THE EU'S DIGITAL EQUATION: RE-REGULATING THE EU'S KNOWLEDGE, POWER, AND SOVEREIGN RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF ITS UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNMENTALITY[*]

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Abstract

The European Union complements its political and economic integration with digital and technological policies in order to align itself with digitalization and technological progress. As the EU digitalizes and harmonizes itself with technology, it aims to incorporate its citizens, member states, and global technology companies within this process of harmonization. With this new approach, the EU establishes the practices of neoliberal digital governmentality, which engage with the equation of sovereignty, power, and knowledge in a data-centric order. This is because, in today's world, data determines knowledge, shapes the subject, transforms the international system. In such a situation, the EU lays out its own particular models of power and attempts to control and discipline the international system. Hence, this article aims to explicate – through the EU's digital policies – that the EU has developed new dispositifs that will allow it to maintain its governmentality in the digital sphere. Embracing Foucault's post-structuralist approach, this article consists of four main sections as well as the introduction and conclusion. The first section includes Foucault's terminology. The second section analyses Foucault's understanding of neoliberal governmentality. The third section engages in the relationship between digitalization, data, and the individual. The fourth section examines the EU's practices of governmentality with respect to digitalization.

Keywords: Data, Digitalisation, Knowledge, Power, Foucault, the EU.

AB'NİN DİJİTAL DENKLEMİ: AB'NİN GÜÇ, BİLGİ VE İKTİDAR İLİŞKİLERİNİN YÖNETİMSELLİK ANLAYIŞI IŞIĞINDA YENİDEN DÜZENLENMESİ

Öz

Avrupa Birliği (AB) dijitalleşme ve teknolojik gelişimle uyumlu olabilmek için siyasal ve ekonomik entegrasyonunu dijital ve teknolojik politikalarla bütünleştirmektedir. AB kendini dijitalleştirirken ve teknolojiye uyumlu hale getirirken aynı zamanda vatandaşlarını, üye devletlerini ve küresel teknoloji şirketlerini söz konusu uyumlaşmanın bir parçası haline getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu yeni yaklaşımıyla AB, dijital neoliberal yönetimsellik uygulamaları inşa etmektedir. AB'nin dijital neoliberal yönetimsellik uygulamaları iktidar, güç ve bilgi denklemini veri odaklı bir düzen içinde ele almaktadır. Çünkü veri bugünün dünyasında bilgiyi belirlemekte, özneyi şekillendirmekte ve uluslararası sistemi değiştirmektedir. Böylesi bir durumda AB; kendine has iktidar modelleri ortaya koymakta, uluslararası sistemi kontrol ve disipline etmeye çalışmaktadır. Dolayısıyla makalenin amacı, AB'nin dijital alanda yönetimselliğini devam ettirebileceği yeni dispozitifler geliştirdiğini, AB'nin dijital politikaları üzerinden izah etmeye çalışmaktır. Foucault'nun post-yapısalcı yaklaşımını benimseyen makale, giriş ve sonuç bölümlerinin yanı sıra dört ana bölümden meydana gelmektedir. İlk bölümde Foucault'nun terminolojisine yer verilmektedir. İkinci bölümde Foucault'nun neoliberal yönetimsellik anlayışı analiz edilmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde dijitalleşme, veri ve birey ilişkisi ele alınmaktadır. Dördüncü bölümde ise AB'nin dijitalleşmeye ilişkin yönetimsellik uygulamaları incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Veri, dijitalleşme, bilgi, iktidar, Foucault, AB.*

Introduction

As digital technologies and social media platforms take over more of daily life, data and knowledge have become more valuable than ever. Subjects and objects are created through digitally produced and consumed interactions in the online world. This situation not only causes epistemological and ontological change of data, but also forces the restructuring of the international system in this context. Hence, the complex relationship between knowledge-subject and knowledge-power is being restructured once again. This ever so digitalization of daily life not only forced the regulation of subject-object interactions, but it became so big that it eventually started an inevitable power and authority struggle between the nation-states and global technology companies. Along with digital subjectivity, issues of digital security, property and sovereignty

come to the fore. The EU has enhanced certain regulations which consist of not only its own digitalization process but also the balance between nation-states and global technology companies. It should be noted at this point that in a new digital world where data is more valuable than ever, where knowledge is constructed and subjects are defined, the EU deploys a particular set of governmentality techniques and strategies in achieving its objectives. The EU aims to be a leading example in taming and regulating the digital world for the rest of the international community.

This article provides an analysis – through knowledge-subject and power-sovereign relations– of how the EU engages with the digital world, and, the article examines the power struggle between nation-states and global technology companies in the context of neoliberal governmentality. Hence, this article aims to explicate – through the EU's digital policies – that the EU has developed new dispositifs that will allow it to maintain its governmentality in the digital sphere. The article has a poststructuralist approach and it benefits from Foucault's notion of governmentality as its theoretical background. It also carries out a profound investigation of the epistemological and ontological change in the knowledge-power-subject-data relationship. Through the example of the EU, it explicates the questions as to why data has become so important, how it determines knowledge, what kind of power relationship it establishes and what kind of power theme it transforms these power relations into. It especially looks into how the position that the EU has taken in the age of digital surveillance brings about changes in its neoliberal governmentality; as the relationship among knowledge-truth-power-subject is constructed once again. In this regard, this article provides an analysis as to how the EU utilizes its digital regulations as a neoliberal dispositif, including extensively examining the utilization of digital normative regulations.

