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Travel Surveillance Assemblages

Ensamblajes de vigilancia viajera

Sistema de vigilância em viagens

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ABSTRACT

Soothing sounds, calming light, appeasing stories about security screeners and X-ray machines that can see the skin under clothing — all of these are implements that have slowly come to airports near all of us thanks to a total makeover of airport security measures planned mainly by the *Transportation Security Administration*. Recently, the *TSA's Checkpoint Evolution Project* has aimed soothe passengers in the screening line with music designed to calm us down while light panels complement it by emitting agreeable colors. Calmed while standing in line, passengers can read stories about the security officers, which the *TSA* hopes will make travellers feel comfortable with their screeners. The ideal is that most of the security implementations we are subjected to as we travel are perceived to be invasive, or control us, but rather to “protect us” from unforeseen catastrophes. This paper looks at how the original insidiousness of surveillance methods is slowly being erased making surveillance

acceptable as design parameters are incorporated into all sorts of surveillance technologies in order to make traveling more “comfortable”.

KEYWORDS

Airport security, comfort, manufactured consent, security.

RESUMEN

Sonidos apacibles, luces calmantes, historias amables sobre guardias de seguridad y las máquinas que pueden ver la piel bajo nuestra ropa. Todas estas innovaciones han llegado lentamente a nuestros aeropuertos gracias a la reconfiguración total de las medidas de seguridad planeadas principalmente por la agencia de transporte y seguridad TSA. Esta agencia, con su nuevo *Checkpoint Evolution Project* busca tranquilizar al pasajero que espera pasar por aparatos de seguridad mediante paneles de luces agradables. Tranquilizados mientras esperan en fila, los pasajeros también pueden leer historias sobre los oficiales de seguridad, que según las expectativas de la TSA, les ayudará a sentirse más cómodos con sus escrutadores. El propósito final es que la mayoría de las medidas de seguridad sean percibidas como medidas protectoras en lugar de prácticas invasivas y controladoras. Este escrito analiza cómo la insidia de los métodos anteriores de escrutinio y monitorización han sido reemplazados por tecnologías sutiles que los hacen socialmente más "aceptables" en la medida que facilitan nuestros viajes y tránsitos por áreas de control.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Seguridad en aeropuertos, confort, consentimiento manufacturado, seguridad.

RESUMO

Sons acolhedores, luzes relaxantes, histórias amáveis sobre seguranças e detectores que podem ver através de nossas roupas. Todas estas inovações chegaram lentamente aos nossos aeroportos graças às reconfigurações totais das medidas de segurança inseridas principalmente pela agência estadunidense de transporte e segurança (TSA). Esta agência, através de seu novo *Checkpoint Evolution Project*, busca tranquilizar o passageiro a espera por passar pelos sis-

temas de segurança ambientando estas áreas com painéis de agradáveis luzes. Tranquilos durante a espera, os passageiros podem ler amenidades sobre os trabalhadores da segurança para que, segundo a TSA, possam se sentir mais cómodos com os procedimentos de controle e incluso apreciar positivamente todos os procedimentos de segurança. Este texto analisa como os métodos anteriores de vigilância foram substituídos por tecnologias mais sutis que transformam as vistorias em algo mais aceitável socialmente enquanto os passageiros precisam acessar distintas áreas de controle.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Segurança do aeroporto, conforto, consentimento fabricado, segurança.

SUMMARY

Manufacturing Consent
Comfort and Transformative Technologies
The Other Side of the Coin
Soothing sounds, calming lights
Self-select lanes
References

SUMARIO

Consentimiento manufacturado
Comodidad y tecnologías transformadoras
La otra cara de la moneda
Sonidos relajantes, luces relajantes
Autoasignación de fila
Referencias

SUMÁRIO

Sistemas de vigilância em viagens
Consentimento manufaturado
Comodidade e “tecnologias transformadoras”
A outra cara a moeda
Sons relaxantes, luzes relaxantes
Auto-seleção de filas
Referências

Piece by piece, layer by layer, scanned manually or mechanically we used to be angered as we forfeited our humanity as “we (were) encouraged to march quietly along through airport checkpoints as full-cavity searches (were) silently executed” (Kandutsch, 2010) either by X-ray machines, or dutiful border attendants behind monitors in makeshift spaces in airports around the globe. An erasure of personal and legal boundaries has continued making privacy increasingly irrelevant because of an all-out war against anyone and everyone. This war, a war to be won by macro and micro-surveillance, is being carried out through practices inherent to the “mismeasure of man” (Gould, 2005) that grounded in state of the art techno-scientific applications, has led to the accrual of an incredible amount of data with the potential of being utilized in the persecution and disruption of the normal lives of unsuspecting and mostly innocent individuals.

