasite that has taken hold and hijacked it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:47 It's interesting. For listeners, in the overtime, I'm going to go through some of these solutions and some of the things that Prof. Zuboff outlines in her book because I also think they are market opportunities. You have a great quote. I think it's from actually an interview you gave. I tweeted it out. I really loved it. It's having to do with market opportunities because I completely agree and I've been making this point myself. I think there's a humongous market opportunity here because of this profound market failure in not addressing the progress-
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 01:01:16 This is a market failure, a market failure of world historic proportions because nobody wants this.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:01:22 It's an existential threat to the business models of these enormous platforms. Now, Apple is an interesting case, of course, because they've made a point to differentiate themselves from Google, and I think they're trying to take this competitive advantage, which is to say that, "We can offer you a platform and give you back your privacy," and by doing that, it's taking a competitive shot at Google.
- Shoshana Zuboff:** 01:01:45 So, we'll see.

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| Demetri Kofinas: | 01:01:46 | We'll see. |
| Shoshana Zuboff: | 01:01:46 | Obviously, Apple has taken that stand. Tim Cook has taken that stand, but Apple is still full of many contradictions, many things that would have to be resolved, but were it to be an Apple or a company, alliance of companies, alliance of business leaders who confound a new ecosystem that really plants a flag in the ground changes the trajectory toward the digital future. This alliance, these new operators, these new competitors have the opportunity to engage every single person on planet earth as their customer because nobody wants to be entangled in surveillance capitalism. |
| Demetri Kofinas: | 01:02:34 | Well, I think that's where the optimism comes from. I'm sure you've seen it because you've been touring now on your book, and you see how many people respond to this. I think that's what's so optimistic about this. The demand is there, and I think people are waking up because that anxiety is becoming impossible for some of us to ignore. |
| Shoshana Zuboff: | 01:02:50 | Absolutely right. I have every faith that we triumph here because, and the key thing goes back to our distinction between technology and capitalism, surveillance capitalism, specifically. Our societies have experienced successful experience in fighting and tethering the raw excesses of capitalism to the requirements of our populations, of our people, and of our democracies. We ended the gilded age. We did it again during the depression. We did it again in the postwar era. We brought law, regulation, and opened the way for new forms of competition that allowed capitalism to reach an equilibrium with democracy. We called it market democracy. |
| Shoshana Zuboff: | 01:03:42 | I see every possibility today as people all over the world are being activated, and the naming is a key part of that. As people are activated, politicians are being activated. I've just spent a week in Brussels, 10 days in London. I've seen it in Europe. Politicians are being activated. Political leaders are talking about surveillance capitalism. We see folks who have nominally been called users, the name given to them by surveillance capitalists now beginning to understand we have political interests, and we have economic interests. We have social and psychological interests. |
| Shoshana Zuboff: | 01:04:26 | We want something else. The demand is there. That is going to make its way into the political system, and it's going to make its way into the market system. |
| Demetri Kofinas: | 01:04:36 | Absolutely. |

Shoshana Zuboff: 01:04:37 So, I have every belief that we know how to create this change, how to take on this kind of combat and do it successful. We've done it before. We'll do it again. This is not the end of the story. This is the beginning of the story.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:04:56 I feel 100% the exact same way. I think it's been validated by many of the conversations that I have. Dr. Zuboff, I want to thank you so much for coming on the show.

Shoshana Zuboff: 01:05:07 Thank you, Demetri.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:05:08 That was my episode with Shoshana Zuboff. I want to thank Dr. Zuboff for being on my program. Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Creative Media Design Studios in New York City. For more information about this week's episode or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts and show run downs full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:05:51 Today's episode was produced by me, and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our websites at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at Hidden Forces Pod or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.