Relying on this information, this article embraces a research strategy that elucidates the EU's policies on data and digitalization through Foucault's theory of governmentality. Official sources, including the statements of the EU authorities and leaders of Member States are examined throughout the writing process of this article. Consequently, the article attempts to establish the power relations that form the EU's approach to governmentality. It scrutinizes discursive and normative texts in order to explain the approach with respect to data. It examines the EU's official sources (agreements, by-laws, directives, communiqués, strategy documents etc.) as primary sources.

This is because the article asserts that the EU resorts to its digital regulations to reinforce its digital normative structure, to enable the determination of the normal, and even to solidify the Union's economic and political integration. As the EU's approach to neoliberal governmentality is evaluated in epistemological and ontological terms, the scope of the article includes the

EU's behaviour, the experiences of subjectivity that the individual is exposed to by the EU, and the link between member states and the third parties that they have relations with. The article is structured in a way to first provide a clear and understandable explanation of essential concepts and phrases from the Foucauldian viewpoint. Second, it evaluates neoliberalism from the Foucauldian perspective. Thirdly, it provides evaluations of the EU's digitalization venture and subjectivity practices to which its exposes the subject. Fourthly, it examines the EU's practices of governmentality concerning digitalization.

Discourse, Dispositif, Knowledge, Subject, and Data

The EU's neoliberal transformation is constantly being constructed through knowledge-subject and power-sovereign relations. The neoliberal policies of the EU – which shape it based on a theme of continuity – are a result of the rationality process. The rationality[1] process here concentrates on progressive language, freedom, and collective consciousness. At this stage, this "neoliberal rationality"[2] reveals itself as it develops a governmentality approach that incorporates power, knowledge, and subject. Hence the relationship among discourse, dispositif, knowledge, and data, and indeed how they shape the domain of governmentality are extremely important.

Thus, discourse provides materiality to a word, enables its circulation and its service to certain things, allows for its concealment, enables or disables the materialization of a desire, enables it to be against or for certain interests, and allows for the inclusion of this word in the contexts of conflict and struggle (Foucault, 2012: xi). Fundamentally, discourse is a series of governmental phrases (Foucault, 1972: 21-40; A. van Dijk, 2014: 10-14). From a Foucauldian perspective, discourse is a series of words, actions, institutions, and infrastructures that are coherent in themselves and produce new truth regimes, and are not solely related to words (Cresswell, 2009: 211-214). Also – as a name given to all practices and relations arranged in an organization or system – discourse has features such as the ability to change the object or practices that it engages, and to establish special connections (Foucault, 2016: 33-68). It is this structure that enables the involvement of discourse in a production process and its formation of knowledge (Foucault, 2016: 33-68; McHoul, 2006). Moreover, the content of discourse includes ideas and meanings and is not solely related to the language (Foucault, 2016: 33-68). In this context, all

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[1] In Foucauldian studies, the concept of rationality indicates globality. The concept of rationality is used as the capitalist rationality.

[2] From a Foucauldian point of view, neoliberal rationality is completely accepted as the general norm for the historical formation and life. It, also, represents the rationality of a capitalism that is relieved of its archaising references.

practices and relations that are arranged in an organization or system are accepted as discourse. Discourse determines the scope of society's style of thought and defines its boundaries, and indeed enables such societies to focus on certain thoughts (Baumgarten and Ullrich, 2016: 13-38). As a strategic concept, it plays an active role in shaping the power-sovereign relationship (Wandel, 2011: 370-372).

From this viewpoint, it is not wrong to make the assessment that it is in the nature of discourse that the system either determines or directs all practices and relations. In fact, discourse is a product of systemization (Foucault, 2016: 77-78). A product of systemization that is transferred from mouth to ear indeed (Foucault, 2016: 78). The thing that is being explained here is the reproduction of the already existing phrases and their integration into the existing system. The relevant methods are the pedagogically available in certain technical units, institutions, behavioural schemes, and categories of transfer and expansion that both force and maintain discursive practices (Foucault, 2012: 226).

Discourse is not aimed at neutralizing events, joining the silent thing, or reducing the intensity of events; on the contrary, it tends to secure the continuity of events during intensity and to uncover events in its own peculiar chaos (Foucault, 1981: 51-78). The reason for this is that discourse is heavily subject to the practices of power (Foucault, 1981: 51-78; Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 521-547), as the essential role of discourse is to turn knowledge into an object of political practice through language (Foucault, 1991: 53-72). The EU's discourse also helps it legitimize its power practice. The EU's governmentality is partly based on its depiction as a normative power (as an entity which defines "the normal" for its others) and it is reproduced through its discourse on norms and values, and, by its definitions of the normal and its standardization policies.

As a tool of power, the dispositif serves the dominant strategic function that makes power visible. Hence, the dispositif is the second important concept that needs to be touched upon. From Foucault's perspective, "dispositif" is the name given to all tools (apparatuses) of governmentality that determine the relationship between knowledge and power (Foucault, 1980: 194-198). The dispositif is an apparatus that explains the links between events through social analyses – either discursive or otherwise (Peltonen, 2004: 205-219) – that always incorporates concrete strategic functions, is not independent of history, is concerned with providing an urgent response, and is positioned within power relations (Agamben, 2009: 3; Bussolini, 2010: 88; Foucault, 1980: 194-195). Moreover, over time, the dispositif becomes inseparable and even operates like an analytical mechanism that is interconnected and derivative (Ditrych, 2013: 226).

