Informational Invasion and the Virtuality of NIMBY!

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NIMBY: an oft cited acronym aimed at opposing development close to one's turf... The phenomenon crops up when someone who was never involved in action groups, protest movements or any other anti-something decides that an activity is encroaching too close for comfort and suddenly becomes the symbol of chivalry….

Well, the world has evolved since the last time we looked and there is a whole new definition for encroachment, which has become anthropomorphised and taken residence in our lives through the virtual portal. Not simply access but pure immersion. No longer the domain of the real world, privacy has become something surreal where access to gadgets and the virtual world has placed us in real-time touch with the rest of the world (the entire world not simply that which revolves around our personal space) most often without us noticing or even wanting. A few cases in point; you mobile seeks triangulation antennae and they respond back eliciting information on your location – remember Dudayev the Chechen warlord who was killed by a missile homing on his phone, today some phones record your position at all times? Another case: a friend posts a photo of yourself on a social network and your life does a somersault. Others tweet their feelings or enlightening thoughts whilst on a walk toward the corner café next to the courts, revealing their aims and location…. And so the list goes.

But where does this take us? From a nimby to immersion situation we have actually made the world both safer and less secure: contradictory but true. Safer as in we have knowledge that loved ones are OK and one knows their location and cohesion remoulds itself to strengthen ties, something that modern and post-modern society has eroded and led to an increase in crimes such as crimes against the elderly, thefts from residences, amongst such cases. On the dark side all this virtual immersions has actually given a boost to offenders to monitor victims and time their predation. Case in point: Joe Borg just advertised that he is happily taking a siesta opposite the Versailles abode of the late Marie Antoinette and to prove it also posted a photo. His erstwhile 'friend' on Facebook noticed this and visited Joe's abode for a looksee… Marie Antoinette's statement "Let them eat cake" couldn't have gone down better as the friend made away with the goods.

Another unobtrusive but potentially dangerous situation concerns the use of everyday gadgets such a simple TV. Not so simple nowadays but every household is connected to some company or other. Cases of monitoring by rogue technicians in other countries has been documented: review what criminologists call the routine activity theory and notice that your daily activities follow a set pattern: you switch on the TV, you watch the news, the kids watch the blessed cartoons, the partner watches the endless survival series, you watch the news again and then off to sleep again. Once one

goes abroad or off to work the TV goes dormant giving a message that Elvis has left the building. Even more so, some people are taking the habit of leaving the TV on whilst off on a holiday: who can take more than a few hours watching the same station, let alone a whole week…. The rogue one could trace such an action and take their time to act.

Virtual worlds have also been taken to the next step where people can live 'real' interactive lives online, building businesses, relationships and many a replica of the real real world. Virtual criminals have finetuned their activity and destroyed such livelihoods, scammed people through illicit money-making ventures, created virtual businesses that disappear in an instant, and a thousand other activities, most dangerous being identity theft. Many a person sits in a British jail, with the justice system none the wiser on who they were born as.

The police have created their cybercrime unit, a highly efficient and dedicated core team, who however need the help of each person in the reduction of such offences: a neighbourhood watch taken to the highest level: a personal watch. The less information transmitted, the less people know of your activities and the less the chance for victimisation. Use of software to prevent information theft, monitoring of one's children and also a more sensible transformation towards a virtual life is advised if one is to survive the brave new world.