

# Technology: Aboriginal Communities & Oppression

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## Keywords

Aboriginal, country, Internet, data, law, community, privacy

## Abstract

The grasp on Aboriginal sovereignty is no longer just about retaining rights to their own land. The most brutal form of dispossession is the latest forms of data retention, increased lack of privacy and unwarranted use of this personal data as a result of activities being collected, analysed and intelligently manipulated from entities geographically elsewhere all thanks to the Internet.

## Energy

Essentially, humans exist in a vast orbit of energy.

We are composed a of a high percentage of aqueous matter and “hold charge” much like a battery holds energy that is transferred and expended in connection.

Humans are charged with energy which we can see manifest itself from time to time in contact with other things or people. That charge is an electrical state, both physical and emotional as we interact, connect and experience new things with others as we move through a physical landscape.

*“...Everything in our universe is essentially energy and information.”<sup>1</sup>*

In essence, as humans in charge of our own destiny, we have the choice to connect with others in person and when we do so we transfer energy. We pass through a “charge” to others, in our communications where others hear of our ideas audibly, in proximity, or engage with our selves in physical proximity to each other, feet to the ground, hand to hand, eye to eye.

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary General, National Observatory of the Effects of Climate Change, French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy in personal communication with Dr. Anne Poelina, Ian Perdrisat and Magali McDuffie - November 2014 - Bondi, Sydney Australia

That experiential transfer and connection that we feel in a physical environment are radically different in an engineer's experiment, in a science fiction writer's dream state.

A virtual reality is exactly that - virtual. Routinely it fails to realise the same depth of connection we have with others in reality.

Social media is another manifestation of this virtual existence which on the one hand can be considered to be revolutionary in the manner in which it connects people or conversely, insidious in the myriad of ways it acts as a social surveillance, manipulating the way in which we engage with others.

Technologists take this further by the notion that as sentient beings we are now 'nodes' in a network largely facilitated by the Internet.

*"Networks are the key to learning and life - now and into the future...the most important component of the network is the node...the best networks have the best nodes...the best nodes are empowered individuals."*

*Tim Klapdor<sup>2</sup>*

We must therefore seriously bring into question technologies that render our physical forms immobile, our voices mute and our spirits locked into heads up displays, body worn video recorders, bracelets, embedded RFID chips and countless other emergent technologies.

## **Spiritual Dispossession**

In October 2015, a leading Australian Aboriginal Elder, Patrick Dodson<sup>3</sup>, a Yawuru man from Broome, Western Australia, made reference in his address at a Higher Degree research retreat to the lack of contemporaneous debate on emergent technology as a force of oppression within Australia.<sup>4</sup>

He was bringing forward a topic which is rarely critically debated, instead largely drowned out by a rising tide of political and social injustices for the Australian Aboriginal community.

The most important issues facing Australian Aboriginal communities is the dispossession of their lands as a direct result of government policies and intervention, the lack of power of veto on mining activity from international consortia, the incarceration and detainment of

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<sup>2</sup> Presentation - 'You Are Not In Control' - October 2015, Tim Klapdor.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Dodson - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick\\_Dodson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Dodson)

<sup>4</sup> Presentation - Magali McDuffie - [http://figshare.com/articles/Nyikina\\_Collaborative\\_Filmmaking/1579433](http://figshare.com/articles/Nyikina_Collaborative_Filmmaking/1579433)

individuals as young as 12 for 90 days on spurious charges of terrorism and the tragedy of ongoing deaths in custody<sup>5</sup>

These are just a few of the many, many other despicable forms of marginalisation and continued colonisation happening at this very minute, in this country, in the grip of a technologically facilitated apartheid.

The grasp on Aboriginal sovereignty is no longer just about retaining rights to their own land. The most brutal form of dispossession is the latest forms of data retention, increased lack of privacy and unwarranted use of this personal data as a result of activities being collected, analysed and intelligently manipulated from entities geographically elsewhere all thanks to the Internet.

Our need as individuals and as a community to open up for debate the savage techno-cide occurring on a second by second basis in all our communities across Australia and the world are now apparent.

In many rural and remote communities in Australia the connection between policing and public space, where the presence of surveillance cameras in petrol stations, shopping centres, ATMs, banks, post offices, medical centres is directly attributed to a targeted control of Aboriginal people.

Juvenile Justice, the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Community Services all contribute to the multitude of ways in which technology is used to control welfare, education and community services. These departments identify, reward or punish those who are unaware of the hybrid nature of these visual, auditory and data driven interconnected systems, in other instances only too aware via mandatory monitoring using GPS bracelets.

