

Urban Citizenship in a Sensor Rich Society

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Abstract : Urban public spaces are sutured with a range of surveillance and sensor technologies that claim to enable new forms of 'data based citizen participation', but also increase the tendency for 'function-creep', whereby vast amounts of data are gathered, stored and analysed in a broad application of urban surveillance. This kind of monitoring and capacity for surveillance connects with attempts by civic authorities to regulate, restrict, rebrand and reframe urban public spaces. A direct consequence of the increasingly security driven, policed, privatised and surveilled nature of public space is the exclusion or 'unfavourable inclusion' of those considered flawed and unwelcome in the 'spectacular' consumption spaces of many major urban centres. In the name of urban regeneration, programs of securitisation, 'gentrification' and 'creative' and 'smart' city initiatives refashion public space as sites of selective inclusion and exclusion. In this context of monitoring and control procedures, in particular, children and young people's use of space in parks, neighbourhoods, shopping malls and streets is often viewed as a threat to the social order, requiring various forms of remedial action. This paper suggests that cities, places and spaces and those who seek to use them, can be resilient in working to maintain and extend democratic freedoms and processes enshrined in Marshall's concept of citizenship, calling sensor and surveillance systems to account. Such accountability could better inform the implementation of public policy around the design, build and governance of public space and also understandings of urban citizenship in the sensor saturated urban environment.

Keywords : citizenship, public space, surveillance, young people

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