

Transcoding Sovereignty

Naked Bandit/Here, Not Here/White Sovereign

KR + CF

Global information technologies (Satellite, GPS und Data Surveillance) are producing new territorial principles of order and new logics of space, as well as constituting forms of transnational power and sovereignty.

Transnational sovereignty is emerging from permanent processes of exclusions and inclusions of territories and people on a global scale. Extraterritoriality describes a logic of space which is defined outside of the state and its systems of law, but is still controlled by the referring state power and sovereignty. Extra-territorialities are constructed as 'non-publics', external to the existing protocols which govern our civil conflicts. These imply zones in which legal status can be suspended, in which citizenship is invalidated, in which the assumption of innocence is thrown away, in which representation is denied. Each person and territory is, in the context of the "war on terror", under permanent threat of being excluded, becoming an unlawful subject or an extraterritoriality.

Knowbotic Research investigates these (non) legal frameworks of transnational sovereignty which inscribe and determine our fields of action in mostly invisible layers, beyond the surface of daily images produced by the mass media.

The political procedures of the ongoing constitution of transnational sovereign powers are always enacted as test cases, probed and executed in parallel strands: the 'virtual' and the 'real'. An artistic project like *Naked Bandit* is able to create an interface and connect to the virtual level of its constitution, making that level public and providing virtual and symbolic levels of engagement.

Virtual engagement does not mean a de-realisation, but a displacement of the centre and a change of perspective and identity.

Knowbotic Research posits an experimental spatial assemblage which enables the analysis and translation of the coded layers of these new territorial encryptions, and which provides interfaces to interfere with the spatial logic of extraterritoriality. This translation and transcoding into different and conceivable logics has the potential to include the logic of extraterritoriality, and those affected by it, in the public sphere.

Naked Bandit/Here, Not Here/White Sovereign

Our project focuses on the mechanisms of detainment of so-called 'unlawful enemy

combatants', terror suspects not entitled to the legal status of prisoners of war. The (global) sovereign defines persons as 'here' (detained) and simultaneously 'elsewhere', not here, not anymore on the territory of the nation state, and thus banned, stripped away from the legal framework which the nation state guarantees. The detainee is a 'naked bandit', 'here' and 'not here', exiled in extraterritorial spheres.

We investigate the formal mechanisms and logics of such an 'inclusive exclusion' and the inherent structures of power involved in these. Inclusive exclusion means that, on the one hand sovereign power segregates and excludes, and on the other includes and detains/occupies the excluded. Knowbotic Research translates the dilemma of the naked bandit, excluded from the legal body and included in an extraterritorial non-location, into three differently coded levels. In doing so it opens up virtual potentials and agencies to deal with (address, confront, alienate, contaminate) and transgress the *naked bandit/here, not here/white sovereign* dilemma.



Transcoding Level 1 : Autonomous Indoor Flying Control System

The interdependent processes between detainer and detainees are presented in the exhibition space via an indoor flying robot system, which is de-territorialised out of the context of scientific research (Autonomous Systems Lab, EPFL Lausanne; see below).

An autonomous robot – a helium-filled blimp (zeppelin) – controls and attacks other balloons, *the naked bandits*, without any technical control devices. The 'bandits' are detained and kept captive, floating in space. They serve as targets as well as orientation and navigation forms for the sovereign robotic logic, which is characterised by processes of zoning, scanning, filtering, profiling, detecting and targeting.

Visitors to the installation can move on the level of the control technology – in between the flight operations and navigation modes of the robotic machinery. The public thus confronts and obstructs the logics of this autonomous flight machinery by constructing obstacles in space via their physical presence (serving as additional targets), and making the sovereign space more and more non-navigable.

Transcoding Level 2 : Naked Code

Knowbotic Research transfers the legalistic codes (or, more precisely, codes which produce an exemption from legality) of the 'inclusive exclusion' of the naked bandit by the white sovereign, into two scenarios of script code, executable in a Unix shell on a personal computer.

