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Mobility and Distributed Surveillance

Surveillance and mobility have historically maintained close relations: the demarcation of borders and territorial protections, the control of migration and the flow of people, goods, diseases etc. all represent ancient lineages of the intersections between these two processes (Salter & Zureik, 2005; Foucault, 2007). An initial historical glance seems to show that surveillance practices and techniques usually operate so as to refrain mobility. The relatively static and paralyzing forces of surveillance, with its territorial controls, spatial examination and inspection of the flow of people, goods etc. seems to be opposed to the deterritorializing and relatively unpredictable forces of mobility, which pose a risk to social order (Adey, 2004). However, a careful examination reveals another

relationship between surveillance and mobility which does not exclude the previous one, but rather overlaps it. Especially since the constitution of modern cities and states, surveillance devices haven't simply opposed the many forms of mobility; in fact, they have followed and ordered them – not only to restrain and paralyze these movements, but also to capitalize on them and manage their potentialities. This is particularly visible in the urbanization processes since the 18th century, whose surveillance and safety devices (establishment of police systems, health policies and population management etc.) aimed at setting limits, borders and locations, as well as enabling and guaranteeing the flow of people, goods, air etc. (Foucault, op.cit.).

This double relationship between surveillance and mobility is emphasized and complicated in the contemporary world in which, on the one hand, there is a magnification of the mobility of individuals, populations, information, communication, goods, business etc., and on the other hand, there is the ongoing proliferation and diversification of monitoring, surveillance and control of this mobility (Lyon, 2002). The dissemination of mobile communication technologies (cellular phones, laptops, palmtops), pervasive computing and informational geolocation systems (GIS, GPS)[2] is central to the growing entrenchment of surveillance and mobility. This is especially true once such technologies – even though they are not specifically designed to perform surveillance – include monitoring systems for actions, information, behavior and communication of their users within their very machinery. In this context, mobility, which could in certain cases be a way to escape or violate surveillance, becomes its privileged means: being in movement or being mobile often means being subject to

surveillance and monitoring, since there is no longer a material, spatial, temporal or informational distance interposed between the surveillance/monitoring system and the watched object/subject. Yet this condition does not necessarily imply, as is typically cited, the consolidation of a hyper-panoptic society in which surveillance is absolute. Considering the pervasiveness of these technologies in everyday life and the role of safety and terror in post-9/11 discourse, several authors have diagnosed a hypertrophy of the panoptic device in current surveillance societies (Gandy, 1993; Poster, 1990). Suggesting that it is chiefly an intensification of this device means missing something essential: the changes, not only in the intensity of the surveillance, but in its mode of operation, which is in several aspects set apart from the panoptic model. An extensive discussion on ruptures and continuities of such a model has been produced in the scope of the surveillance studies (Bogard, 1996; Marx, 2002; Lianos, 2001), and the intention here is not to revise it. The point is to analyze a few elements in the relationship between mobility and surveillance in Brazil, in order to distinguish certain specificities in the present operational mode of surveillance in this context.

The inclusion of video surveillance in contemporary urban landscapes is a global process, widely instituted in several countries. In Brazil, even though we are familiar with video surveillance in private and semipublic spaces, we are witnessing the beginning of their presence in public areas of free access. The social, political and subjective implications of this process cannot yet be completely apprehended, and we draw from relatively little research on the topic. In this article, I limit myself to only a few aspects of the relationship between video surveillance and mobility in Brazilian

urban contexts. In order to do so, I refer to data collected in interviews performed with the parties responsible for the installation and monitoring of surveillance cameras in public thoroughfares,[3] as well as research carried out in the period of a year (August 2007 to August 2008) on Brazilian news websites available on the internet. The data produced in these studies forms the basis for this article's analytical work, which highlights the processes of the contemporary distributed surveillance model in terms of its contrast with the panoptic model. This analysis emphasizes the tensions and ambiguities of the visibility and mobility control regime, characteristic of video surveillance in Brazilian urban public spaces.