The *de facto* dissolution of all sorts of the legal rights eroded in merely a decade is appalling, —and we increasingly and almost imperceptibly— traverse a “no man’s land between public law and political fact, and between the juridical order and life” (Agambén, 2005, p. 1) while surveillance nano-compromises every inch of our body, making all of us into data stored in technological devices ready for filing and sorting to be inevitably shared amongst intelligence agencies or hackers around the globe.

All sorts of technologies are being used in a self-serving “state of exception” (Agambén, 2005) which without any apparent method to the madness charter, map, digitize body interiors and borders into data composed not only from the natural categories of flesh and blood, DNA, fingerprints, or facial data but all sorts of recordable information — turned into fancily constructed correlations and algorithms. This surveillance state of things —though apparently out of control and to most of us illogical— has proven to have as main aim fixing the location of the ever-elusive pathogen, whether large or unduly small, acting with an “anxiety displaced through images of contamination” (Ostherr, 2005, p. 1) aimed not just at those thousands of subjects on the TSA’s “no-fly list” (TSA, 2011), but eventually affecting millions.

Body heat, sweat, fingerprints, nose parameters, iris analysis, vein mapping, gait imaging, height, weight, skin color and texture, odors, scar and tattoo registries, are increasingly charted to increase our “security” and that of “fellow” co-nationals silently consenting to internal and external disproportionate attention from “homeland security” that in a purported

democratic society reinforces a unitary system that remains intent in making the legal “borders of our bodies increasingly irrelevant” (Kandutsch, 2010). Surveillance is becoming tersely ubiquitous; from the detection of the dark body infiltrating “our” “national” borders, described so clearly as *that most dangerous* outsider—a monster by Herodotus, the father of all histories—to those self-described cockroaches (Zeta Acosta, 1989) entering the United States from the south, seeking ways to transverse the Arizona desert—while avoiding the gun toting militias and the swelling heat of forty degree surfaces of the land of the free—merely trying to make it alive to the land of mirages.

Airports have become the main scenarios for direct confrontation between state and individual. Heroes and underdogs of dystopic scenarios have converged there whether in body or mind during the last decade from Edward Snowden to David Miranda to Code Pink’s Medea Benjamin ...to the unsuspecting and very scared traveler stopped due to a false positive alarm. It is this last one, however, that we should care about. That is us, one by one, passing through checkpoints that slowly are becoming less conspicuous, easier to use, ergonomic, comfortable and dramatically intrusive.

Manufacturing Consent

NARRATOR: Experienced travelers move confidently... They have learned the secrets of expedited travel... They have mastered international travel... They blaze new paths unknown to others... True travelers dispense with the unnecessary, yet enjoy convenience and security... Today such master travelers lead us to one place—Global Entry. Global Entry is your ticket out of the line it is a U.S. *Customs and Border Protection Program* that enables frequent, low-risk international travelers to step away from lines and complete entry processing at automated kiosks. Global Entry is open to all law-abiding citizens, permanent residents, and citizens of certain other countries. You can apply online at Global Entry—your ticket out of the line and into more convenient international travel. Apply today.

(GOES, 2014)

To be sure, this is not the only “convenient” and comfortable innovation at an airport near us. The insidious way to win the so called “war” on terror was once to get everyone’s bodies diced, spliced and coded electronically thanks to clunky experimental technologies— which are (and make no mistake about it) the results of the wonders of the application of twenty first

century “scientific” work. The trick now is, in view of the many civil rights issues that have come up over the last decade, to make surveillance gadgets look like they are not intrusive and to contribute to the “suave” (soft) experience of traveling. The call is to make the damned things comfortable to use, ergonomic, and undetectable; the idea is to eliminate the raw and vulgar feeling manhandling body surfaces that makes one aware of the infringement of personal boundaries, human rights or uncomfortable constitutional protections, turning surveillance into a trivial situation.

