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Scoring the Citizen: Aesthetic Regimes of Digital Governance in China and Post-Yugoslav States in the Context of Globalization

Abstract: This article offers a comparative analysis of China’s Social Credit experiments and emerging educational data infrastructures in post-Yugoslav states as interconnected aesthetic regimes of digital scoring. Rather than treating these systems only as legal or technical arrangements, the article examines how they organize perception and experience: which behaviors become visible as data, how they are ranked, and which emotions—shame, pride, anxiety, aspiration—are attached to their visual forms. Methodologically, the article employs a comparative interpretative approach situated within media and cultural studies, combining discourse analysis, interface analysis, and critical policy analysis. The comparison does not aim to establish direct equivalence between political systems, but rather to examine how distinct digital environments produce comparable regimes of behavioral visibility, classification, and normalization. On the Chinese side, the analysis focuses on policy documents and critical scholarship on the Social Credit System (SCS), and shows how blacklists, redlists, and scoring interfaces construct state-sanctioned images of the “trustworthy” citizen. On the post-Yugoslav side, it discusses Serbia’s Unified Information System of Education (JISP) and the eDnevnik platform as instances of “soft” social scoring that continuously evaluate pupils and schools. The theoretical framework combines Jacques Rancière’s notion of aesthetic regimes, Shoshana Zuboff’s concept of surveillance capitalism, critical media theory (Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Lev Manovich), and Abraham Maslow’s humanistic psychology. Together, these perspectives illuminate how software interfaces, scoring metrics, and systems of continuous evaluation shape subjectivity, emotional orientation, and social behavior. The article argues that, despite substantial differences in political context and institutional coercion, both cases reveal broader global transformations in which digital governance increasingly operates through continuous visibility, behavioral evaluation, and affective modulation. At the same time, these systems also open space for contestation and for imagining more humane and autonomy-supporting digital infrastructures.

Keywords: social credit; aesthetic regimes; digital aesthetics; surveillance capitalism; China; post-Yugoslav states; educational data infrastructures; self-esteem and autonomy.

Introduction

Over the last decade, data-driven evaluation, classification, and ranking have become increasingly central instruments of governance in digitally mediated societies. In what Shoshana Zuboff describes as a regime of “surveillance capitalism”, human experience is transformed into a source of behavioral data used for prediction, optimization, and social control.¹ Beyond corporate platforms, states and public institutions have also begun to develop systems that monitor, classify, and evaluate citizens through digital infrastructures. The most widely discussed example is China’s Social Credit System, but similar logics of continuous evaluation increasingly appear in educational, administrative, and welfare systems across different political contexts.

Recent scholarship has emphasized that contemporary forms of data extraction extend beyond economic processes alone. Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias argue that digital societies increasingly operate through what they term “data colonialism”, whereby everyday human life is appropriated as a continuous source of informational value.² Such processes transform ordinary activities—including communication, consumption, mobility, and education—into measurable behavioral traces that can be integrated into broader systems of governance and institutional management.

Rather than approaching these developments exclusively through the frameworks of law, surveillance, or political economy, this article examines them as aesthetic regimes of digital scoring. Drawing on Jacques Rancière’s concept of the “distribution of the sensible”, aesthetics is understood here not simply as a question of visual form, but as a mode of organizing visibility, perception, and social intelligibility.³ Digital scoring systems shape what becomes visible, measurable, and socially meaningful; they determine which forms of behavior appear desirable, trustworthy, risky, or deviant within digitally mediated environments.

The Chinese Social Credit agenda represents one of the most explicit attempts to institutionalize such forms of evaluative visibility. Since the publication of the Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System (2014–2020), Chinese authorities have developed interconnected infrastructures that combine blacklists, redlists, data-sharing systems, and reputational mechanisms intended to regulate “trustworthiness” across social and economic life.⁴ Although frequently interpreted through dystopian narratives, recent scholarship suggests that Social Credit operates through a more complex combination of governance, public legitimacy, and affective participation.⁵

¹ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (PublicAffairs, 2019), 8–12.

² Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford University Press, 2019), 3–7.

³ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (Continuum, 2004), 12–13.

⁴ State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System (2014–2020),” June 14, 2014, accessed May 27, 2026, http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-06/27/content_8913.htm.

⁵ Genia Kostka, “China’s Social Credit Systems and Public Opinion: Explaining High Levels of Approval,” *New Media & Society* 21, no. 7 (2019): 1565–1593.