I suggest the expression *distributed* surveillance to denote the general state of surveillance in contemporary societies. Generally speaking, it is surveillance that has tended to become more ubiquitous and embedded in several technology devices, services and places that we use or attend every day, but performed in a decentralized fashion, non-hierarchically and for several purposes, functions and meanings in different sectors: in safety measures and in the coordination of the flow of people, information and goods; in consumption practices and marketing strategies; in communication means and modes, entertainment and sociability; and in the rendering of services etc. Thence derives a multiplicity of present or potential objects of surveillance that are not limited to, nor justified by, suspicious, bandit or allegedly dangerous groups, but which can actually include everyone or anyone – consumers, passers-by, internauts, criminals, reality show members etc. In the midst of this kind of surveillance for all, there are several possible foci, because the present devices that

constitute this distributed surveillance regime do not watch or monitor only individuals or groups, but also information, electronic transactions, behaviors and habits in the information space, displacements, communications, traces in the cyberspace, flows of anonymous bodies in urban areas etc. Indeed, the affections and subjective and social significations that surveillance puts in motion today are diverse; if on the one hand, it is justified or carried out by the fear or the promise of safety and protection, it also on the other hand, affords fun, pleasure and sociability, as reality shows, image sharing websites, micro blogs and social networks reveal every day.

Referring to distributed surveillance is, therefore, not the same as referring to total or panoptic surveillance. Apparently, it is not a simple matter of expanding the existing models, it is rather another arrangement of practices and devices in which surveillance becomes a process diffused among multiple actors, techniques, functions, contexts, purposes, affections, etc. Note that the intention in this process is not to cease or restrain mobility, but to guide, conduct, capitalize and potentialize it in certain directions. If the focus and the devices intrinsic to surveillance tend to become more mobile, mobility is no longer simply the controversy or the danger that disturbs ordered spaces under watch, rather, it is what should be guaranteed and secured by surveillance.

This concept of distributed surveillance will be the background for the analysis of the recent and growing presence of video surveillance in public spaces of free access in Brazilian cities. I will highlight, in this context, aspects of a visibility and mobility

control regime in which the monitored spaces and displacement of bodies are increasingly associated with safety, while immobility is seen as a threat and a source of suspicion. I will also observe how two different kinds of control of mobility by video surveillance coexist and nourish each other: the first aims at guaranteeing and stimulating free flows, under surveillance, of individuals and groups that are part of the services, consumption and work circles in the city; and the other aims at capturing and containing the mobility of poor and/or supposedly dangerous populations, removing them from these circles.

Video surveillance: visibility and mobility control regimes in Brazil

Let us start with the figures: in 2005 there were only 5 open street surveillance cameras in the city of Rio de Janeiro; in 2008 these cameras numbered 220, and their number was expected to reach 720 by the end of the year, representing a massive increase between 2005 and 2008 (a 144-times increase in this period).[4] In the city of São Paulo, 96 streets were monitored in 2007; by the end of 2008, 369 streets are expected to be monitored with a total of 12,000 cameras in streets and public establishments (museums, schools, parks etc.) in the city.[5] Other important Brazilian cities such as Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre and Curitiba have shown a remarkable increase in their investments in video surveillance systems for public spaces since 2004 and 2005. In the Brazilian northeast, Fortaleza is the city that has the most ambitious project, calculating the installation of 250 new cameras by the end of the year 2008. Presently the public space is monitored by 35 cameras.[6]

These numbers offer a patent confirmation of the recent and significant increase of video surveillance in Brazilian public spaces, even if the absolute figures are low when compared to other cities in the world, such as London and New York.[7] The reasons for such an increase in Brazil are multiple, spanning local and global contexts, and this paper does not intend to analyze them. We will only mention a few elements in the history of video surveillance in Brazil, so as to move on to the analysis of the implications for the mobility control in the large Brazilian cities.

The course of video surveillance in Brazil begins in the 80s, is intensified in the 90s, and as of 2003, surveillance becomes almost a synonym for safety (Kanashiro, 2008), appearing not only in private and semipublic sectors, but also in public spaces. As indicated by the figures shown, video surveillance systems in public areas of free access only began about four years ago in Brazil, and they have been enhanced significantly in the past two years. The State is responsible for the installation and monitoring of these systems, even if they are associated with the private sector in specific cases. A great part of the recent increase of this public investment comes from funds made possible by the National Program of Public Security and Citizenship (Pronasci[8]), introduced by the Ministry of Justice in 2007, in order to fight criminality in the country by combining security policies and chiefly preventive social actions. Even though the installation of surveillance cameras is not among the official projects of the program, several states have effectively directed the funds obtained for this purpose. Until recently, a great part

of the investments in video surveillance fell under the scope of private security, a token of Brazilian reaction to violence in the cities. In 2002, for example, it was calculated that there were a million cameras installed in the State of São Paulo and a great part of them were meant for the protection of private or semipublic areas (Kanashiro, op.cit).