Essentially, the dispositif is the totality of the process, namely the actions, carried out to achieve a certain goal. Hence, all the processes that construct the dispositif need to be assessed together. At this point, the concepts of knowledge, power, data, and sovereignty demand explanation. Knowledge is an assessment carried out by processing data (Boisot and Canals, 2004: 43-67). Moreover, knowledge is also a cluster of factional or ideational phrases that are organized and lead to a reasoned judgment or experimental result (Bell, 1979: 163-168). Although the definitions above are not in line with the Foucauldian perspective, they illustrate the gist of the concept. Nevertheless, the Foucauldian perspective acknowledges the fact that knowledge is constituted in a social context and that it brings about power, or vice versa (Nola, 1998: 109).

Knowledge and power are intertwined concepts. For Francis Bacon, they even signify the same meaning as according to Bacon the acquisition of knowledge and its governance is an indication of the ability to wield power (Nola, 1998). Foucault, on the other hand, articulates that the concept of power acquires meaning through the influence of the truth regime. Hence, power is an apparatus that aims to establish the truth regime, helps systemize sovereign governance, and enables the correction of abnormalities (Vallebona and Weber, 2018: 262; Manokha, 2009: 430).

Discourse's ability to constitute knowledge solidifies the effective role of knowledge in social, cultural, and political practices. It is not wrong to propound that, as a formative system, the most precious source of discourse is knowledge (Foucault, 1972: 64-71). Hence – as an object of desire that is attained in different historical forms and the human mind is compelled to approach– knowledge's characterization on the basis of the relationship between truth and power reveals how discursive practices are utilized in the neoliberal sphere of governmentality. This is because the thing that determines discourse is the transmission of knowledge and the truth created by knowledge. The main source of all this systemization and direction is power and the relations it establishes with other actors and instruments.

According to Foucault, behind knowledge, there is a wall which is not knowledge (Foucault, 2012: 204). Knowledge acquires an epistemic form within this complex structure, and it is ontological as it attempts to clarify the extent of reasoning that discourse provides for the rightness value. Hence, discourse seeks knowledge, knowledge seeks truth, truth seeks right. As a strategic product, knowledge is not an element that is acquired with the acquisition of truth; on the contrary, it is a source that produces truth (Foucault, 2012: xvi-xix). Knowledge is invented and subsequently, truth is invented (Foucault, 2012: xvi-xix). Thus, truth is an object of knowledge (Foucault, 2012: xvi-xix).

On the other hand, Foucault considers knowledge as something that accompanies certain types of power (Love, 1989: 280). In short, knowledge becomes functional as a method of production of power (Giddens, 1994: 57-58). Hence, this generates the need for the evaluation of knowledge, power, and sovereignty to be inseparable concepts (Arnason, 2012: 295-299). In his lecture on the 24th of January 1979, Foucault articulated that he considers sovereignty to be the gist of power as, according to him, knowledge is a dispositif that defines the relations between power and the sovereign. Based on this information, it must be indicated that in fact, for Foucault, the concept of the sovereign corresponds to the actors that hold power (Foucault, 1998). Here, the sovereign, with its own dispositifs, constantly re-regulates the society and – through knowledge and power – it creates distinct methods for disciplining bodies.

For the EU, dispositifs are the key to its further domination over the online world, post-digitalization, as today's struggle is based on data, and the information created from data. Data becomes an ever-valuable notion. Ownership of knowledge in the digitalized world requires the ability to keep pace with technology and its progression. The EU takes many steps in this regard, prominent examples of which are the 95/46/EC Directive[3], the 2000/31/EC Directive (E-Commerce Directive)[4], and the GDPR[5]. Moreover, the EU portrays a desire to produce a digital constitution in order to increase its pace, be positioned at the centre of knowledge in the digitalized world, and integrate neoliberal policies into the field of digital technology (De Gregorio, 2021).

The 95/46/EC Directive, the E-Commerce Directive and the GDPR envision the EU's approach to data governance and are, in essence, the EU's methods of power production with respect to the digital sphere. The regulations in question are essential elements of the process towards an EU strategy for a single digital market; relatedly, they also serve as the dispositifs of the neoliberal approach the EU maintains in the digital sphere. Hence, these regulations explain how the EU determines and utilizes digital knowledge, as well as what kind of a digital

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[3] The 95/46/EC Directive is the first legal instrument that regulates the protection of personal data within the EU. The Directive is prepared to coordinate the collection, processing, and storage of commercially acquired personal data in accordance with human rights (Aldhouse, 1999: 75-79).

[4] As a dispositif that regulates the EU's digital competition policies, the E-Commerce Directive is a text that pertains to the legal conduct of e-commerce in the EU territories and aims to ensure the free movement of information society services in the internal market (Commission of the European Communities, 2000).

[5] The GDPR is a legal text that provides epistemological and ontological content on data, the subject, global technology companies, and other actors, as well as regulating data technology with data economy (Albrecht, 2016: 287-289; Vatanparast, 2020: 821).

truth regime it establishes for this purpose. From a different perspective, the aforementioned regulations establish the EU's struggle for power in the digital sphere.

Another important concept, which is central to most Foucauldian perspectives, is the subject. The subject is the most strategic element of neoliberal governmentality. The subject is the individual who is exposed to certain experiences of subjectivity along the axis of knowledge and power and who is articulated as the passive object of power (Foucault, 2011: 64). Foucault argues that sovereigns intentionally create subjective experiences in order for individuals to become subjects (Heller, 1996: 78). Therefore, the forms of power create subjects who are subject to others through control and dependency and, also, are dependent on their self-identity through conscience and self-knowledge (Foucault, 2011: 63). Hence the individual is transformed into a subject of the sovereign and is not involved in an opposition to topple it.

The subject encounters the fields of knowledge that limit its actions against subjectivity. Naturally, the relevant fields of knowledge make a claim to speak the truth. Truth is the game of discourse that progresses along with knowledge as its object (Foucault, 1980: 133). The game of truth is a relationship of governmentality aimed at the thing that has become an object of thought through certain propositions and concepts. Indeed, depending on this situation, truth experiences its last change. Eventually, it subjectifies itself as a result of the subjective circumstances it encounters.

