[*Data, Surveillance and Me*](https://globe.asahi.com/series/11029968), the serial articles by Midori Ogasawara

1. "[Is cell phone effective to stop the corona virus?](https://globe.asahi.com/article/13331044) Big data include your data, mobilized in the pandemic” (01/05/2020)

   Many governments around the world began to use the data collected by people’s cell phones to prevent the corona virus from spreading, such as geolocation data and contact tracing apps. You may think that these technologies can be a saver, but the effectiveness is unknown. It is certain that we are going into a new stage of surveillance practices in reaction to the pandemic, which reminds us of 9.11. Many surveillance tools such as biometrics became prevalent after 9.11. However, the tech industries were actually waiting for the debut of those technologies, and the anti-terror measures created the ideal stage for them. In this sense, Naomi Klein warns the ‘Coronavirus capitalism’ regarding to the current state of emergency, which leverages the political economic agenda that is normally difficult to implement.

2. "[Does the app surveil the virus or you?](https://globe.asahi.com/article/13351680) The effectiveness of prevention is question” (07/05/2020)

   There are roughly three kinds of data use involving personal cell phones in response to the COVID-19 around the world. First, the use of geolocation data through GPS, directly acquired by the governments. In China, ‘Alipay Health Code’ has been put into practice to sort out the people who can go out or remain in quarantine. The South Korean government discloses the detailed geolocation data of the infected people to public, which triggered searching, shaming and punishing the infected socially. Second, the real-time use of geolocation data to enforce quarantine. In Taiwan, a student who came back from Europe had a police visit on an early Sunday morning because his cellphone buttery died 30 minutes ago. He is also afraid that his neighbours would turned him to the police when he stepped out from his home. In Poland, the people under mandatory quarantine are required to take a selfie twice a day to show the government that they stay home. Finally, the use to trace the people an infected person has contacted. It’s called contact tracing apps that the governments of US, UK, EU, Japan and others rapidly pursue. It is not the direct acquisition of geolocation data like the first and second, and has two types of centralized (involving governments) and decentralized (not involving government, developed by Apple and Google). The process of data sharing in the apps are not yet fully clear, and even if the apps do not help the prevention, the data collected will remain in the hands of government or tech companies.

3. “[Contact tracing apps: Who really wants the data?](https://globe.asahi.com/article/13370568)” (14/05/2020)

   UK has tested a contact tracing app in Isle of Wight, which created a variety of reactions, such as trying to download it to a fax or misunderstanding it that can give the users a real-time warning (so they can go out freely now). The privacy advocates in UK opposed its introduction and demanded the government a robust legal protection for individuals. Meanwhile, the engineer who led the ’TraceTogether’ app in Singapore, is honest about the quality of the app, saying “We use TraceTogether to supplement contact tracing—not replace it”. To think about the future consequences of contact tracing, one area where the technique has been historically pursued is national security intelligence. The American National Security Agency, for which Edward Snowden worked, has collected an enormous amount of contact tracing data to find ’terrorist’ groups, but their analyses were not always accurate and caused the occasional mis-bombing and ‘collateral damage’ in the war on terror. On the other hand, private corporations such as pharmaceutical industries and insurance companies are keen to acquire health-related personal data, including who have been infected or who have contacted the infected by COVID-19. While Japan’s Data Protection Committee finds no problem to implement contact tracing apps with the individual consent, it’s hard for the individual to read off the consequences of sharing the sensitive health data with others.

4. “[Big mess of 'My Number’ system](https://globe.asahi.com/article/13388850): The government leverages the unpopular national ID card system in the pandemic and failed again” (21/05/2020)

   The Japanese government decided to provide $1000 to each resident as a special aid under the pandemic. However, the government required the people to obtain the ‘My Number Card’ for the online application, the people rushed to the City Halls to obtain the cards first, which created the crowds that should be avoided preventing infection, and caused the delay of processing the aid. It is unnecessary to include the ‘My Number Card’ in the online application, as only 16% of the population had obtained the cards. The government used the pandemic to make the people get the cards, which is an important part of their long-term agenda to step up to a mandatory national ID card system. But in other places like Canada, people applied online for emergency aids without any cards. The SIN card was abolished in Canada to protect personal data. Japan can speed up the aid without the cards.

5. "['My Number' as a zombie](https://globe.asahi.com/article/13409974): The dark past of high-tech-card experiments the government wants to hide” (30/05/2020)

The Japanese government has advertised a utopian story that can be achieved by the national identification card system since the 1970s, responding to the model of Welfare State. However, almost all experiments of high-tech identification cards the government has initiated have never been successful: people did not find the benefits in obtaining the cards and often concluded that it’s a waste of their tax money and possibly dangerous. Thus, the Juki-net, Japan’s first centralized national identification system, faced a sharp resistance and an eventual failure as the government-wide, data-sharing system. Nevertheless, the government kept paying to the tech companies for the same kinds of experiments, and now finds the best opportunity to require the people to bear the ‘My Number Card’, which duplicates the Juki-net, but with sharing personal data with private corporations. The government is quickly moving to link the individual banking information to the My Number, excusing the speedy payment of the COVID-related aids to the individuals. But we should look back to the history of failure and resistance, in order not to let the zombie dominate our personal data.