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Session: Risk, hazard, disaster and crime

**Title: Controlling the unknown. Surveillance and its use of imaginary geographies.**

So, this is not presenting a project, this is some theoretical thoughts and some empirical research. With some examples I will show what I mean. In some ways, it is an indirect comment on some things I have seen here, on some of the maps. I also use pictures, but I also use maps because they are a nice example of imaginary geographies. Basically, this is a talk about surveillance and the use of imaginary geographies and what they will do.

Surveillance is - without definition - mostly about looking into something I don't know or I can't control. That is not to say that everything surveillance is looking at is basically unknown. But the punch line is: in order to argue for surveillance it has to be made unknown. So that works better and I will come back to that. So surveillance is about the unknown but the things they watch are not necessarily unknown.

There is a basic idea behind this: We know so much about our world and the world outside. We can see it from above, that is a nice thing to do! People centuries ago could not do that. They imagined that, but now we can. We actually know there is a global totality we know everything about the earth. But then again, we can watch down at the earth we can know everything that goes on.

This is an image for military purposes, intelligence gathering. It is just an example to show that we know lots of things. Apparently this is something that we all see, in this town more than in others. This picture was taken in Hamburg. There is far less of those things around. So although we know the whole globe totality, it seems there are still spots we don't know. Imaginary geographies - this is one from an old school book I found. Some of you may remember them from the old school days. I actually do. There is the „Reds“, the empire of the evil on the right hand side. And everything that is blue or blueish: Those were the good ones, Eastern Europe, Western Europe. I don't know why France is not really blue, but

that is a different story. So, this is imaginary geography. You can deal with that. There is the unknown, although - you know - it was known. It was the Soviet Union, people spoke Russian, lots of things were known. So this is one example of imaginary geography. Surveillance is about the wish to know. Satellite and U2-Flights over the Soviet Union were - of course - means to uncover what was not known.

I give you a few examples where unknown things are constructed, how that works and why it is necessary to surveil. This is part of a map of Hamburg, Northern Germany. This blueish thing in the middle is called an „area of danger“ (= „Gefahrengebiet“), which is temporarily set up. It was set up two weeks ago for a little fair in one particular quarter of Hamburg. This area of danger is set up by the police and enables them to stop and search everybody that is walking in the street, just because they want to. It is basically two kilometers in diameter. It is not a large area. When we look at what actual things happened: They were expecting a riot. Not like in London, but it is an annual thing that comes around that particular fair. Some youth masked in black come, throw stones at the police, the police is there with 3000 men. It is more of a ritual than actually an uprising that happens suddenly. The actual area where this happens is that small. They do more. They put up an area of danger for you to imagine what is behind it. That is from the newspaper. I did not make this myself, I just copied it out of the internet from a news site. They posted it everywhere: In the newspapers, on the internet. So, everybody knows this scenario of danger. „I don't go there.“ You can play with the imaginary. What have you. And - of course - it is the argument for the city of Hamburg to send 3000 police men in there: On horse, with water canons, with everything they have. No rubber bullets though, but lots of things. They use that imagined geography to argue for what they want to do. And nothing is unknown. People sit in the cafés during the riots, that is one particularly strange thing.

Here is another imaginary geography: This is Northern Ireland. As you can see this is a peace line and the peace line is watched by the high camera up there. This is a peace line - it is not necessarily the same peace line. But this is what a peace line looks like in Northern Ireland. It separates communities: Catholic from protestant, republican from loyalist, unionist. And both sides have a different imaginary from the other side. They both think it is something that it is not. That might or might not be true that it has a real basis or that it is simply fantasy. It is the experience that regulates their lives. It is not impossible to go there. It is not a wall like the Berlin wall which separated the city permanently. You can go there. There is a gate. You can go through the gate. You can move easily from one side

to the other. Protestants can move to the catholic side and vice versa, but nobody does it. Not on foot at least. People rarely take the car. On a normal business day they would go there but they would not really stay there. It is transitional. But it is a means to - this is after the conflict! These peace walls have been erected during the last 13 years. More so than have been there before. And they have been surveilled by video surveillance after the peace agreement in 1998. So this is the outcome: Thinking about surveillance, thinking about what is on the other side and putting up is - in part - because people are clashing but their clash has to do with what they think. So peace lines separating and surveillance arguing for that. And they go up more and more, which is a strange thing to do in peace.