We are in the grip of an oppression so pervasive, so insidiously gradual, designed, purposeful and expedient that most of the world's population now accept this activity as an everyday and acceptable way of being. Since the onset of the Internet an abuse of our civil rights has occurred with the implementation of one key force, one globally connected and systematic process of colonisation of private space.<sup>6</sup>

## **Surveillance.**

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<sup>5</sup> Gerry Georgatos -

<http://thestringer.com.au/600-black-deaths-in-custody-by-2025-jail-numbers-to-soar-9102>

<sup>6</sup> Katina Michael - <http://works.bepress.com/kmichael/506/>

Surveillance is a act of oppression, a genocide that seeks to erode our rights as humans to remain unseen, to be secluded by choice, to express ourselves selectively without the oversight of others, first and foremost.

This differs from culture to culture but inherently the manner in which we grow as a matter of personal freedom is as fundamental to human dignity as it is the very spiritual domains in which our cultures hold secret, remain diverse and in many cases the very reason they survive.

Surveillance on the other hand is an extension of the totalitarian state, a means to influence and control the human population and provides a means to divide us all in an activity known as social sorting.<sup>7</sup>

In religion we see the manifestations of a human mind, we feel the inculcations of charge of cultural mass and yet in the present day we are moving fast to an existential and nihilist dystopia of a quantified self.

Ray Kurzweil<sup>8</sup>, author, computer scientist, inventor and futurist, Director of Engineering at Google, would have us believe that we are in an exponential phase of an 'accelerating intelligence' of the human race as a result of these new and emergent technologies. It is likely though that a transmogrification of humans transcending their current biological milieu to that of an artificial intelligence enhanced Singularity is more likely to end humanity entirely, an unnecessary evil.

In a Singularity, where we have become the carriers both external and internal of the very technology we found most useful, we also lose our sense of charge, our connection with each other and ultimately our own will to live having failed to reach that utopia, an empty transcended state. Our sense of intuition, awareness of country and of 'life force of place'<sup>9</sup> then is lost if we put these technologies first.

Therefore, when we engineer a devil incarnate in ourself, as cyborg and we take away that spiritual connection if we fail to put country first. By taking away that spiritual connection we remove a domain of engagement that is only felt in a physical manner. We are in that case engineering in the likeness of non-humanity which is the demise of humanity.

## **Veillance**

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<sup>7</sup> David Lyons - <http://www.sscqueens.org/davidlyon>

<sup>8</sup> Ray Kurweil - <http://www.kurzweilai.net/>

<sup>9</sup> Frans Hoogland - "Millennium: Tribal Wisdom & The Modern World 1992" - Maybury Lewis

Surveillance across these institutions, across the community and across all nations is not simply static video cameras in public space. The *domain* of veillances occur in a number of forms.

Firstly, that of **surveillance**<sup>10</sup> and the hive of globally network cameras and recorders, secondly that of **dataveillance**<sup>11</sup> and it's many "reward" schemes, thirdly that of **sousveillance**<sup>12</sup> and the recalcitrance of shooting back on the system and lastly that of **uberveillance**<sup>13</sup> which is the totality of all of these becoming an embedded electrophorus, a transdermal condition for all of humanity from the moment we are born - chipped, identifiable.

In every public place, in many private spaces, businesses, homes and workplaces, we have consistently been told through massive "awareness" campaigns that surveillance in in all it's forms is located there for our own safety, for our well being and for the good of the community. These surveillance systems extend to body worn cameras by police, emergency or community services.<sup>14</sup>

In all aspects of our daily lives we are now as never before subject to the gaze of authorities, whose presence and moniker in many cases is that of one single fixed physical object - the surveillance camera. Repeatedly we are told that surveillance is a panopticon<sup>15</sup> we need, a necessary evil that without its presence we descend as a human race into outright anarchy.

As if we have accepted the Orwellian<sup>16</sup> dystopia without question, we now go about our daily lives under hundreds of cameras connected to systems that track our location, our facial and gait identity, many of which are monitored and the data used by corporations and law enforcement agencies far from the Australian shores.

The consequences of gaining a discount at a petrol bowser to use as reward points to gain "free" airline flights as anything more than convenience is an example of dataveillance that permeates many households, often indifferent to the activity of those collecting this information. Consumers seem willing to give away every detail of their shopping activity to organisations who use it to target further consumption.