Never mind the old fashioned dirty ink-stains of fingerprinting and the shiny rag that went along with that technology and move on to the science fiction film style gadgets, with thousands of scanning machines welcoming travelers to the land of lady liberty. “There is something to be said for ‘out of sight, out of mind’ when designing surveillance systems that are likely to be seen as Orwellian” (Huntleigh, 2013, p.14). In past times, should an alarm sound, one used to go into a private chamber and unhook a prosthetic under duress, explain why as an adult one wears diapers, be forced to declare a pacemaker, explain a trans-gender nature, remove a nipple ring, unwrap a turban, or prove with ample documentation that what set off the system’s alarms were indeed not bomb-making chemicals but the fumes from the peppers — basic foodstuffs to some “primitive tribes” south of the American border which would make sensors act up as if the fumes belonged to TNT (Frey, 2010) or risk getting frisked or locked up. So why not travel comfortably? Why not just join those who confess they don’t mind surveillance systems, as they are candid citizens and “have nothing to hide”?

Comfort and Transformative Technologies

The distinction between trusted individuals and suspects (false positive) citizens and/or potential criminals, or those people on a real no-fly list will eventually boil down to money. The sorting of human beings currently worked out at an “airport near you” illustrates how one will be or not be “uncomfortable” according to social class; confirming that at least capitalism is consistent. Consider *Privium*: “the local service program with fast border passage used at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol” created with two traveler categories in mind: one at €121 and the other at €205” (Schiphol, n.d.).

Customers can opt between *Privium Basic* or *Privium Plus* to make their trip experience more comfortable by selecting from comforts and perks according to their needs and wallets. While one affords the traveler “fast border passage with iris scan” at an the more affordable price, the “plus” alternative entails basics plus a special walkway, the use of the *Privium Club-*

lounge and many other comforts (Schiphol, n.d.). At the same time, corporate membership assures that business travelers are, as a group, as comfortable as possible. In any case “improved airport security... need not come at the expense of privacy—both may be achieved together in a positive-sum (not zero-sum) manner” (Cavoukian 2009, p. 1).

The services offered are increasingly sleek and exciting. One can even download an app for a smart phone and clock the time it takes to go through checkpoints in different airports to gauge how fast one is assessed or not as a travel risk. At Schiphol the winning rate is eleven seconds. It is interesting to watch the video produced to promote the service: Privium members enjoy all those delights that business class members used to enjoy for the thousands of dollars that their airplane ticket cost (Schiphol, n.d.).

IMAGE 1: FLUX TIME EXPERIMENT

The image is a screenshot of a website for the 'FLUX TIME EXPERIMENT'. At the top, there is a logo for 'FLUX' and the text 'TIME EXPERIMENT'. Below this is a dark purple navigation bar with white text for 'Home', 'Time Experiment', 'FLUX', and 'Contact'. The main visual is a photograph of people's feet on a red carpet, with a small white timing device on the ground. Overlaid on the image is a large blue text box that says 'It's all about time' and a white text box that says 'Hassle free border and security passage through fast lanes at international airports.' To the right, there is a yellow starburst graphic that says 'Clock your time and beat our VIP's'. In the bottom right corner, a smartphone is shown displaying a video player with a play button and a video thumbnail of a man. At the bottom of the image, there is a blue banner that says 'Join the Time Experiment'.

Source: <http://www.savetime.nl/>

If we enroll we can all hop on and enjoy? According to the advertisement character, a good looking female Dutch Judo Olympian, tasty snacks, comfortable designer lounges, soft music and the fun of timing the experience against others' will make membership worth the cost (Schiphol, n.d.). However, elements not clearly evident from the video are whether or not the system includes backscatter or X-ray imaging, while iris reading scanning is a highpoint in the experience.

IMAGE 2: VIDEO. EDITH BOSCH. 11 SECONDS. DO YOU THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME?