This is not an imaginary geography, it can be one. In 2008, with many Iraqi refugees coming into Europe, the German government engaged in a very awkward debate about what kind of refugees to let in and what kind of refugees not to let in. And they decided: The Christian ones can go in and the Muslim ones - we rather do not want to have them. So, this is a map of people fleeing to Europe, 150.000. It is from a newspaper article from 2008. Many more refugees - as you can see - are of course internally displaced people. Many millions - in comparison to 150.000 - that come to Europe. But these 150.000 is the real danger, the real flood that comes into Europe. And what such a debate about Christians and Muslims does... In my view, dividing up refugees in Christians and Muslims creates an artificial geography of closeness and distance. I don't know how many refugees have come here. No matter if they are Christian or Muslim, they are as foreign to me as anything. Just because somebody is Christian it does not make him or her closer to me. With someone that is just coming as a refugee it is like „I help you“, but not „I help you because you are close to me. I am a Christian.“ There are not that good Christians in Germany anyway, the churches are not filled. So both are foreign to Europeans. Using Christianity as a marker to decide which will gain access renders the other group - in this case the Muslims - into something alien. So they are used as a screen of projection. You can project everything on it. This is the Muslim world, it is known, but of course you can argue so many dark and unknown things go on in it. So you have to put up a very tight European border control by Frontex, the European frontier agency in the Mediterranean between Turkey and the rest of Europe.

For example - very short - this is a crime map of Hamburg. It is given out usually every year, probably all of you have seen that of your towns and cities. This is about suspects under 21 years of age in violent crimes. This is something from a research I did myself years back. This is the range of mobility of 12 people in this part of town, a small residential area. This is their range of mobility and this is their idea about Hamburg which is unsafe and safe. Here is a comparison again: They never go in these places (red is very dangerous). This is a mapping exercise that we did with them. And in the interviews after that they argued to especially watch - there was no CCTV at the time in Hamburg. When we asked them: „You want CCTV in Hamburg? And in what places?“ Guess which places they would love to have CCTV in place. All the red and more redish ones, rather than the green ones. Whatever they imagined to be there, they wanted to have it surveilled. It was not experience obviously.

And there is another one, which leads up to the conclusions. Imaginary geographies do not have to be on territory. They can be on us as well. This is a body scanner image. So to look actually beyond, to construct us as the unknown (DNA etc.), surveillance goes into the body. And they are constructing the human as the unknown as we walk through security affected areas, areas of danger, or airports. You all know - since you all probably have come here by plane - what is danger: markers, DNA, biometrics and that stuff like that. Nothing of that really is unknown but is constructed as unknown to argue for a surveillance. The production of these imaginaries - geographies or other - and surveillance are instrumentalised, especially surveillance technology. So you have some technology that can do something, you want to sell it and therefore create something. Or, as surveillance and these imaginaries are about power and knowledge, you need to create them in order to act out your control. That is to say surveillance needs these imaginary geographies and this unknown stuff while imaginary geographies on the other hand do not need surveillance. You can deal with other things in other ways. Paradise is such an imagined geography and it does not need surveillance, does it? It needs your imagination, your fantasy for the good things. It does not necessarily need your control. The other way around, if you want to surveil and you want to control, you want to act and pursue power, if you want to steer populations, if you want to exercise various functions of governance, you actually need to construct such unknown things because it makes it easy to argue for surveillance. If you say: „We know all about them“ than everybody goes: „Well, then just go over there and speak to them.“ And do not control them in the way you are used to, by

videocameras, or biometric passports, or DNA-testing, or DNA-databases, or what have you.

That is it. Thank you very much!