Scenario A

```
export white_sovereign='not_here() { while [ enclosed ] ; do echo "naked bandit: here, not here"; echo $white_sovereign] sed -e "s/ ( not_here ) /(& \& ) /g"> clone.sh; done; } ; (
```



```
not_here ) & wait $! ; sh -c "$white_sovereign"
```

Scenario B

```
not_here() { echo "$! ">.key; here & wait $! ; } ; here() { while [ enclosed
];do echo "naked bandit: here, not here";done; } ; ( ( not_here ) & while true;do
echo "white sovereign: naked bandit here, not here";done )
```

The shell scripts appropriate the mechanism of the inclusive exclusion in order to overcome it by its own mechanisms. The potential escape of the bandit (child) process from the sovereign (parent) process is installed and enacted through then the execution of the two Naked Bandit/Here, Not Here/White Sovereign scenarios A and B (for the explanation of the specific processes in the Unix kernel initiated by these shell scripts, see <http://www.krcf.org/krcfhome/Banditweb/scripts/>).

Transcoding Level 3 : Public Voice

By means of two computer units and a sound system, the audience is given an additional 'voice' to address the naked bandit-white sovereign dependency. The installation offers manipulated *reboot* buttons of personal computers. Pressing these effects a restart of the white sovereign/naked bandit script codes, and thus a change in the white sovereign/naked bandit script process interdependencies.

The Naked Bandit/Here, Not Here/White Sovereign shell script processes print out the following dialogue in a loop, which is displayed on the two computer monitors:

```
White Sovereign: Naked bandit here, not here!
Naked Bandit: Here, not here!
```

The printouts also become present as audio samples in the installation. Two male voices are looped:

```
Sovereign voice: Naked bandit here, not here!
Bandit voice: Here, not here!
```

After reaching a certain threshold level of audience engagement, the audio sample of a female voice is be triggered by the computer:

```
Public voice: Naked bandit here and now!
```

Indefinite Spheres of Sovereignty

(by Timothy Druckrey)

Spheres of sovereignty are legitimated in forms that rely on control of the legal and judicial systems, on the sustenance of political hierarchies, on the application of military, police and investigative systems, on the regulation of communication systems, on the management of

information systems. In other words, spheres of sovereignty are legitimated in forms that rely on the total control of culture.

In the authoritarian political climate after 9/11, sovereignty has taken a leap from management to domination, and has extended its reach into the extra-territorial, extra-legal, extra-national, extra-governmental spheres by claiming absolute authority to act unilaterally, unhindered by localisations or local imperatives of any sort. This suspension of the old territorial sovereignties has been evolving alongside globalisation for many decades, and is exemplified by the trans-national and, in our understanding, non-legitimated power of world organisations.

Transferred into the floating sovereignty of the post-9/11 era, authority has mutated into militarised ideologies which claim the entire planet as a potential crime scene, and operate on the central principle of 'state policing'. This too is a paradox in which a government disclaims territoriality but enforces localised ideology.

This merging of imperial codes and the logic of empire is both reactionary and developmental. It passionately roots the imperium as an entitlement of the good and the just, and it founds an empire on a renovated sovereignty. By mobilising itself as exempt from civil examination, it depletes the principle it proposes to defend. By creating an overwhelming security apparatus (or better still, a security ecosystem), it legitimates the state of emergency, the condition of political crisis based on the sense of ongoing threat (from subversive 'bandits', from the realm of the 'extraterritorial'); ironically, this condition can never be reduced or alleviated without the undermining of its *raison d'être*. Unable to sustain human rights, it substitutes itself in their place. Instead of mandating human rights, it mandates sovereign rights.

This astonishing reversal liberates ideology from the principles and protocols of consensus. Veiled behind secret rationalisations and self-validations, it detaches itself from accountability. Not just a conspiracy, it is a *coup d'état*, an act of uprising in reverse, an insurgency against representative government itself.

Floating above accusations, it nevertheless maintains a hold on the public sphere, either by legislated restrictions or by extra-legal means. Cowering below this looming territorial authority, rights are no longer implicit – or inalienable – but either granted or denied; they are ostensible, not definite, subject to conditions and circumstance.

In order to provide cover for lingering and inconvenient territorial legalities, the new sovereignty invents indefinite spheres, zones in which legal status can be suspended, in which citizenship is invalidated, in which the assumption of innocence is thrown away, in which representation is denied.

These civil black holes are holding-pens in which anyone can be a inmate. Bound to a tightening state security apparatus, the social sphere is increasingly becoming one of confinement and risk. What used to be in the political sphere the 'illegal immigrant', the 'refugee', the 'exile', the 'other', has become, in an all-too-real sense, the world as a political asylum divided into combatants and non-combatants, each existing under the reign of an irreproachable authority acting on a unsanctioned mandate.