JPM717: Presentation Handout

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Reading’s Title: Secured and Sorted Mobilities: Examples from the Airport

Year of publication: 2004

**1. Summary of the Reading**

*What is the reading about? What is the author’s main thesis and conclusions?*

The paper focuses on the mobility surveillance of passengers and their belongings at the airport as an example of increasing surveillance of society. Mobility has become a central principle when we think about *“society, space and power.”*States often consider mobility as a security risk. The airports have become a good example of population mobility control and surveillance. The paper discusses the taxonomy of the surveillance and the impacts on different travellers that are being differentiated by their profiles. The author criticized this differentiation which may be discriminatory and biased. He is also worried about data privacy.

Unlike other scholars who tend to focus predominantly on screening passengers, this paper concentrates on also controls of things. By separating human and non-human monitoring for the purpose of the article, the author would like to demonstrate the importance of including non-human screening to better understand the complexity of the surveillance system. The paper uses *Actor-Network Theory*(ANT) to analyse the network of relationships among people, as well as things and organizations. This theory tends to view the monitoring of “means of terrorism” as an observance of network actors and objects. When using this theory, it can be better understood how the surveillance systems were designed and how they work. It especially reveals the assumption and norms that are used during surveillance. Then the process of surveillance can be modified to prevent the threat better.

**2. Critical Analysis**

*What are the strong and weak points of the argument?*

The heightened usage of the ANT approach can improve our recognition of surveillance. It offers us a broader view of actors’ mobility and their behaviour. Besides the mainstream type of surveillance practices, the security personnel can also focus their attention on the actor’s behaviour, in the airport’s case, and possibly their relationships with other parts of the network, namely things and organizations. The security personnel would focus more on passengers’ behaviour. However, this approach is limited in not recognizing the actor’s intentions fully.

**3. Relation to the Main Reading**

*How does the argument relate to, and/or expand the argument of the main reading to which it is linked in the syllabus?*

The main reading also highlights the benefits of using the *Actor-Network Theory*and focuses on the more critical view of the current security approach of the governments. It shares the belief that security is not only about using technology to perform security checks or physical barriers. As the presented article, it still considers the ANT approach as supplementary. As one of the main theses of the main article, the author perceives security as a controversy that is always in the making. He uses the term “Black boxes” to describe the mapping of current controversies of security governance. He digs into ontological politics of controversies, in the airport’s case into the used security policy measures. In this point, the author of the main reading expands the argumentative level of the presented article, where the ANT approach is used for (additional) security recommendations rather than assessing security discourse as a whole. The main article opens the “black boxes” rather than reacting to the effects of security measures already established, as in the presented article.