However, knowledge is not the only thing that subjectifies the subject. The forms of power that impose identities on the individual and put the individual in the place of the subject of these identities also subjectify the subject. In short, the power practices that involve knowledge run a process of the subjectification of the individual. Although identity is experiential and historical, it is also a cluster of subjective experiences that are imposed by governments (Foucault, 2019). This process is normative and regulatory. Indeed, according to the neoliberal paradigm, it is a result of a tendency to expose the subject to disciplinary dispositifs. Knowledge – which valorizes the history of both the fields of knowledge and normative power practices – subjectifies the72ubjectt as it affects the behaviours of individuals. The individual both represents this process in their mind and exposes themself to this process.

At this point, there is a need to concentrate on the concept of data to see its relationship with power and knowledge and, of course, governmentality, because the collection and procession, as well as the regulation of data, have become crucial dispositifs. Today, data is in a different place than before, as with the advent of digitalization data leads to changes in power balances. Moreover, it provides new connections between the object of knowledge and

the techniques of power. Therefore, first, the experiences of subjectivity and second, the sphere of sovereignty are reconstructed.

Data is, of its nature, non-directional, neutral numbers, words, and symbols that do not mean anything by themselves (Sanders. 2016: 223-228). Data is a form of modelling that is used to obtain desired outputs and the smallest particle of knowledge; in other words, the nucleus of knowledge (Medeni and Aktas, 2010: 1-5). Data acts like a mechanism that is valuable as much as the attributed meanings and, moreover, like a mechanism that transforms knowledge, power, subject, and sovereign relations from an epistemological material to an ontological one. In fact, it is noticeably clear as to why humans have struggled to analyze data for thousands of years[6].

The EU, on the other hand, exposes the individual to the new practices of securitization as it engages with normative processes that are centred around data and data security. In actuality, the relevant norms that embrace a positive language create subjects that discipline themselves. The guidance provided for digital customers in Europe's "2030 Digital Compass"[7] include similar expectations. Also, nowadays – independent of nation states – global technology companies can obtain and use data and, further, they can establish a new international system. Hence, due to data and related information, global technology companies hold the power to control and discipline the individual, nations, and even the international system. This extremely complex and extraordinary situation will probably lead to existential questions about the nation-state in the future. For all these reasons, the concept of data needs to be boldly underlined.

In this situation, what is the essence of knowledge that the EU wants to provide individuals with? The EU provides individuals with twofold

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[6] The reason for the development of writing in Antique Mesopotamia is the effective record-keeping and tracking by bureaucrats. Due to writing, numerous data about Antique Mesopotamia is accessible. Since the Bible, governments can easily decide on their policies as they can compile enormous clusters of data about their citizens. Data, which is ineffective and neutral in itself, is now transformed into a part of the analysis about the individual. All these developments indicate that data is used as a tool of making final decisions and this feature constitutes the essential layer of its ontology.

[7] As it aims to deepen the digital internal market, the 2030 Digital Compass intends to improve and increase the harmony between the technological transformation and the digitalised public order and infrastructure of the EU, its digital business world and its digitalised citizen. Naturally, data is a crucial source during this process as it serves as the shortest path to digital knowledge. On the other hand, algorithmic tools also support the EU's digitalisation voyage. Hence, as the EU continues to digitalise, it constantly utilises algorithmic tools. Innovations aimed at digital progress, such as e-health, the digital identity card, and cloud storage networks are among the EU's digital goals for 2030 (European Commission, 2021).

knowledge: The first one is discursive knowledge. It subjectifies individuals through the construction of a progressive European identity which can be called historical episteme. It also essentially incorporates instructions like freedom, adaptation, and responsibility. The second one is the non-discursive knowledge perspective that exposes individuals to normalization practices, the regulatory apparatuses of normative power systems and the disciplinary dispositifs of the system.

What, then, is the subject that the EU wants to create? The EU creates a subject that is loyal to normative regimes and political restrictions, completely devoted, individualized, exposed to competition and that learnt to be an active and autonomous subject, approved to be exposed to technics that aim for their engagement with the other[8]. As with all other societies that have embraced modernity, the EU subjectifies the individual on the condition that they are subordinated to itself. Also, the subjectification that the EU exposes the individual to existentially involves the execution of economic and political knowledge. The individual is responsible for both their own and others' behaviours. The EU, which seeks economic solutions even for political problems, exposes the subject to a subjectivity that is accountable and can be held accountable. Hence, the individual internalizes certain identities within the boundaries drawn for them. As the individual relates the boundaries of the identities provided for them to their existence, they experience a natural acceptance in their consciousness. Eventually, the individual – either intentionally or unintentionally – becomes the subject of subjective experiences.

A Foucauldian interpretation of this would suggest that this is a technique of neoliberal governmentality to subordinate and dominate the individual. That is to say, Foucault calls the convergence of domination techniques on others and self-techniques as governmentality (Dardot and Laval, 2018: 9). Thus, elaborating on the concept of governmentality facilitates an understanding of the EU's governmentality. It also clarifies the points of convergence between the EU's digital governmentality and the changing nature of knowledge as it establishes how the balance within the relationship between governmentality and knowledge-data-subject is formed, and indeed how neoliberalism contributes to this.

Foucault's Neoliberal Governmentality

What Foucault attempts to articulate with governmentality is that it is a dispositif that acts as an intermediary in the relationship between power and the subject and combines the technologies of selfhood with the tools of domination

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[8] The other is seen as the population that is excluded from normalisation processes or refuse to accept or fail to internalise normalisation practices.