Brazilian cities multiplied their "fortified enclaves" (Caldeira, 2000), which are "private, closed, monitored places meant for habitation, leisure, work and consumption" (Idem, p.12), and which keep "outside" those who do not participate in these circles or who represent some kind of threat to the functioning and safety of the enclaves and their inhabitants. The monitoring of surveillance cameras placed in public spaces is usually performed by offices responsible for public safety, even if in some cases the hiring of professionals is outsourced. The State supplements the growing revenues of the security industry, which in the last nine years have increased 13% per year in Brazil, according to ABESE.[9] In 2007 the growth was 15% compared to the previous year,[10] and in 2008 one of the most important companies in the field of video surveillance, Axis,[11] chose Brazil as the site of its main office of South American business. According to the security industries, the supposedly saturated European and North American markets point to countries such as Brazil, India, Russia and China as emerging markets for video surveillance.[12]

As for the relationship between video surveillance and mobility in Brazilian urban spaces, the first aspect to be noted, a technical one, is the progressive conversion of the

wired closed circuit TV model – which is still technically and esthetically linked to delimited and relatively closed spaces – to the digital and wireless video surveillance – which is more adequate for monitoring urban mobility. Cities like São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Santa Catarina and Curitiba have invested in such digital and wireless systems with the transmission of data via internet, cellular phone or radio, allowing for greater mobility of monitoring actions and the devices themselves, as well as greater control over the flow of people in urban public spaces.[13] Wireless video surveillance systems allow cameras to be repositioned more frequently and less expensively. They also enable the transition and monitoring of images via cell phone, or the installation of car cameras, which makes surveillance simultaneously more mobile and more capable of monitoring mobility. Besides proving to be the "ideal" for public networks of urban space monitoring – as reinforced by its low cost compared to analogical and wired systems – digital and wireless video surveillance also embodies the "technical solution" to the distribution of video surveillance among individuals who wish to monitor their own real estate, business, employees, relatives, children, etc. In Brazil, the IP cameras, which enable monitoring via internet, are heralded as the technology that will bring surveillance to everyone, amplifying the personalized use of video surveillance in households, workplaces and other sites.

In addition to this technical aspect, I would like to consider some of the aspects of the visibility and mobility control regime present in the incorporation of video surveillance systems in public urban spaces in Brazil. The most prevalent facet of this process is the progressive consolidation of a security discourse that promotes an associative identity

between video surveillance and safe mobility. Such discourse is particularly visible in newspaper texts that report surveillance camera installation in Brazil. Research carried out with Brazilian news websites observed that 98.3% of the articles reporting on the installation of video surveillance systems in public spaces of free access used the idea of safety as a main legitimating framework.[14] In these articles, the increase in video surveillance is practically synonymous with an increase in safety – in this context understood as the reduction of the amount of contraventions and the arrest of contraveners. Only 3.39% of the articles approach the inefficiency of the surveillance cameras used to reduce crimes, which is noteworthy, since recent statistics in several countries indicate that there is no evidence for the efficiency of video surveillance in the fight against criminality (Gill & Spriggs, 2005).

However, the journalistic discourse and its security rhetoric neither make explicit nor question how the cameras' mobility is targeted at a part of the population considered "virtual victims" (Vaz et al., 2006) – victims of another significant part of the population, to whom the camera is not a safety and protection device, but a means of exclusion and suspicion. Still in the journalistic scope, Vaz et al. show how recent articles dealing with criminality in the city of Rio de Janeiro prioritize the suffering of victims, multiplying statements from the victims themselves, or from relatives and friends, while seldom mentioning the social causes for crime or the suffering of criminals. Thus, readers are identified as potential or virtual victims of crimes that, according to the discourse, are characterized by randomness and irrationality, implying the shadowy existence of barbarians among the elite, for whom there is no other option

