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Automata: Counter-Surveillance Using Public Space

Automata is the working title for a counter-surveillance internet bot that will record and display the mutually-beneficial interrelationships between institutions for higher learning, the global defense industry, and world militaries. The proliferation of automated spying techniques on the part of government and corporate institutions has created an unequal flow of information. This bot acts to subvert these techniques in the most relevant way – by making data about the confluence of economic and violent power visible to the public at large for research, activism, and examination.

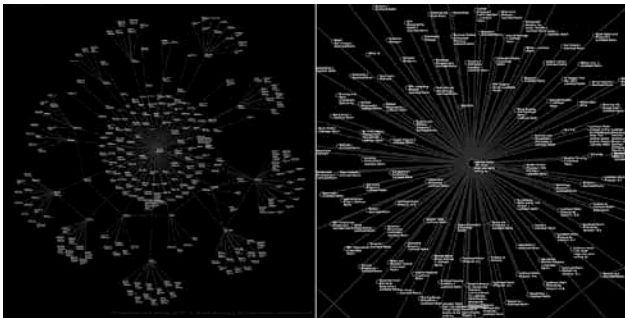


Fig. 1: lockheedmartin.com_sitemap_20091214_red {cc} Owen Mundy ~ owenmundy.com

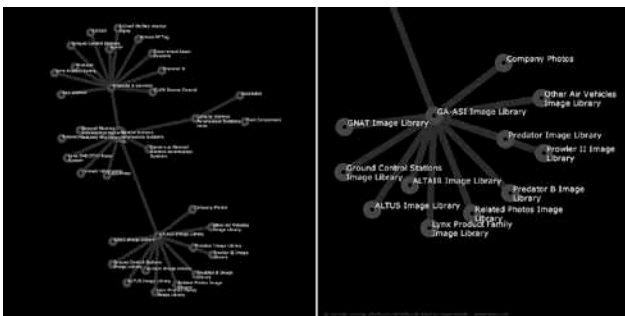


Fig. 2: ga-asi.com_sitemap_titles_black {cc} Owen Mundy ~ owenmundy.com

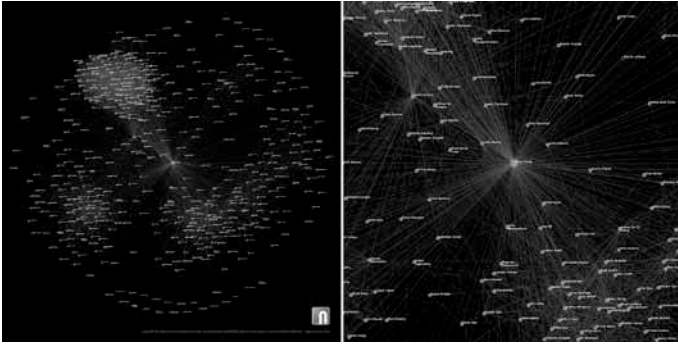


Fig. 3: Give Me My Data multi-network visualization

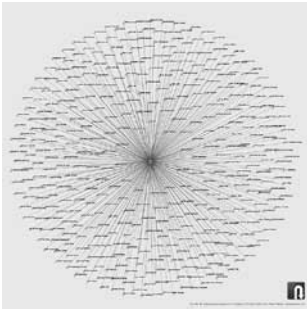


Fig. 4: Give Me My Data network visualization

Automata is not simply about collection and visualization, but a way to enable an understanding of concentrations and relationships of power for the public as well as researchers, through a website, searchable database, and images depicting those relationships.

Recent cuts proposed to portions of the defense budget show how enterprising defense contractors strategically placed the manufacture of defense items in every state to ensure it is embedded in our cultural fabric. Automata intends to investigate the strength of the relationships between our material culture and invisible violent outcomes by making these ties public.

A related project, Give Me My Data, is a Facebook application that helps users reclaim and reuse their facebook data. According to Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities:

You own all of the content and information you post on Facebook, and you can control how it is shared through your privacy and application settings.

Give Me My Data helps users exercise this right by re-presenting data in easy to use formats.

While seemingly utilitarian, this project intervenes into online user experiences, provoking them to take a critical look at their interactions within social networking websites. It suggests data is tangible and challenges users to think about ways how their information is used for purposes outside of their control by government or corporate entities. <http://givememydata.com>