(Foucault, 2015). Foucault states that the concept of governmentality indicates three main points (Foucault, 2009: 144): Firstly, the concept of governmentality is a form of technical and technological governance that incorporates the population in certain strategies, tactics, analyses, and calculations while adhering to political economy's knowledge and security apparatuses (Foucault, 2009; Tellman, 2010: 290-298; Merlingen, 2011: 152-153). Second, the concept of governmentality is a technique that develops knowledge through a series of government apparatuses. Finally, the concept of governmentality is a process of statization.

At the centre of Foucault's concept of governmentality lies the focal points of success and failure, not an investigation of legitimacy or illegitimacy. Foucault advocates that governmentality is a governmental perspective that shapes behaviours, subjects, lifestyles, and draws the conceptual boundary between the state and society (Foucault, 1991: 22-36; Foucault, 2015: 17-29; Lorenzini, 2018: 161). In short, governmentality, which rationalises the governmental practices in the implementation of political sovereignty, is a technical and technological dispositif that designs the relationship between the sovereign and the subject on the basis of the relationship between knowledge and power (Lemke, 2012: 12-17).

According to Foucault, neoliberal governmentality regulates extant governmentality as an extreme form of the liberal truth regime (Oksala, 2013: 54). Rather than a top-down governance mechanism, neoliberal governmentality is about the internal government of individuals. This model, which emerged after the industrial revolution, is strictly loyal to the doctrine of neoliberalism, concerned with political economy, and essentially concerned with freedom.

The new art of government requires freedom and needs to benefit from liberties (Mckinlay and Pezet, 2018: 61). Benefitting from liberties leads to the need for the concurrent production of liberties. Hence, the perspective of "I will produce what liberates you and provide you with the freedom of liberty" (Foucault, 2015: 54-55) is a discourse that constructs the field of neoliberal governmentality. Thus, to enable freedom, the focus is on the free movement of labour, capital, and goods (Dardot and Laval, 2018). This movement is also one that is needed by capitalism. It needs to be freely actualized and secured as well. This is actually the starting point of Foucault's security society.

The reason for establishing the required mechanisms to secure freedom and govern the world and things is that governmentality is a technical instrument. Instead of legislating reality, that is to say, transforming reality by forbidding or

ordering reality, placing reality under surveillance[9] is also an outcome of the same strategy. The gist of the governmentality approach is to scientifically determine what path reality will follow, determine the potential problems on this path, take the necessary measures to prevent these problems or be of the opinion that it will resolve these problems once they have occurred. It is a governmentality that places the subject, knowledge, truth, power, and sovereignty on an extremely technological and technical infrastructure (Lemke, 2012; Lorenzini, 2018).

The key point of the governmentality approach is instead of directly intervening in reality, to accept reality as it is. However, it is also governing reality by estimating the path reality will follow. In this way, the link between knowledge and security is established. Thus, what is meant by government is not ruling and forbidding. The government is accepting of the existence as it is, providing a field for freedom and enabling all these to progress and develop as part of state policy. This is what Foucault means by the process of statization (Dean, 2018: 40-53). The neoliberal governmentality approach aims to curb the political engagement of the individual, determine the adequate models of behaviour for the individual, include the individual in a performance process and expose the individual to certain supervisory technologies in accordance with these models of behaviours (Leander and van Munster, 2007: 201-216). The essential feature of neoliberal governmentality that distinguishes it from disciplinary power reveals itself at this stage.

Digitalisation, Data, and the Individual

Neoliberalism exposes the individual to subjectification practices. Foucault interprets subjectification as the ideational and behavioural change in the subject in accordance with their subjective intentions due to the influence of power relations (Foucault, 1998). Subjectification is an experiential relationship that the individual establishes with themself. Hence, neoliberal rationality is the development of a form of pleasure and performance mechanism during the subjectification of the individual (Foucault, 1998). It attempts to unify the individual and world by transforming performance into pleasure and considering pleasure as performance. The performance relationship above is so important that the individual thinks itself as the world and the world as themself. Undoubtedly, this leads to an ontological transformation in the subject. To even argue the following is not an exaggeration and is fitting for the practical situation: the neoliberal subject eternalzes itself to the extent that there is no place left for the other in the life of the neoliberal subject.

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[9] What is meant by surveillance is close monitoring, not controlling.

This is the largest obstacle to the digital individual. The digital individual becomes a subject like the Leibnizian concept of the "monad", which is closed to external influences, and changed and moved under its own internal effects. The subjectivity approach on the part of the individual who is only divisible by themself and cannot go beyond themself is designed by neoliberalism on the basis of sentiments like performance and pleasure. This strengthens the functioning of digital governmentality as the concept of performance is not limited to success in business, but it also incorporates success in all other processes. Hence, the subjectification venture of the digital subject begins by the voluntary transfer of all their data to the digital sphere in the name of experiencing the sentiment of performance and pleasure. In short, the performance subjects of neoliberalism now occupy digital life.

