

**Privacy for the 99%**  
***Surveillance for the Rest***

**1. Privacy and surveillance are experienced by everyone.**

**2. Privacy and surveillance are most often experienced indirectly and intuitively.**

**3. Because surveillance and privacy are often experienced indirectly and intuitively, it is easy to believe that we do not have an ongoing relationship with them. We all do.**

Today, when someone talks about invasions of privacy, or the more melodramatic “death of privacy,” they are likely talking about the proliferation of “ambient intelligence,” or pervasive smart-embedded-devices that passively and continuously collect information about us, such as where we go and what we buy.

## **4. Privacy has a reciprocal relationship with surveillance. Both are a threat to the other.**

This narrative of creeping surveillance and the death of privacy is a common one, but it's important to understand that it's not just that surveillance is a threat to privacy, but that their relationship is reciprocal: privacy is also a threat to surveillance.

**5. “Private” is not a passive state, but an active one. We need to practice privacy in order to have it.**

When we flip their relationship from the more commonly articulated one, we understand that privacy is not a passive state or being or a space that we inhabit, but a proactive action we must use.

**6. Privacy is a power structure. It helps maintain the power for those who have it, and it helps resist power for those who don't.**

**7. Resisting power is the first step in creating new power.**

**8. Creating new power is better than obtaining existing power.**

It is also important to understand that this two-way relationship between privacy and surveillance doesn't operate unilaterally, but asymmetrically across power structures. And whether surveillance or privacy is a greater threat is weighted by the power of who is practicing which. When either comes from below, protection and propagation of the opposite will be bolstered from the top.

**9. Like privacy, surveillance is also a power structure. However, surveillance is more offensive than defensive. While privacy helps resist power, surveillance works to actively take power.**

**10. Taking away power is not always necessary for new power to exist.**

**11. Taking power does not always mean gaining power.**

**12. When surveillance or privacy is used by one party, there is likely another party automatically using the other in response.**

**13. Privacy and surveillance do not stay on one side of this conflict, but instead regularly flip positions.**

**14. This flipping of positions can create contradictions in the functions of privacy.**

**15. These contradictions can be rationalized by calculating the power dynamic between those who practice surveillance and those who practice privacy.**

**16. It is not always clear which side of a privacy-surveillance conflict has more power.**

**17. If those with more power are practicing surveillance, those with less power should practice privacy. If those with more power are practicing privacy, those with less power should practice surveillance.**

**18. Privacy and surveillance tactics between parties with similar amounts of power should be avoided.**

**19. When either surveillance or privacy come from below, the opposite will be bolstered and propagated by those on top.**

Privacy for the 99% (Surveillance for the Rest) by Ryan Aasen.  
1st Edition, April 2021.

Downloaded from [ryanaasen.com](http://ryanaasen.com)