

## NETOPTICON<sup>[1]</sup>

[he] [es]

Introduction

**The Local Context**

Netopticon

Related Resources

In the Israeli reality, the methods of control and monitoring are integral part of the daily life. This reality is interpreted by most of the citizens not only as understood but also as necessary. Via the mass media stream of signs and messages every citizen is encouraged "to pay attention to all suspicious object" (also person, attitude, etc.). The citizen is invited to be contributor of a collective act of control where all potentially become simultaneously suspects and guards. In the same way different speeches promoted by mass media and the political speeches grant legitimacy to practices of control and monitoring made in name of "the communal property" and the "security". We all forced to contribute and to turn transparent in front of this system of control, easily identified, located, watched and differentiated according to nationality, religion or sex.

In each coffee shop in the city, in each store, mall, university, hospital and even on the ascent to bus, one is under a vigilant glance that guards "our security" and the imminence of the danger reminding us of the constant presence of the control, built-in systems of paranoia, that become invisible at the moments of calm. An average citizen, must cross daily between 4 and 10 points of control (inspection of hand bags, documents, car checks, etc.), not to mention all the hidden tools of observation and control in the urban space and in the net <sup>[2]</sup>. The edge between the public and the private body blurs. The situation for the Palestinian citizens, inhabitants of the occupied territories and of the Israeli arabs citizens is considerably more complex than the one of the Israeli jews. The means of control are massive, and the level of suspicion is much higher.

The success of the system in the streets of Israel can be observed through the passiveness of people in their agreement to pass these inspections considered as routine. The passivity and the lack of reaction as the normative behavior, allows to continue the daily tasks in an efficient way. Any act or protests to this system of control, is considered to be a deviation from the expected pattern, waking up suspicions among those charge and annoying the citizens who see such act of protest as a mere delay of the routine.

The excessive means of control and monitoring in the Israeli society is not in any way conspicuous subject neither in mass media, nor in academia, nor even in the artistic circle. Only a single case of outrageous use of power at the Control post (Check-point) located on the passage from Palestinian to Israeli territory has caused an action that turned to the subject of [Machsom Watch](#), the [Machsom](#) website of the alternative information, and some other works that get mentioned later. A critical approach to dataveillance can be found at the [para-noia](#) <sup>[3]</sup> workshop and at [magaf](#) site.

Small daily acts of resistance can sometimes lead to dysfunction of the system and to dismay. One example is the modification of the official Israeli identity card by the artist Aviad Albert. Whereas the blue ID card identifies Israeli citizens, the orange is destined to the Palestinians living on the occupied territories. Aviad Albert, artist, activist and Israeli citizen decided to change the blue color of his ID card to orange. This act caused disturbances at the control posts. This action was quoted and its symbolics was stressed by putting **Albert's ID cover** as the front cover of Hearat Shulaym journal #7.

The installation of Michal Rotschild, **Vision 2003**, makes references to "Mabat 2000" - the undertaking of the Israeli police in 1998. Almost 300 cameras were put to watch and record the movements in the old city of Jerusalem. The free floating movement of Rotchild's camera along the streets of the old city creates a contrast with the images of surveillance displayed at the local police station. In addition the work features the interview with the police officer in charge of this electronic panopticon.

Sharif Waked, in his work **Chic-Point**, refers to the thorough inspections that the Palestinians from the occupied territories must pass in the army check-points. Chic-point begins with a parade of masculine models, presenting exclusively designed clothes made for the crossing of the control barriers. The clothes, down to very last detail designed to reveal the parts of the body considered suspicious by the army.

Among the projects that treat the daily control at the Israeli street we should mention **Check it!**, a video work of by Effie & Amir recontextualizing and altering the relation between the watcher and the watched. A

camcorder, hidden in a hand bag, films guards every time it gets opened for a check-up. The work is further edited in words of Effie & Amir, in a "rap-like track, protesting, furious ZIP'N'SCRATCH".

**Bagcheck & Bodysearch** is a video installation by Hagar Goren treats the excesses in the penetration of privacy during the security or medical inspection. To make this project, Goren, has worked as a security guard at commercial center, but not only checked the people and their hand bags but also documented this process. The work, the continuous video row of open bags and bodies search, was projected along with a video of a thorough ophthalmologic test.

Jack Faber and Gady Sprukt secretly connected their video camera to the control panel of the surveillance network at the Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, and filmed the actions conducted by them in front of the cameras in the different show rooms of the Museum. **Watchmen** resulting work did not get exhibited since the Museum initiated a lawsuit against the artists affirming that the work that endeavors to create a reflection of relations between the art institutions, the artists and their works, damages the credibility of the museum. The legal action was taken without seeing the film, based only on a press article describing the work. Currently the artists are at suit.

Pil & Galia Kollektiv, two Israeli artists living in London, in the work **ASBO** focus their attention on the CCTV cameras massively present in the city. They prefer to call the cameras "ASBOs" - an acronym for anti-social behavior order. In words of Pil & Galia the cameras/ASBOs become part of the modern urban fauna, tragi-comic creatures of the society of surveillance and control.

Another work is "Big Optics\_2" by Avi Rosen of which we refer to it in the context of netopticon exhibition.

### Notes

[2] See Indymedia Israel case: <http://indymedia.org.il/>

[3] In Hebrew also "cow noia"