Neoliberal governmentality constantly subjects the individual to measurement through certain mechanisms. As they systematize, control and discipline mechanisms utilize the techniques of normalization (Mckinlay and Pezet, 2018: 59). What Foucault attempts to stress via the techniques of normalization is the technology that enables population management (Foucault, 2013: 49-75). First, a norm is determined. Then, by drawing a distinction between the normal and abnormal on the basis of this norm, the population is controlled. *Raison d'etat* thus determines the tools and practices of governmentality. Similar connections are relevant to the EU's understanding of neoliberal governmentality, which is portrayed in the GDPR. As the GDPR provides the digital subject with certain liberties, the subject is also exposed to certain disciplinary techniques. For instance, while the right to be forgotten, as an important element of the GDPR, grants the data subject the right to self-determination, it also creates a new area of fragility for the data subject. This right renders the data subject, who is forced to constantly discipline himself/herself against algorithms that process data, dependent on the EU's disciplinary apparatuses. The EU aims to discipline both global technology companies and the data subject by controlling technology companies through the GDPR. Consequently, the EU is able to maintain its neoliberal governmentality in the digital sphere through its disciplinary dispositifs.

The transformation in digitalization begins via these processes. In the past, the state (and *raison d'etat*) used to produce and collect information on the individual through its own technologies; now, technology companies do the work for it. Although states do not intend to delegate leadership, the change in the balance of power leads to a change in the hierarchical relationship between the nation-state and global technology companies. Second, as an object of knowledge, the individual creates their own phenomena by getting involved in a sphere of reality among the techniques of power. Thus, possible information begins producing new objects with data. While every data produced becomes a

new object, it is placed in the position of the subject of power techniques and data. Due to the existing techniques, in the cycle of object and subject, these two reciprocally produce each other. As knowledge positions the object – namely the individual – by means of data, the individual takes up a position of the subject of data.

Beyond the concept of technology which controls the population, a power model in which technology is technologized reveals itself as well. On the one hand, this power model transmits new experiences of subjectivity on the basis of the relationship between pleasure and performance, whilst on the other, it produces technologies that expose the individual to tracking mechanisms. The neoliberal human being is a competitive one, and completely embedded in the global competition (Dardot and Laval, 2018: 362). Hence, performance and pleasure are vital to the individual in order to enable the greatest happiness and increase the effectiveness of neoliberalism. This is because the greatest happiness facilitates the systemisation of the subject. The subject, who considers themself to be hierarchically superior to the other, voluntarily embraces the practices of subjectification in order to integrate into the system. Thus, normalization processes are streamlined, and the effectiveness of the techniques of control and discipline is also increased. The individual, who is completely under the neoliberal sphere of influence, is positioned as the object of their own data and adds more data to their digital property[10] in order to feel more pleasure. The individual, finally, learns how to be an active and independent subject (Dardot and Laval, 2018: 375).

In such an order, the ontology of data is concentrated on two points. Firstly, data is an essential source that greatly empowers the knowledge economy. As they feature in the digital domain, companies transform the production of knowledge into an economic structure. In particular, global companies collect customers' information through the apps they develop and re-organize company strategies like marketing, purchasing, and communication, based on the information obtained. This situation gives rise to the need to collect, store, and analyze clusters of data.

Secondly, data is itself transformed into an economic source. Today, all the information added by the individual in the online world constitutes an economic source for companies in the digital domain. As they purchase this information from online platforms, companies open new spaces for capital. For example, the fact that a hospital's check-up department runs a Facebook advertising campaign only for cardiac patients over the age of 65 demonstrates how valuable data is as an economic source.

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[10] Zuboff (2019: 167) states that "the digital tracks that a consumer leaves when using a network are the property of that consumer".

While the abundance of data and the increase in its quality in the neoliberal order, embolden the competition sentiment on the part of global technology companies, it also leads nation-states to transfer more funds, technology, and technic into this domain. As it is a technique of power, competition is also an indispensable element of data. Both nation-states and global technology companies come under the influence of the concept of competition that lies at the centre of neoliberalism. This is because the extensive social transformation that the digital world brings about affects the international competitiveness of the digital industry (Wladawsky-Berger, 2019). A serious field of competition to acquire, store, and use data – if required – is established both within nation-states and technology companies and between nation-states and global technology companies.

Data is now a tremendously valuable source with which to determine knowledge. That is to say, data is no longer a neutral source but rather an economic and political value. For exactly these reasons, the EU develops numerous digitalization strategies to avoid being excluded from the system and even to move ahead and shape the system. In this context, the EU focuses on fundamental texts like the EU Toolbox for 5G Security, the EU Digital Strategy, the European Data Strategy, the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence, the Artificial Intelligence Act Proposal, and the Digital Services Act. These texts discipline the individual, member states, and third-party actors, and also include regulatory and controlling mechanisms.

Another issue is that the fact that data as a strong source of capital encourages technology companies to obtain more data. This situation, in turn, paves the path for more data processing and data's exposure to technical analysis. The European Commission's plan for artificial intelligence reveals itself at this point. In this context, the Commission's proposal for artificial intelligence promises to forestall the fragile structure of the digital domain and protect against the negative implications of data-centric technologies (Lilkov, 2021). However, the relevant analyses produce calculable subjects that neoliberalism imagines. The subject who accepts judgments and their consequences based on the evaluations they face is positioned as a subject that is always available for evaluation (Dardot and Laval, 2018: 387). Thus, every track in the subject's sphere of property and privacy can be traced, analyzed, and translated into a political or economic strategy. The reflection of surveillance systems on data economy occurs under these conditions. The data economy catches and calculates digital tracks through surveillance mechanisms. Hence, the relationship between data and the subject is transformed into one of a surveillance relationship. Digital tracks are not only put under surveillance but also simultaneously recorded and achieved in order to contribute to the

economy in the future. In short, data economy and neoliberal governmentality together act like a surveillance mechanism.

