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Prehistories of Social Media: Panopticon in Web Cam Community

Introduced by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, the Benthamian Panopticon model has become one of the main metaphors for surveillance. According to Foucault, the central features through which the disciplining power in panopticon is working are space, visibility, normalizing gaze and hierarchical observation. This paper examines parallelism with Panopticon and one particular Webcam community by studying these central features. By researching the possible panopticon logic working inside a webcam community the paper wants, first, to raise question about the acclaimed participatory and empowering functioning of social media practices. Second, to generate new knowledge on the leisure orientated “free” organization and the mechanism how it disciplines the subjects inside it. The key conclusion is, that in order for a web cam community to function there is a need of disciplining, panopticon type power.