



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

21 June 2021

## **A Faustian Pact? Welcome to the World of Surveillance Capitalism**

The Internet is inescapable in modern life. It gives us so much convenience, so much information and facilities. And it has gotten into the deep parts of our lives and homes, in our work, our entertainment, our finance, our education, our meetings, our cars and parking, our appliances, nearly everything. Most of us cannot survive a day without being connected to this thing.

BUT what are trading off for all these conveniences and progress?

We may be basically losing our sovereignty, our right to make judgements and decisions by ourselves without being influenced by the powers that be. Maybe we think we cannot be influenced, but why are they spending billions to track us, know our most intimate behaviours, likes and dislikes, listen in on us and predict our next moves. And tell us what to buy, how to think, how to vote, and what is a good life? And there are also a lot of young users like children or even adults out there who may be easily influenced and not know what is best for them.

Our interaction with the Internet may have developed into a “Faustian” pact. “Faustian” in a sense that now we cannot live without it or tear ourselves from it, though we give away so much about ourselves. We know so little about the people, corporations, or groups behind the Internet; or the governance; or inherent logic of Internet system -- but they know everything about us and have a record of everything we do on the Internet, whether in modern communications, Internet banking, Internet of things, filing of official documents, driverless cars and so on. We may have surrendered our personal sovereignty, though many of us think we have nothing to hide.

But we may inadvertently help to put power in the hands of the already powerful. The surveillance systems are empowering already powerful institutions – corporations, militaries and police. Big Brother and Surveillance Capitalism are watching.

In her book, *THE AGE OF SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* by Shashana Zuboff, defines Surveillance Capitalism as below:

1. A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales;
2. A parasitic economic logic in which the production of goods and services is subordinated to a new global architecture of behavioral modification;
3. A rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of wealth, knowledge, and power unprecedented in human history;
4. The foundational framework of a surveillance economy;
5. As significant a threat to human nature in the twenty-first century as industrial capitalism was to the natural world in the nineteenth and twentieth;

6. The origin of a new instrumentarian power that asserts dominance over society and presents startling challenges to market democracy;
7. A movement that aims to impose a new collective order based on total certainty;
8. An expropriation of critical human rights that is best understood as a coup from above: an overthrow of the people's sovereignty.

She also says that "Surveillance capitalism is not technology; it is a logic that imbues technology and commands it into action. ... It is capitalism that assigns the price tag of subjugation and helplessness, not the technology. That surveillance capitalism is a logic in action and not a technology is a vital point because surveillance capitalists want us to think that their practices are inevitable expressions of the technologies they employ."

We may be made into homogenous predictable human beings for the markets and for political power. Industrial capitalism has wrecked our relationship with nature. Surveillance Capitalism may wreck our soul and human nature.

Consumers must not allow this to happen. We must assert and not allow the Surveillance Capitalists to do data mining and more from our acts of living. The asymmetries on the internet must be curbed by consumers and governments, however difficult or challenging they are.

**Mohideen Abdul Kader**  
**President**  
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