The EU's Practices of Governmentality Concerning Digitalization

For the reasons articulated above, the EU begins to use its regulations and normative sanctions as a dispositif, both to be able to exist in the technological system and also to prevent the individual from becoming a digital economy. Thus, the EU wants both to design its digital milieu in the future and to govern its digital economy. Undoubtedly, it categorically refuses to engage in a jurisdictional struggle with global technology companies not only in terms of economic matters but also in matters pertaining to digital sovereignty. Hence, the EU establishes a link between its own existence and data. On the one hand, the EU tries to govern the digital economy and restrict global technology companies, whilst on the other, it incorporates the European individual into new spheres of subjectivity through its own digital norms and regulations. Hence, it determines knowledge even in the digital domain by imposing normative restrictions on every intervention to its own citizens, places limitations on the access to knowledge and tries to enable a secure circulation of knowledge in the digital domain. It thus attempts to prevent digital sovereignty from getting monopolized by global technology companies. This situation, which is seen as a future threat by nation-states, raises questions about their *raison d'être*.

This is because, although it is in the digital domain, with territorial sovereignty, nation-states want to establish a presence as figures of power in relation to the issue of sovereignty that is raised by the individual's data. In short, nation-states are unwilling to open their spheres of legitimacy to discussion even in the digital domain. This is the essential issue that lies at the root of the EU's development of a series of normative regulations concerning its digital future. The E-Commerce Directive, the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy and the GDPR are among these regulations. However, the GDPR is one step ahead when compared to other regulations, because it reproduces the EU's neoliberal governmentality in the digital age as a dispositif. At the same time, it offers a global understanding to control data, the data owner, technology companies and other actors at the EU level (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2017).

As part of the EU's governmentality, the GDPR provides epistemological and ontological content concerning data, the subject, global technology companies, nation-states and other actors. In an ever-growing digital world, the GDPR is a legal text which does not solely focus on data and concurrently regulates the economic system and data technologies (Albrecht, 2016: 287-289; Vatanparast, 2020: 821). The GDPR strengthens personal data protection rights concerning the digital sphere (Hoofnagle, Van Der Sloot and Borgesius, 2019:

65- 98). It also places a variety of legal responsibilities on global technology companies and national businesses that collect and process personal data (Lu Yu and He, 2019: 1-6).

In answer to the question of what kind of neoliberal digital governmentality does the EU portray through the GDPR, it can be seen that the EU both places certain restrictions and confers liberties related to data processing, specifically for data owners and global technology companies. For instance, data processing is subject to the consent of the data owner (European Commission, 2016: 37). On the one hand, this right conferred upon data owners shifts them from the position of 'contract taker' to that of' contract maker' (Lanzone 2018: 1-14). On the other hand, it exposes them to complex algorithms and software. Consequently, the data owner encounters a new practice of subjectification. In other words, this practice of the GDPR liberates data owners on one hand and disciplines them on the other.

Global technology companies become dependent on certain control mechanisms when collecting and storing the data acquired online (European Commission, 2016). As they are responsible for violations in data categories, data processing time limits and post-data processing procedures, the EU imposes serious administrative fines on global technology companies due to their improper data processing behaviours (European Commission, 2016).

It can be claimed that the EU is unwilling to give up the control mechanism that relies on its global normative power. Thus, while controlling the individual, data and global technology companies, the EU designs its own algorithmic world in a parallel process. Now, algorithmic tools constitute the content of the EU's sphere of governmentality (Brkan, 2019: 1-31). Naturally, this situation alters the epistemological and ontological composition of the EU's rationality of governmentality. At the root of this change, lies a multi-layered governmentality (Marks, 1996: 20-38; Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 1-32). In this sphere of governmentality, the Commission and Parliament have extremely effective initiatives. While the Commission strives to establish the balance between member states in the internal market, the Parliament attempts to ensure that European citizens are digitalized, and their legal rights are not violated in the process of digitalization. Within this multi-layered understanding of governmentality, two strong dispositifs feature: the DSM strategy in the establishment of balance in the internal market and the GDPR in the protection of European citizens.

Hence, it can be said that the E-Commerce Directive, the DSM strategy, and the GDPR are important dispositifs in the standardisation of data policies and the reinforcement of the EU's neoliberal digital governmentality. Certainly, the reasons for this are the digital control language of the new neoliberal world

(Rodrigues, 2016: 1-22; Leese, 2014: 494-511; Bellanova, 2017: 330), the reliance on digital measurements for the quality of data (Cheney-Lippold, 2011: 166), and the increased attachment of the individual to technological and technical procedures of calculation (Gillespie, 2014: 167-193).

In other words, the 95/46/EC Directive, the E-Commerce Directive, the DSM strategy and the GDPR provide a framework showing how data governance and digitalization are envisioned by the EU, and how progress is made in all of these. It must be stated that the dispositifs in question are a disciplinary apparatus for the EU. These disciplinary apparatuses provide a framework for how the digital individual, technological companies, nation-states and other actors should behave in the digital sphere[11]. With references to essential rights and liberties, the EU disciplines the aforementioned groups through data. Additionally, through the regulations mentioned above, the EU attempts to standardize its digital competition policies, digital free market and strong digital economy[12]. As a result, the EU features its own particular disciplinary elements and exhibits its unique form of governmentality.

Alongside this, the EU utilizes the aforementioned regulations as a security apparatus. Specifically, the EU benefits from these regulations in order to tame global technology companies that began to eclipse nation-states with the advent of digitalization. As these companies outcompete nation-states in data governance and the determination of knowledge, they establish their own truth regimes.[13] Naturally, this situation raises questions about the raison d'être of nation-states. Conversely, the EU aspires to limit the influence of global technology companies on individuals in order to safeguard its sovereignty. In

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[11] What Foucault expresses as the "conduct of conduct" reveals itself at this point. In fact, this situation is a result of the EU's neoliberal stance. The "conduct of conduct" is the deliberate transformation of the individual's behaviour by power/the sovereign? (Li, 2007; Cruikshank, 1999: 55). Conversely, in the example of the EU's digitalisation the conduct of conduct approach not only influences individuals but also extends to nation states and global technology companies.

