

Typically, we have considered systems thinking in this class to be set of methodologies to understand a situation, often under the frame of a problem to solve. If the systems thinker uses flawed thinking, a clear consequence would be lack of fair understanding of the system. However, when a systems thinker is also a systems actor whose thoughts are reflected in policy choices, consequences to flawed methodologies can apply to many stakeholders beyond the scope of the thinkers. I find transparency to become extremely important in these situations. Specifically, if policy makers use systems thinking to apply rules to a system (including both laws and general societal procedures).

My reasoning for this has roots in political theory of democracy. In a democratic style of government, representatives should function as a benevolent force to represent the best interests of the people, even when that means making choices they might not immediately agree with. I think the model of democracy aligns well with systems thinking in that systems actors and rule makers should function as similarly benevolent forces. Democracy functions under the idea that representatives get their power from the constituents, who can take away that power if at any time they see the government unfit. One pillar of democracy is transparency, which emphasizes that the constituents must know what their representatives are doing in order to continuously deem them fit to maintain in power. Because of this, I think things should generally be revealed. There should be a burden to justify keeping secrets rather than a burden to make things public.

I can definitely see the value of keeping some things secret. For example, psychology uses blind studies since giving the participant knowledge about what is happening could influence their actions, and taint the results of the study. This motivates me to think that the way to prove that something should be hidden from the public in systems thinking must involve damage to the function if the public has full knowledge. When military operations are planned in the Pentagon, it makes sense that the general public should not know the details, since release of information could infringe on the operation by leaking to other governments. Because of this, the function of the system is much more effective if it is hidden from the general public. Only authorized individuals in the Pentagon should be able to use this. This also very much comes into play with private information, such as information covered by HIPPA. Releasing an individual's medical abilities, disabilities, or preexisting conditions could have negative impacts on employment opportunities. Medical professionals should definitely get to use this information. Whether or not employers should get this information becomes a difficult question: they need to be able to know when their workers need a reasonable accommodation. However, an employee could be negatively affected if they are punished for condition. Some employers will avoid hiring pregnant women because they assume they will need to take more leave.

In the case of the persistent surveillance in Baltimore, Pritchett claimed that, "They could have watched that van, too, but no—they missed that one. I thought the cameras were supposed to protect us. But I'm thinking they're there to just contradict anything that might be used against the City of Baltimore. Do they use them for justice? Evidently not."

I believe that in this circumstance, there was definite misuse of technology and information. A governing force, which was granted trust by its constituents to rule justly, abused

that power of knowledge to manipulate justice. However, I think the fault was not in allowing the government to have access to this surveillance information. I think the greater problem was the specific people in the role of governing actors. In general, surveillance could be used as a function of a societal system to increase transparency, aligning with the goals of democracy and justice. However, when citizens are not fully informed of the surveillance process, there government is showing misuse of the information. If surveillance is conducted without bias toward the city or toward citizens, it can become a helpful tool. For these reasons, I would recommend the continuation of surveillance as a philosophy, with careful attention to strategies to further transparency of the process to citizens, and an obligation to equal treatment of surveillance subjects.