At the same time, less spectacular but structurally related forms of digital evaluation have emerged within educational systems in post-Yugoslav contexts. In Serbia, the Unified Information System of Education (JISP) and the electronic gradebook platform eDnevnik have been introduced as instruments of educational modernization, transparency, and administrative efficiency.⁶ These systems continuously generate and circulate data concerning attendance, grades, disciplinary records, and institutional performance, producing environments of permanent evaluative visibility within everyday educational experience.

The article situates these developments within broader debates on software, interfaces, and digital subjectivity. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun has argued that digital media become most powerful precisely when they become habitual and seemingly invisible within everyday routines, while Lev Manovich conceptualizes software as a “metamedium” that structures contemporary visual and social experience through interfaces and database logic.⁷ Such perspectives help illuminate how scoring systems function not merely as technical instruments, but as infrastructures that organize perception, emotional orientation, and social behavior.

The human consequences of these systems can also be approached through the perspective of humanistic psychology. Abraham Maslow’s theory of motivation suggests that systems grounded in constant comparison, external validation, and continuous evaluation may shape subjects whose sense of worth increasingly depends on fluctuating external indicators.⁸ From this perspective, digital scoring systems do not simply manage information; they also participate in the production of affective environments structured by anxiety, aspiration, competition, and behavioral self-regulation.

By placing Chinese Social Credit experiments and post-Yugoslav educational data infrastructures within the same analytical frame, the article does not claim that these systems are politically equivalent. Rather, it argues that they participate in a broader global transformation in which digital governance increasingly operates through continuous visibility, classification, and behavioral evaluation, while simultaneously taking different institutional and cultural forms.

The central research question of this article is how contemporary digital scoring systems function not only as technical or administrative infrastructures, but also as aesthetic regimes that shape perception, emotional orientation, and subjectivity. Through a comparative analysis of China’s Social Credit experiments and educational data infrastructures in post-Yugoslav contexts, the article examines how digital governance increasingly operates through visibility, classification, and affective modulation.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the methodological and analytical approach of the study. Section 3 develops the theoretical framework. Section 4 analyses the Chinese Social Credit agenda. Section 5 turns

⁶ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, “Jedinstveni informacioni sistem prosvete (JISP)” and “Elektronski dnevnik (eDnevnik),” accessed May 27, 2026, <https://jisp.mpn.gov.rs/> and <https://esdnevnik.rs/>.

⁷ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (MIT Press, 2016), 1–15; Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 147–182.

⁸ Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd ed. (Harper & Row, 1970), 35–58.

to selected post-Yugoslav cases, with an emphasis on Serbia's JISP and eDnevnik. Section 6, titled "Comparative Dimensions of Digital Visibility", develops a comparative discussion of the two contexts, while Section 7 outlines possibilities for more humane digital infrastructures.

Methodology and analytical approach

This article employs a comparative theoretical and interpretative approach situated within media and cultural studies. The analysis combines discourse analysis, interface analysis, and critical policy analysis in order to examine how digital scoring systems organize visibility, affect, and subjectivity.

The Chinese Social Credit System and Serbian educational digital infrastructures (particularly JISP and eDnevnik) were selected as indicative rather than exhaustive case studies. The comparison does not aim to establish direct equivalence between political systems, but rather to examine how distinct digital environments produce comparable aesthetic regimes of classification, visibility, and behavioral normalization.

The analytical procedure focuses on several comparative dimensions:

- forms of visibility and data representation,
- affective mechanisms (anxiety, aspiration, shame),
- degrees of institutional coercion,
- interface logic and behavioral feedback mechanisms,
- relationships between governance and subject formation.

The Chinese case analysis is based on policy documents, existing scholarly literature, and publicly available descriptions of blacklist/redlist mechanisms and digital trust infrastructures. The Serbian/post-Yugoslav case focuses on educational data systems such as JISP and eDnevnik, including their interface structures, data organization practices, and public discourse surrounding educational digitalization.

Rather than offering quantitative empirical research, the article develops a qualitative comparative interpretation of digital governance as an aesthetic and affective regime.

Theoretical framework

The analysis in this article brings together three strands of theory that are often treated separately: aesthetic theory, critical media and software theory, and humanistic psychology. Read together, they offer a conceptual toolkit for understanding digital classificatory systems as aesthetic, infrastructural and psychological formations. In this way, the article positions itself within contemporary aesthetics by treating digital infrastructures of scoring as aesthetic regimes that organize perception and experience in datafied societies.

