The nation where your 'faceprint' is already being tracked

By Jessica Mudditt, *BBC*, 24th June 2022

If a person in Western Australia contracts Covid-19, they must remain in home quarantine for the following seven days – as do their close contacts. The police check up on their whereabouts by sending periodic text messages and require a selfie to be sent back to them within 15 minutes. The police use facial recognition technology and GPS tracking to determine if the person who took the selfie is at home. If they are not, they quickly follow up with a knock on the door and a potentially hefty fine.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has called for a moratorium on the technology until Australia has a specific law to regulate its use. Human rights campaigners say there is potential for the personal data obtained to be used for secondary purposes, and that it is a slippery slope towards becoming a surveillance state. "The pandemic created all these new justifications for using facial recognition technology," says Mark Andrejevic, a professor of media studies at Monash University in Melbourne and the author of a forthcoming book titled Facial Recognition. "Everything went online and organisations were trying to make things work very quickly. But the implications haven't been thought through. Do we want to live in a world where everything is rendered and there are no private spaces? It creates a whole new level of stress that does not lead to a healthy society."

[...] A law to govern facial recognition technology was proposed back in 2019, but it was shelved after a parliamentary committee review found that it lacked adequate privacy protections. Among its strongest critics was the then Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Edward Santow. "We're now in the worst of all situations where there's no dedicated law, so we're dealing with a few piecemeal protections that are not completely effective and are certainly not comprehensive," says Santow. "And yet the technology is continuing to be deployed." Santow is working on ways to make the privacy provisions more robust, with his team at the University of Technology in Sydney.

[...] Leila Nashashibi is a campaigner at US-based advocacy group Fight for the Future, which is striving to achieve a federal ban on facial recognition and other forms of biometric identifiers. "Like nuclear energy and biological weapons, facial recognition poses a threat to human society and our basic liberties that far outweigh any potential benefits," she says. "Facial recognition is unlike any other form of surveillance because it enables automated and ubiquitous monitoring of entire populations, and it can be nearly impossible to avoid. As it spreads, people will be too afraid to participate in social movements and political demonstrations. Free speech will be chilled."

[...] Clearview AI's Australian CEO and founder Hoan Ton-That disagrees. He says that facial recognition technology has great potential for crime prevention, because It can ensure that only authorised people have access to a building such as a school. "We have seen our technology used with great success by law enforcement to stop gun trafficking, and we are hopeful that our technology can be used to help prevent tragic gun crimes in the future," he says. [...] Live facial recognition is already used by some police forces around the world.

London's Metropolitan Police, for example, uses it to monitor specific areas for a "watchlist" of wanted offernders or people who might pose a risk to the public.

JO de Paris 2024 : pourquoi la vidéosurveillance automatisée fait débat

Adopté par les sénateurs en janvier, le projet de loi sur les Jeux olympiques est débattu depuis lundi à l'Assemblée nationale. Au cœur des discussions : l'autorisation à titre expérimental de la vidéosurveillance dite « intelligente ».

Les technologies de vidéosurveillance algorithmique (VSA), ou automatisée, reposent toutes sur le même principe : utiliser des algorithmes pour analyser de grandes quantités d'images issues de la vidéosurveillance afin d'en faire émerger différentes informations. Sur le principe différent de la reconnaissance faciale, la VSA propose néanmoins des outils d'identification qui en sont proches. C'est, par exemple, le cas de la solution Briefcam, entreprise israélienne parmi les leaders du marché, qui donne la possibilité aux opérateurs vidéo de filtrer les personnes filmées en fonction de leur genre, de leur couleur de peau ou de leurs vêtements.

De nombreuses collectivités utilisent déjà des systèmes de lecture automatique des plaques d'immatriculation qui permettent, par exemple, d'identifier les usagers n'ayant pas payé leur stationnement. Une pratique contre laquelle la Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (CNIL) mettait en garde dès 2020. « De tels dispositifs ne sont en aucun cas un simple "prolongement" technique des caméras existantes, notait l'institution en 2022. Ils modifient leur nature même par leur capacité de détection et d'analyse automatisée. »

« La vidéosurveillance par algorithme pose les mêmes problèmes que la reconnaissance faciale », juge Noémie Levain, juriste à La Quadrature du Net. Cette principale association française de défense des libertés publiques et numériques dénonce « les mêmes risques pour les libertés publiques et les mêmes possibilités d'abus de la part des forces de l'ordre, dont les pratiques racistes ont été largement documentées ». Une critique largement partagée par Amnesty International, qui pointe, par ailleurs, dans un communiqué publié en janvier, la faible efficacité de ces technologies dans la lutte contre la criminalité.

Clément Pouré, Le Monde, le 20 mars 2023

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1. Question: According to these articles, what are the current stakes of video surveillance? Your answer should be 200 to 250 words long. Indicate the number of words at the end of your answer.

II. Essay question: Do you believe that technology hampers freedom? Your essay should be 200 to 250 words long. Indicate the number of words at the end of your essay.