but to seek more protection and safety. In this context, surveillance cameras in public spaces of free access are justified as a way to guarantee that the classes who used to be protected behind walls and condos and shopping mall barriers have safe mobility in the streets of the city. The cameras exert a dissuasive effect, according to the discourse that legitimates them, pushing crime away from monitored zones and allowing for the instant capture and arrest of criminals in action, since they are monitored in real time. It can be noted that, if on the one hand, cameras in public spaces guarantee the mobility of citizens that have free access to consumption and civility circles, extending their "safe" mobility beyond their "fortified enclaves", then on the other hand, they contribute to gentrification processes, displacing from monitored and watched areas a whole other part of the population, whose mobility is seen as threatening, and demanding control and restriction. This aspect becomes clearer when the installation of surveillance cameras is part of government-sponsored revitalization or reurbanization projects in decaying or abandoned areas. Research carried out at Parque da Luz in the city of São Paulo (Kanashiro, 2008) – a region until recently inhabited mainly by a poor population, drug users, prostitutes and beggars – points out how the revitalization of the area and the use of surveillance cameras comprised a policy to make these groups disappear.

It should be noted how social significance and forms of control operated by the incorporation of surveillance cameras in public spaces in Brazilian cities involve a visibility and mobility regime marked by ambiguities and tensions. This regime embodies the global model of surveillance for all, since video surveillance, when

consolidated in public spaces of free access, is not directed to previously defined groups. In contrast to modern inspection devices, which observe a set of predefined individuals whose presence is related to the institution that watched them (prisoners, diseased), street surveillance cameras in streets, public parks etc. are directed at everyone and anyone, performing a dissuasive or "preventive" duty. The people in this case do not have an individual – nor a collective – identity that justifies surveillance. The chance of passing by the same inspected area is the only fact that links the watched parties. In this respect, we all become victims and potential suspects. In some cases, the office in charge of performing surveillance becomes its own object, such as the police, who are also monitored by the body responsible for monitoring the public thoroughfare. A recent example of this process in the city of Rio de Janeiro is the installation of surveillance cameras in police vehicles responsible for the operations in poor communities (slums), known as caveirões. Such operations can be distinguished by significant violence. The cameras – monitored in real time by the Command and Control Center of the Public Safety Office – watch occasional violent actions of criminals and the police.

However, as we have seen, this visibility regime for all coexists with a clear distinction between the mobile masses, for whom surveillance goes with protection and security, and the masses whose mobility should be restrained and for whom surveillance implies suspicion and exclusion.[15] Once again, this regime presents a significant distinction from the disciplinary and panoptic model, according to which the safety of cities and populations involves the surveillance of dangerous individuals in circumscribed spaces. Today, by contrast, safety entails the surveillance of victims, as well as potential

suspects, creating a stronger indeterminacy between those two groups. In Brazil, however, this indeterminacy coordinates with a clear distinction between populations that are meant to have a safe and free mobility, and populations that become the target of suspicion in the areas of monitored mobility, since they do not fit the accepted image of the mobile "civilized" masses (Bauman, 1999). It is possible to state that, contrary to the panoptic model, today the elites feel they are virtual victims of poor and allegedly dangerous populations in the cities and they "request" surveillance in the interest of safety. The surveillance camera performs an ambiguous symbolic function: on the one hand, it is legitimated by a discourse that affirms the presence of danger and reason to be afraid, since a monitored place is allegedly a potentially dangerous place – if it weren't, then there would be no need for the camera to be positioned there; on the other hand, it provides a symbolic impression of safety, as associated with visibility. The camera works this way under a certain logic that attempts to legitimate its presence in public spaces as a device which simultaneously presumes lack of safety and provides security.