Source: <http://www.savetime.nl/pages/time-experiment.php>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPtV0DigoM>

According to Ann Cavoukian who is the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the city of Ontario, and a major player in the surveillance tools and procedures world:

Positive-Sum Paradigm + Privacy-Enhancing Technology = Transformative Technology

Which means that: “all parties can benefit from technological advances. In this paradigm, privacy protections are incorporated into security technologies from the outset, into security technologies from the outset... hence my term *Privacy by Design*” Privacy by Design” (Ca-

voukian, 2009. p. 1) (my emphasis). Comfort, invisibility, a gentle travel experience, more like designed consent...

If once we were outraged at the fact that we were patted down, or that our body could be seen silhouetted on a screen by a total stranger, now we can opt to acquiesce in comfort. However, no matter how sophisticated these silent intrusions might be and no matter in how much distinction we might feel about the possibility that fanciful machines become capable of isolating our bodies from potential weapons we crave and thus purchase those services as they, smartly enough, are sold to us as markers of distinction, a step up in the social ladder:

The realization that privacy concerns can be accommodated opens up the possibility to assess a given technology's harm to privacy without being intellectually paralyzed due to a false sense of awe in light of a new technology and to the security interests at stake.

(Tirosch & Birnhack, 2013, p. 1306).

Currently Privium membership extends its service to airports in the U.K. (Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham, Stanstead), (Schiphol, n.d.). Will the service go international? And as international membership grows so do the perks: luxury design lounges, hot meals, shower facilities, free drinks and spirits, shower facilities and "travel spas", bedrooms, "à la carte dining", cinema lounges, game rooms, "Champagne packages" (Schiphol, n.d.) (No1Traveller).

Comply, comply, comply and travel with ease, while trying to find out where your legal rights fit in the rules and regulations of things that fly across the globe. While all the time those not paying will still be subject to all sorts of rules and regulations like:

CBP officers receive great authority respecting enforcement of the immigration laws from this section of Title 8, which enables them to engage in searches and seizures and to interrogate persons believed to be aliens regarding their right to be or remain in the United States in the course of their duties as immigration officers.

(USC, 2012: 8 U.S.C. § 1357)

Which to Privium and Traveller 1 users will seem like nothing has happened to their civil liberties as the comforting aura of the lounges soothes their minds and weary bodies.

The Other Side of the Coin

While some of us might opt to travel the easy way, other human beings don't have those choices. An ad for *DRS Technologies* was reported as egregious in a popular Internet journal. The writer described the company as cleverly setting up a Tourist/Terrorist dichotomy: printed upon an image of the U.S./Mexico boundary; “[t]he word *terrorist* straddles the Mexico side of the border while tourist is over the U.S. side” (Frey, 2010). The company specializes in surveillance equipment for civilian and military use; as posted in their corporate webpage in 2012 they boasted a collaboration with the American government against impeding evil through a “competitively priced’ line of electro-optical/infrared surveillance cams”, such as the *Compact High-Resolution Infrared Long-Wave Imager*, a.k.a. CHILI, as well as the Jalapeno modular imaging system (their emphasis; their product’s name (DRS, n.d.).

Other products such as VeriChip help keep unwanted aliens a.k.a known as “guest workers” out of the United States via:

a very small Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag about the size of a large grain of rice [that] can be injected directly into the body; a special coating on the casing helps the VeriChip bond with living tissue and the stay in place. A special RFID reader broadcasts a signal, and the antenna in the VeriChip draws power from the signal and sends its data. The VeriChip is a passive RFID tag; since it does not require a battery, it has a virtually unlimited life span... The tag can be read silently and invisibly by radio waves from up to a foot or more away, right through clothing.

(NCPA, 2006).

This innovative device, in its more benign and comfortable form can be used to regulate access to secure areas, link to medical records, and serve as a payment device when associated with a credit card (Bullock, 2009).

While thousands will eventually be the subject of new and tersely designed surveillance tools, those who travel cheaply, direly, on foot with the aid of a “coyote” to assist them in their passage, will a) either get away with it, b) be left to wither in the middle of the desert by the same unscrupulous coyote (and be persecuted and maybe shot by Arizona militia) or c) be detected through the application of scientific research disguised under the ethical disclaimer “technology”. At the same time, the *Advanced Vehicle Interrogation And Notification*

System (AVIAN) detects the presence of persons hidden in vehicles. Using data from special sensors, AVIAN finds the shock wave generated by the beating heart, which couples to any surface or object with which the body is in contact. AVIAN collects the data and analyzes them using advanced signal processing algorithms to detect a hidden person in less than 1 minute (GEOVOX, n.d.).

