

Streaming:

An Intelligence Agency

for an unspecified city in a hot climate.

Streaming

Data is transmitted by copying: read the data in, and write it out to a new location. Streaming is when data is being read out while it is still being written. Internet video, for example, is often streamed: a sufficient quantity of data is downloaded to begin playing the video, while the rest of the data is still being downloaded. The logical limit of this condition is when the data is still being recorded at the other end, as is the case with internet 'radio'. In this situation, there is no 'file' being copied at all, simply an ongoing process of reading out data. Since the total quantity of data is functionally infinite, what matters is the rate at which this data can be processed.

Compression

Compression is the reduction of the size of a dataset. It relies on the discernment of patterns in the data which can be stored in more compact fashion. Non-lossy compression requires the entire dataset to be able to be reconstructed. Lossy compression tries to preserve the important data by excluding the less important.

Intelligence

Programmes such as ECHELON (run by the US and UK) and Carnivore (FBI) provide continual streams of data at a massive rate. The problem with 'Total Information Awareness' is the awareness, not the information. The difficulty is not getting enough data, but in recognising patterns in order to compress that data to the point where it can be apprehended by a person. Intelligence is pattern recognition.

Strategic Inefficiencies

The 9/11 Commission reported that the terrorist attacks exposed a "failure of imagination", writing "Imagination is not a gift usually associated with

bureaucracies." The report reflects on the necessity of what it calls 'institutionalising imagination'.

A hierarchical intelligence agency works by the division of labour in departments. Data is compressed every time it is passed up the hierarchy (team leaders, department heads, directors).

This project presents an architecture which strategically interferes with these operating hierarchies as a contribution to the institutionalising of imagination.

An in-situ cast concrete shell is proposed, which would be partitioned and filled in according to the specific needs of the agency (a sample program is given on the far right). The subtle misfitting of the hierarchical program and the concrete shell will promote mismatches and shortcuts through the hierarchy in an attempt to multiply the accidental meetings: noticing a piece of paper on someone's desk; meeting someone over the watercooler; double-bookings of meeting rooms; encounters in the corridor; one department overflowing into the next. For this reason, importance is given to circulation spaces and excess spaces (two major courtyards, niches, balconies).

It is important that the architecture is not a residue of objectual thinking. The shell itself is only a temporary coming-together of multiple patterns cut from a stream. The patterns are always truncated, pointing beyond the building envelope. The building is apprehended through circulation. It is not a building which shows you your place. Although local fixity may be found in the circles and niches, movement reveals the continual streaming-away of the architecture.

References: ammunition belts, barcodes, gene-sequencing images, DSP processor design, Husserlian phenomenology, Kahn, Asplundh, Palladio, .torrent, telephones, aerial photography, Banksy.