Building on Jacques Rancière, I approach both China's Social Credit projects and post-Yugoslav educational information systems as aesthetic regimes of governance. Extending Rancière's framework from art to interfaces and platforms foregrounds a specifically digital aesthetics of governance, in which scores, dashboards and lists function as aesthetic forms that shape political experience. Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible refers to the implicit rules that determine what can be seen and said, who is recognized as a speaking subject, and which experiences count as meaningful in a given order.⁹ Evaluative infrastructures participate in such a distribution by deciding which aspects of social life become visible as data, which are backgrounded or ignored, and how citizens, pupils and institutions are positioned within a field of legibility. Interfaces and databases do not simply reflect reality but format it, producing hierarchies of attention and value and attaching affective tones—such as pride, shame or anxiety—to specific classifications.

Critical media and software theory clarify the technological and economic conditions under which these aesthetic regimes operate. Zuboff's concept of surveillance capitalism describes a socio-economic order in which human experience is continuously monitored and translated into behavioral data, which are then used to predict and shape future conduct.¹⁰ In this regime, data are not neutral by-products but targeted extractions that feed predictive architectures and markets. Chun's analysis of habitual new media shows how digital systems become most powerful when they recede into the background of everyday life, turning checking scores, dashboards and portals into seemingly natural routines.¹¹ Manovich's conception of software as a metamedium further highlights how diverse contents are subsumed under the same programmable operations—sorting, filtering, ranking, correlating—that underpin scoring interfaces.¹² In China, these operations are legitimized by the Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System (2014–2020), which frames social credit as a comprehensive solution to problems of trust in markets and governance.¹³ In post-Yugoslav states, educational digitalization is narrated through promises of modernization, transparency and parental empowerment. In both cases, aesthetic forms—lists, grids, colors, icons—are tightly bound to political and economic projects.

While Rancière's concept of the "distribution of the sensible" explains how regimes of visibility organize what can be perceived, recognized, and legitimized within a social order, Maslow's framework helps explain the psychological consequences of such regimes for human motivation and self-perception. Together, these perspectives reveal how digital infrastructures simultaneously structure visibility and shape affective orientations such as anxiety, aspiration, belonging, and self-worth.

⁹ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12–13.

¹⁰ Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 8–10.

¹¹ Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 1–4.

¹² Manovich, *Software Takes Command*, 147–153.

¹³ State Council, "Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System."

Humanistic psychology provides a lens for examining how such environments affect subjectivity. Maslow's theory of motivation posits that human beings strive to satisfy a hierarchy of needs, beginning with physiological and safety needs and moving through belonging and esteem toward self-actualization.¹⁴ Esteem needs include both self-respect (a sense of competence, achievement, independence) and the respect of others (recognition, status, appreciation). Maslow argues that their chronic frustration produces feelings of inferiority, weakness, and helplessness, increasing dependence on external authorities.¹⁵ Systems of behavioral visibility can be read in this light as environments that mediate esteem and recognition through opaque metrics. When access to opportunities—credit, mobility, school prestige—is tied to scores that are only partly intelligible or negotiable, self-worth risks becoming tightly bound to conformity with external indicators. Public blacklists and rankings in China, as well as continuous visibility of grades and behavioral notes in educational platforms, encourage subjects to see themselves and others primarily through quantified attributes. At the same time, Maslow's emphasis on self-actualization reminds us that individuals and communities can also reinterpret, resist or subvert imposed classifications, especially in contexts marked by historical experiences of bureaucratic control and contested reforms. This integrated framework—combining aesthetic regimes, digital infrastructures and human motivation—guides the comparative analysis that follows.

China's Social Credit System as an aesthetic regime of scoring

China's Social Credit System (SCS) has often been described as a monolithic instrument of total surveillance, but policy documents and empirical research show a more heterogeneous "system of systems" that gradually intertwines legal enforcement, bureaucratic performance metrics and digital infrastructures. The *Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System (2014–2020)*, issued by the State Council in 2014, presents social credit as a comprehensive solution to problems of trust in markets and governance, envisioning unified mechanisms for the collection, integration and use of data on the "trustworthiness" of individuals, enterprises and institutions.¹⁶ Subsequent implementation has proceeded through sectoral regulations, local pilot projects and the expansion of blacklists and redlists that classify actors according to their compliance with legal and contractual obligations.¹⁷

Analyses by Rogier Creemers, Chuncheng Liu and others emphasize that the SCS is less a single centralized database than a constellation of interoperable systems anchored in court enforcement, regulatory registries and administrative sanctions.¹⁸

¹⁴ Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–376.

