

The Politics and Possibilities of Self-Tracking Technology

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The Politics and Possibilities of Self-Tracking Technology: Data, Bodies and Design

BY

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Dedicated to the memory of Keshav Kumar Jethani

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About the Author

Suneel Jethani is a Lecturer in Digital and Social Media at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has published work in *International Communication Gazette*, *Communication, Politics & Culture*, *Continuum* and *M/C Journal*.

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Abstract

Collecting data about our lives, our bodies and our behaviours has become a part of everyday practice that promises greater self-awareness, healthier living and increased productivity. This book focuses on the dialectical relationship between those that design and use self-tracking technology in order to examine how logics of datafication redefine the body. It explores what these emerging relations mean for imagining, designing and analysing the sociotechnical systems that bring about self-tracking. The book provides a genealogy of self-tracking to situate the notion of quantified and quantifiable selves as problematic data regimes within contemporary digital culture. It charts the origins of self-tracking from within the blueprint of the Californian Ideology to a global social movement which now reaches beyond self-experimentation to encompass the wider trajectories of using wearable sensor technology in the neoliberal management of health, wellbeing and productivity. The book reframes and theorises the quantified self by re-examining and developing arguments of bodies which 'disappear' (Jewson) into, are made 'docile' (Foucault) by and get caught up in the 'rhythms' (Lefebvre) of datafication. The concept of a 'quantised' self is introduced as a means of reading into and exposing the inherent political interests being served when self-tracking technology is introduced into clinical, home and workplace settings. Drawing on the case studies of self-tracking in practice that precede, the final chapter sketches the outlines of a mutual praxis of critique and design that facilitates the (re)imagination of the politics that are embedded into sociotechnical systems of self-tracking and considers possibilities of intervention.