This visibility and control regime also relies on a perception and attention regime, in which resting, slow and motionless bodies, or ruptures to regular mobility, become one of the privileged targets of suspicion and watchful eyes. Such a practice can be understood as stemming from one element of the attention processes of contemporary urban video surveillance, that which attempts to capture the exceptional or irregular. As such, cameras are not so much intended to establish normality among a deviant population (as in panoptic institutions), as they are deployed to capture the fractures in

the current order. The human beings behind the camera and the software used to identify suspicious movements may perform this duty of capturing a rupture in normality, or they may even anticipate it. In most contemporary urban spaces, especially in public thoroughfares, the moving flow of bodies and objects constitute the regular and expected movement associated with the dynamics of consumption, work and the generally hectic lives of city-dwellers. There are a number of video surveillance software programs that can automatically detect stops and interruptions in body movements, as well as static objects, for a certain period of time in certain places, screening and highlighting suspicious situations for camera operators or safety offices.[16] In Brazil, these software devices are still not employed in public thoroughfares, but a similar protocol guides the training of camera operators, as shown in a study by Kanashiro (2008) at Parque da Luz in the city of São Paulo. According to the author, the mass of passers-by and the rhythm of the movements comprise the attention field of operators, with sudden changes in direction and interruptions to flow signaling peril and irregularity. Even in spaces like public parks, bodies that are too still or "idle" are also suspicious, since they stand out from the expected mobility, and often they are bodies that according to the surveillance point of view should not be there – such as beggars, street kids, drunks and drug users. Thus, mobility converges with an architecture of normalization, and it is over the interruptions, fractures and discontinuities in its standard flow that the eyes behind the cameras watch, sounding the alarm based on attention regimes in monitored urban territories.

Notes

1. This article is the result of the research "Visibility, vigilance and subjectivity in the new information and communication technology", supported by the CNPq (Grant for Productivity in Research, 2007-2010) .

2. GIS – Geographic information system. GPS – Global positioning system.

3. In Brazil, state or municipal Public Security Offices are responsible for installing and monitoring surveillance cameras in public areas, streets or pathways. However, there are possible partnerships with private companies. In this research, agents from six different Public Security Offices were interviewed, namely, from São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Porto Alegre e Fortaleza. These are state capital cities which significantly increased their video-surveillance systems reach in public spaces in the last couple of years. The interviews were conducted from March to October 2008.

4. Information provided by the Safety Office of the State of Rio de Janeiro, in an interview granted in April 2008.

5. Information provided by the Safety Office of the State of São Paulo, in an interview granted in June 2008.

6. The information related to the statistical and technical characteristics of video surveillance cameras in public thoroughfare of free access in Brazilian cities mentioned in this article come from interviews carried out between March and October 2008 with offices responsible for video surveillance in Public Safety Offices of States and/or Cities, and research carried out on Brazilian news websites available on the internet from August 2007 to August 2008. The number of cameras referred to here are restricted to those used for public safety, and installed in free access areas (the traffic monitoring cameras, for example, were not included in the count).

7. According to research carried out in 2004, there are about 4 million cameras in London, of which approximately 40,000 are used in public thoroughfares of free access (open-street CCTV). See Töpfer, E. & Hempel, L. (2004). CCTV in Europe: final report.

Center for Technology and Society/Technical University of Berlin. Available at www.urbaneye.net. In New York, according to the New York Civil Liberties Union report (2006), there were approximately 4,468 cameras visible on street level in 2005.

8. www.mj.gov.br/pronasci/

9. Brazilian Association of Security Electronic Systems, http://www.abese.org.br/

10. Data provided by Abese: http://www.abese.org.br/

11. http://www.axis.com/

12. Data provided by Abese: http://www.abese.org.br/

13. Even though the progressive conversion of the analogical wired video surveillance model for the wireless digital model is clear, there are today several combinations of these models coexisting in Brazil. Regardless of the model used, most cameras installed in public thoroughfare as from 2005 have a 360 degree view, a 22x zoom and real time monitoring by the parties in charge of public safety in the Brazilian states and cities.

14. The research was carried out from August 2007 to August 2008 with Brazilian news websites. The news informing the installation of video surveillance systems in public spaces of free access were selected and analyzed in order to apprehend the legitimating elements of this process in the journalistic discourse.

15. Even if this is a dominant characteristic of the use of video surveillance in Brazil, several studies show similar processes in other countries. See Norris & Armstrong, 1999; Coleman, 2003; Botello, 2007.

16. These software programs are part of a new surveillance area – Intelligent Video Surveillance – which intends to automatically detect suspicious situations in captured images. Companies such as VideoIQ, Intuvision, Arinc, IntelliVid developed these software programs to provide safety in several sectors: transportation, commerce, leisure, etc.

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Biography

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