¹⁵ Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," 382–383.

¹⁶ State Council, "Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System."

¹⁷ Rogier Creemers, "China's Social Credit System: An Evolving Practice of Control," SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3175792 (Social Science Research Network, 2018), 12–17; Chuncheng Liu, "Multiple Social Credit Systems in China," *Economic Sociology: The European Electronic Newsletter* 21, no. 1 (2019): 22–26.

¹⁸ Creemers, "China's Social Credit System: An Evolving Practice of Control," 12–17; Liu, "Multiple Social Credit Systems in China," 22–26.

Liang and co-authors conceptualize this constellation as a state surveillance infrastructure: digital platforms aggregate data on tax debts, safety violations, unpaid fines or dishonest commercial practices and translate them into public labels of “trustworthiness” or “untrustworthiness”, often visible through online portals or mobile applications.¹⁹ Genia Kostka’s survey-based research complicates purely dystopian readings by showing that many citizens express support for social credit initiatives, especially when they are framed as targeting corrupt officials or fraudulent businesses, though younger and more educated respondents display more ambivalence.²⁰ These findings suggest that aesthetic and affective dimensions—how the system is presented, whom it appears to target, what emotions it mobilizes—are crucial for its legitimization.

Publicly discussed blacklist mechanisms in China offer a concrete illustration of how visibility operates as governance. Individuals placed on blacklists may face restrictions related to travel, credit access, or digital platform participation, while “redlist” systems publicly reward “trustworthy” behavior. Such mechanisms do not function solely through punishment, but through the visual and affective production of reputational status, transforming social trust into a continuously visible metric.

From the perspective of aesthetic regimes, the SCS operates through specific forms of visualization and classification. Court websites, administrative portals and some commercial interfaces display lists of “discredited” persons, sometimes accompanied by photographs, ID numbers and descriptions of violations. Rankings, color-coded trust scores and badges of “excellence” or “exemplary trustworthiness” create easily readable hierarchies. Such visual devices function as *distributions of the sensible*: they make certain behaviors highly visible and morally charged, while rendering the underlying decision rules and data flows opaque. Citizens are invited to see themselves and others through the lens of scores and lists, to internalize the system’s evaluative gaze, and to adjust their behavior accordingly.

At the same time, the SCS resonates with longer histories of classification in the People’s Republic of China, including household registration (*hukou*) and archival dossiers that recorded political, educational and disciplinary information about citizens. Liu shows how contemporary credit labels and blacklist statuses can echo older categories of political reliability, even as they are articulated in the language of market trust and rule-of-law enforcement.²¹ The result is a hybrid regime in which socialist legacies of dossier-based governance intersect with data-driven techniques of surveillance capitalism, as Zuboff describes: human experience is appropriated as raw material for behavioral data, which is then used to predict and shape future conduct.²²

Viewed through a humanistic psychological lens, this configuration raises questions about the impact of continuous scoring on self-esteem and autonomy. Maslow’s

¹⁹ Fan Liang, Vishnupriya Das, Nadiya Kostyuk, and Muzammil M. Hussain, “Constructing a Data-Driven Society: China’s Social Credit System as a State Surveillance Infrastructure,” *Policy & Internet* 10, no. 4 (2018): 418–425.

²⁰ Kostka, “China’s Social Credit Systems and Public Opinion,” 1572–1582.

²¹ Liu, “Multiple Social Credit Systems in China,” 22–26.

²² Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 8–10.

theory of motivation suggests that stable self-respect and the respect of others are crucial for psychological health and for the possibility of self-actualization.²³ When one's social standing, access to services, or mobility can be affected by semi-public labels of “dishonesty” or low credibility, generated by systems whose criteria are not fully transparent, self-worth risks becoming tightly coupled to compliance with external metrics. Previous work has argued that codification of behavior through reward–punishment schemes may undermine self-respect and facilitate governance through dependence and fear.²⁴ The SCS, as a digital classificatory system, can therefore be read as an environment that not only monitors and sanctions, but also subtly shapes how citizens value themselves and imagine their room for maneuver.