[12] When examining the conditions of competition across various digital platforms, a significant difference is observed in terms of implementation and access. For instance, all businesses on Amazon's Marketplace gather ideas on issues like what do their own consumers purchase and how much do they spend on these products. However, Amazon retains all the consumer data from the Marketplace. It keeps track of consumers' behavioural data (Zuboff, 2019: 377). As a result, Amazon is able to utilise this data for its own commercial benefit when it sells its own products and thus cause unfair competition (Vestager, 2021). This is exactly what Zuboff articulates as surveillance capitalism. Similar considerations are also applicable to Facebook, Google and other information technology platforms.

[13] A telling example in this regard is the acquisition of 50 million Facebook users' data by Cambridge Analytica in 2014 and its use in preparing political communication campaigns for the elections in the USA (Akpinar, 2022).

this context, the normative regulations in question are employed as security apparatus against global technology companies.

Today, neoliberal governmentality in the new era is formulated as the digital governmentality of neoliberalism. Fundamentally, this is a process that profoundly transforms all processes of knowledge, power, sovereignty, and subject. Digital governmentality or algorithmic governmentality aims to discipline data by taking a novel approach to the general rationality of neoliberal governmentality. This is because the neoliberal sovereign's need for statistics is transformed into a form of governmentality that is run by intelligent machine-learning systems of information processing which can automatically capture and process data (Rouvroy and Berns, 2013: 163-196). Based on this, the source of the will for power in the sovereign is changed. Certainly, the distinction concerning the will for power transforms the nature of knowledge and the truth associated with it.

Knowledge and truth are derived from the question of how happy the individual is in the digital domain. On the other hand, the subject finds the self in the government of digital identity. In particular, the GDPR grants the subject an extensive authority to self-govern his/her own digital identity. For instance, consent provides extensive rights to the data owner in relation to the question of what data the owner wants to be processed. Otherwise, the limits of data processing are left to the discretion of the data processor if the data owner consents to default settings. Hence, as consent is employed as the dispositif of a liberation policy, it regulates the data owner's behaviour and disciplines the owner. In other words, the subject constructs his/her digital identity himself/herself within these practices.

Eventually, governmentality renews itself by jumping on the bandwagon of digital discourses. The EU wants to completely adapt to this change and, at this stage, to become an actor whose words can translate into sanctions in the international system. Hence, the following are the prominent topics in the EU's digitalization voyage: the establishment of a digital competition market through the DSM strategy; ensuring digital sovereignty against global technology companies via the GDPR; and the EU's defence that it retains its citizens' digital property rights through all these normative regulations. Thus, the EU intends to maintain its digital economic and political integration.

Indeed, these practices demonstrate that the EU aspires to govern digital truth regimes by employing its own particular neoliberal approach. Therefore, all the dispositifs mentioned above are developed as a result of the EU's neoliberal understanding. Consequently, the EU portrays a new form of governmentality through digital knowledge and reinforces its supranational position.

Conclusion

This article has aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the EU's understanding of governmentality in the digital sphere through a post-structuralist analysis and Foucault's theory of governmentality. It has explained how the dispositifs that maintain the EU's governmentality in the digital sphere operate. Also, the article has attempted to analyze how the EU responds to the new language of the digital world and the changing nature of knowledge as well as how it envisions the digital power relationship. Naturally, the EU's digital voyage is extremely multi-layered, and this digital voyage incorporates a very extensive sphere. For these reasons, this article only features dispositifs that reveal neoliberal digital governmentality. Thus, the article revolves around four main topics. The first section has analysed concepts like language, discourse, dispositive, subject, knowledge, and truth. The second section has conceptualized the limitations of the Foucauldian governmentality, with a specific focus on data and digitalization. The third section has concentrated on the connection between digitalization, data, and the subject. Lastly, the fourth section has revealed what kind of truth regime the EU's practices of neoliberal digital governmentality produce through data.

The digitalization of the EU concurrently progresses with the development of data policies. In the EU's digital transformation data, knowledge, individual and competition policies hold extremely important positions, because both the individual and economy are transformed as data becomes an object of knowledge. The governmentality exhibited by the EU through digitalization aims not only to govern data and its associated connections, but also to sustain economic development, become the guarantor of permanent peace and provide the characteristics of the security community (Gambles, 1995). As it prioritizes data, the EU's digitalization voyage incorporates multifaceted policies. On one hand, it establishes fields for the digitalization of its own and member states' internal processes (European Commission, 2017). On the other hand, it constructs fields for the digitalization of the individual, private companies and third-party actors (European Commission, 2021). The EU's digitalization voyage restructures information technologies and the information/knowledge economy of the EU. Naturally, this situation brings about changes in the EU's sphere of neoliberal governmentality. The EU invents new areas of governmentality in a way that reflects neoliberal elements. Among the most renowned of these areas are those mentioned above: the 95/46/EC Directive, the E-Commerce Directive, the DSM strategy, and the GDPR.

As this perspective transforms the attitude of the EU towards data, it is compelled to act beyond the data. The EU's consistent stance towards data helps Europe shape its digital future. The EU's understanding of neoliberal digital governmentality centres on the reconstruction of both the digital

competition and economy, as well as the digitally transformed political and social order. Consequently, the topics of digital rights, digital sovereignty and digital property are incorporated in the EU's practices of neoliberal digital governmentality through data.

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