AVIAN is part of a new group of high-tech gadgets used to sense aliens with the name given to a deadly virus which should at this point be no big rhetorical surprise since viruses are considered diminutive foreigners (Wald, 2009, p. 42). The use of disease names to imagine immigration powerfully belies the most anxious dimensions of national relatedness and racism (Wald, 2009, p. 67). On a grander scale, for some geographic areas, *Boeing* has planned an “invisible fence,”—in addition to the real fence already defining the U.S. Mexico border—consisting of intelligent surveillance cameras mounted on equally spaced posts. The cameras, equipped with video analytics, will be able to detect suspicious movements near the border thanks to specially created algorithms that analyze footage for specified data. The addition of video analytics to border patrol operations presents many interesting and beneficial security advantages. The selling points for these objects get more and more creative, compelling and therefore commonplace, while human beings are detected, screened, tracked, surveyed, or detained and equated to other endangered beings:

Sustainability - One argument against the construction of a traditional fence spanning the long border is environmental damage. A fence could disrupt many sensitive species which depend on environmental resources in both the US and Mexico, and disruptions from its likely long construction could damage fragile ecosystems!

(Videosurveillance.com)

Soothing Sounds, Calming Lights

Going back to more comfortable scenarios: the *TSA's* Checkpoint Evolution project aims to soothe passengers in the screening line with “ambient music,” described as specially chosen to be “not too melodic, not too rhythmic”. Light panels complement the screening *Muzak* by emitting colors in the “cooler end” of the spectrum (Singel, 2008). By reducing stress in the checkpoint, both security and the passenger experience are improved by making hostile intent more visible. A better passenger experience may lead to a better partnership between the

public and the Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) who are watching for anomalous behavior (TSA, n.d.).

While being calmed as they stand in line, passengers can read stories about the security officers about to frisk them, which the *TSA* hopes will “put a face on and show the personal side of our screeners”. The agency thus turns our faces into a dystopian blur of malleable data purportedly done to “avoid the invasion of our privacy” (Singel, 2008). Devoted to “Passenger Engagement”, the agency claims that as process and technology upgrades are constantly being adopted, officers are also being trained in order to calm the checkpoint environment while increasing security (TSA, 2008).

Self Select Lanes

Overall new surveillance systems are naturalized through empirical—ethnographic—research (ideo, n.d.); individuals contribute with their travel experiences after having utilized all sorts of gadgets and testing various scenarios for comfort. Rest assured that we have always a “choice” in these surveillance matters. From the *TSA*’s “Black Diamond Self Select Lanes” simply labeled paths (expert, casual, family/special needs) to chose from depending on ability or demand [which] “Help Passengers Move at Their Own Pace” (TSA, 2008), to the more sophisticated technological device, airports are about sorting people and collecting data.

IMAGE 3: BLACK DIAMOND: EXPERT, CASUAL, FAMILY.



Source: Consumerist (2008) - <http://consumerist.com/2008/06/24/are-you-skilled-enough-for-the-tsas-black-diamond-security-line/>

Thus what we are to experience is a calmer checkpoint, happier passengers and significantly lower wait times (United States, 2011). We must be thankful to ideo.com for a upcoming and unique passenger experiences. This company has “reworked the physical checkpoint to smooth the transition from lobby to final checkpoint”, refining a project created “as a demonstration of TSA’s strategic shift toward behavioral, human-centered security” (ideo, n.d.). In fact, thanks to all these efforts these contractors and governmental agencies have come round to solving simple, comfort issues: in fact, with *TSA Pre✓™*, we won’t even have to take off our shoes anymore (TSA, n.d.).

IMAGE 4: TSA Pre✓™



Source: TSA - <http://www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck>

What innovations will come next? How will they be marketed? Who is to know. However, the impulse seems to be to rev up the surveillance, and to sharpen the tools that sustain it even if they are designed, masked, or advertised to appear user friendly. Lamentably, tunnel vision (and yes, real terrorist threats, and terrifying experiences of past), a suspicious mindset in state agencies, has driven its growth, greatly contributing to uncomfortable, and at times draconian methods of social control.

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