Educational data infrastructures in post-Yugoslav states: JISP and eDnevnik

While post-Yugoslav states have not adopted an explicit “social credit” agenda, they have undergone rapid digitalization of public administration and education that introduces structurally similar forms of data-driven evaluation. In Serbia, the Unified Information System of Education (Jedinstveni informacioni sistem prosvete, JISP) represents the core infrastructure for collecting and integrating data on pupils, teachers, schools and educational outcomes. Its legal basis is provided by the *Law on the Foundations of the Education System* and the *Rulebook on the Unified Information System of Education*, which define categories of data to be collected, actors responsible for input and protection, and possibilities for linking JISP with other public registries.²⁵ Official documents present JISP as a neutral tool for improving planning, monitoring and quality assurance in education, in line with broader digital government strategies.²⁶

Within this framework, the eDnevnik platform functions as a key interface through which schools, teachers, pupils and parents encounter the datafication of education. As an electronic gradebook connected to JISP, eDnevnik records attendance, grades, behavioral notes and other indicators, making them continuously available to authorized users via web or mobile access.²⁷ Public communications emphasize transparency and parental “insight” as primary benefits: parents no longer need to rely on paper diaries or periodic parent–teacher meetings, but can follow their child's performance in real time.²⁸ At the institutional level, aggregated data on grades, exam

²³ Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” 370–372, 381–383.

²⁴ Bradić, “Socijalno bodovanje kao model društvene kontrole,” 123–134.

²⁵ Republic of Serbia, *Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja* [Law on the Foundations of the Education System]; Republic of Serbia, *Pravilnik o jedinstvenom informacionom sistemu prosvete* [Rulebook on the Unified Information System of Education].

²⁶ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, Jedinstveni informacioni sistem prosvete (JISP) [Unified Information System of Education (JISP)], accessed May 27, 2026, <https://jisp.mpn.gov.rs/>.

²⁷ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, Elektronski dnevnik (eDnevnik) [Electronic Gradebook (eDnevnik)], accessed May 27, 2026, <https://esdnevnik.rs/>.

²⁸ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, *eDnevnik*.

results and other metrics can be used by school administrations and ministries to monitor “success” across schools and municipalities.

Within eDnevnik, students become visible through continuously updated categories, including attendance records, behavioral evaluations, grades, disciplinary notes, and performance indicators. Parents and teachers interact through interface structures that privilege constant monitoring, notification systems, and quantifiable educational progress. The interface thus contributes to the normalization of permanent evaluative visibility within everyday educational experience.

From the perspective of aesthetic regimes, these platforms create specific visual and temporal configurations of educational life. Dashboards, tables, and charts arrange pupils and classes into grids for comparison; color-coded fields and icons draw attention to absences, low grades, or disciplinary notes; time-stamped entries produce a continuous timeline of performance. As in the Chinese case, the interface does not merely reflect events but formats them: it defines what counts as a relevant educational act, how it should be recorded and how quickly it appears to others. The possibility for parents to check the gradebook at any moment reconfigures the rhythms of family communication: information that was once mediated through the pupil and through episodic encounters with teachers now flows directly and continuously from the system to the parent.

Legally and institutionally, there are important differences between this configuration and China’s Social Credit experiments. Serbian educational law and data protection regulations formally limit the use of pupil data to educational purposes, and there is no centralized scoring of citizens across multiple life domains. Yet the aesthetic and psychological dynamics show notable affinities. With social credit, educational platforms can encourage subjects to view themselves primarily through quantified indicators. Pupils may experience their school identity as a set of entries in a digital record; parents may interpret fluctuations in grades as signs of future success or failure, reinforcing pressure and anxiety. In contexts where public debates about data protection and children’s rights are still emerging, and where socio-economic inequalities shape access to technology, the introduction of JISP and eDnevnik risks amplifying existing disparities while presenting them as neutral outcomes of measurement.

At the same time, post-Yugoslav educational systems are marked by specific historical and political trajectories that shape how such infrastructures are received. Legacies of socialist bureaucratic classification, experiences of war, and contested transitions to market economies inform public sensitivities around state data collection and control. Civil society actors, parent associations and some educational professionals have raised concerns about the opacity of data flows, the lack of clear institutional accountability for data breaches, and the potential misuse of educational records for profiling or commercial purposes. These contestations indicate that digitalization is not a linear process of modernization, but a terrain of negotiation over the meaning of education, childhood and citizenship in datafied societies.

Taken together, JISP and eDnevnik can be seen as an emergent aesthetic regime of soft scoring in which educational subjects are rendered visible through continuous data traces, arranged into comparative grids and evaluated through metrics that may extend beyond strictly pedagogical concerns. This regime differs from China's Social Credit System in scope and explicitness but shares key features with it: the translation of behavior into data, the centrality of software interfaces in structuring perception, and the potential to reshape self-understanding and social relations through seemingly technical classifications.

Comparative dimensions of digital visibility

Although the Chinese Social Credit System and Serbian educational data infrastructures emerge from significantly different political and historical contexts, both systems demonstrate how digital governance increasingly operates through continuous visibility, classification, and behavioral evaluation.

However, important differences remain. In the Chinese case, scoring mechanisms are more explicitly connected to state governance, public trust, and reputational regulation, often involving direct forms of restriction or reward. In the Serbian educational context, governance operates more softly through educational normalization, parental monitoring, and performance-oriented visibility.

The affective dimensions also differ. Chinese systems frequently mobilize shame and public reputational consequences, whereas educational scoring environments more commonly produce anxiety, competition, and aspirational self-regulation. Nevertheless, both contexts reveal how digital infrastructures shape subjectivity through continuous exposure to evaluative visibility.

Conclusion

This article has offered a comparative reading of China's Social Credit experiments and educational data infrastructures in post-Yugoslav states as aesthetic regimes of digital scoring. Drawing on Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible, critical media and software theory, and Maslow's humanistic psychology, it has treated digital scoring not as a purely technical or legal phenomenon, but as an aesthetic-infrastructural formation that organizes visibility, emotion and self-understanding.

In the Chinese case, the Social Credit agenda appears as a heterogeneous but gradually consolidating infrastructure that classifies individuals and organizations according to their "trustworthiness" through blacklists, redlists and various scoring mechanisms. The aesthetic forms of these classifications—scores, rankings, public lists—attach moral and affective meanings to digital labels and invite citizens to see themselves and others through the lens of trust metrics. From a humanistic perspective, this configuration raises concerns about the erosion of intrinsic motivation and

self-respect in environments where social standing is tightly bound to opaque indicators.

In post-Yugoslav contexts, exemplified by Serbia's JISP and eDnevnik, digitalization of education introduces continuous data collection and real-time visibility of pupils' performance. Although formally limited to the educational field and framed through narratives of modernization, transparency and parental empowerment, these platforms translate complex educational processes into comparable metrics and dashboards. They thus constitute a softer, sectoral form of social scoring that can intensify pressure on pupils and families and obscure structural inequalities behind the appearance of neutral measurement.

Placing these cases side by side has highlighted both convergences and divergences. Convergences lie in their shared reliance on software infrastructures that extract behavioral data, convert them into scalar values, and feed them back as normative signals, participating in broader dynamics often described as surveillance capitalism. Divergences stem from distinct political systems, legal frameworks, and historical experiences, which shape the scope, explicitness, and contestation of scoring regimes. While China's Social Credit projects explicitly aspire to a comprehensive architecture of trust governance, educational platforms in post-Yugoslav states embody a more limited, yet still consequential, mode of datafied evaluation.

As a contribution to contemporary aesthetics, the article has proposed extending the notion of aesthetic regimes to digital infrastructures of scoring, emphasizing how interfaces, visualizations, and temporal rhythms of data circulation shape political and educational experience. For policy and design, this perspective underscores the ethical imperative to build data systems that support, rather than undermine, self-respect and autonomy—through greater transparency about metrics and algorithms, meaningful participation of those who are scored, and clear limits to the expansion of scoring logics across life domains. Future research could deepen this analysis through empirical studies of how citizens, pupils, parents and teachers actually experience and negotiate these infrastructures in everyday life, and how they imagine alternative, more humane forms of digital governance.

More humane digital infrastructures would require greater transparency regarding data collection, stronger limitations on behavioral profiling, and the preservation of spaces that allow human subjects to exist beyond permanent evaluation and quantification. Rather than organizing social life primarily through metrics and continuous visibility, digital systems should support autonomy, dignity, and forms of participation that do not reduce subjectivity to data performance.

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