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<sup>10</sup> Surveillance - <http://www.sscqueens.org/publications/haggerty>

<sup>11</sup> Dataveillance - <http://www.rogerclarke.com/DV/>

<sup>12</sup> Sousveillance - <http://wearcam.org/steve.html>

<sup>13</sup> Uberveillance - M.G. Michael and K. Michael (2009). "Uberveillance: Definition" in ed. S. Butler, Fifth Edition of the Macquarie Dictionary (Australia's National Dictionary, Sydney University), p. 1094

<sup>14</sup> Paper - <https://archive.org/details/2010NationalSnapshotPovInEducation-AlexanderHayes>

<sup>15</sup> Foucault -

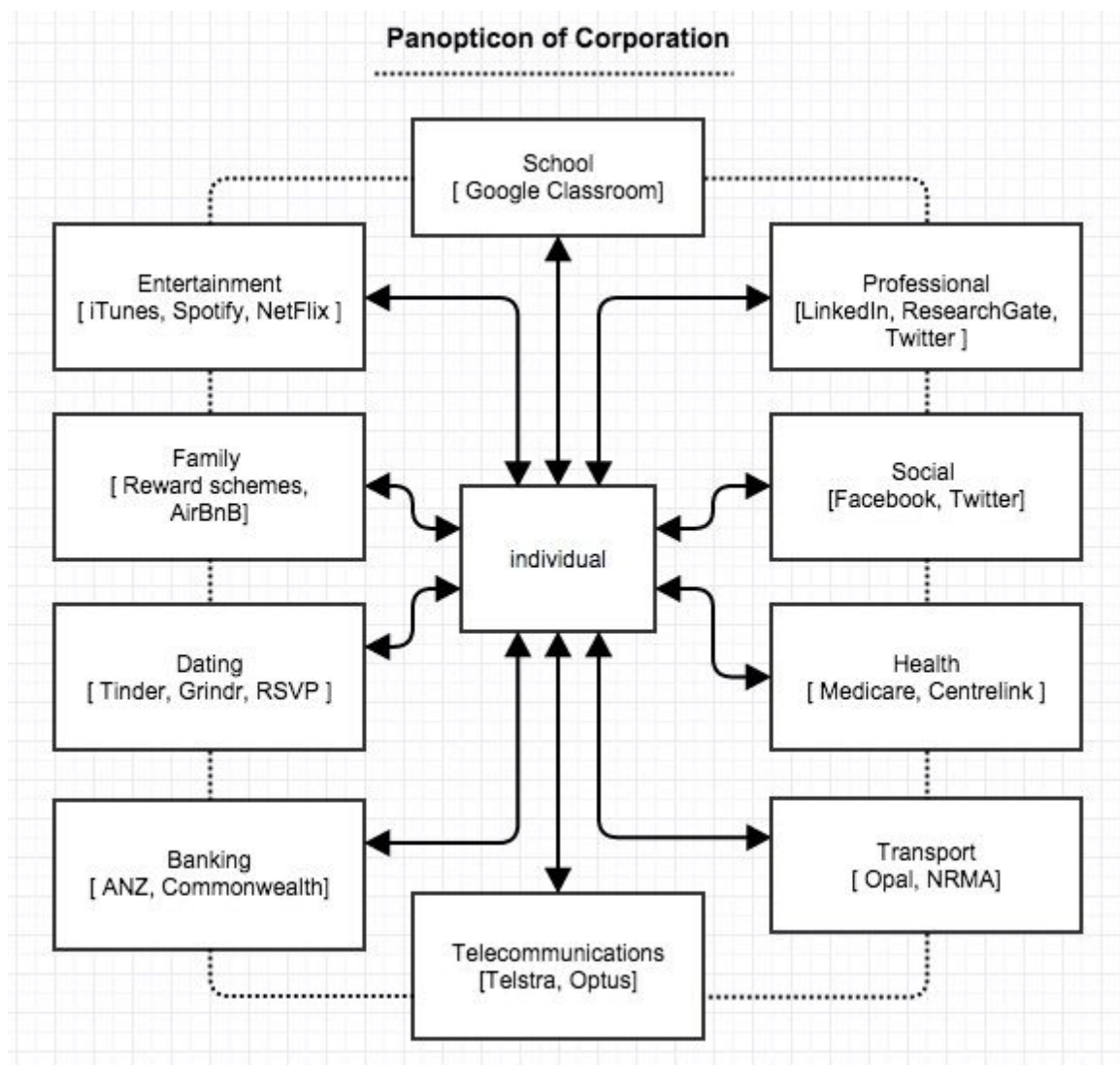
<http://foucault.info/doc/documents/disciplineandpunish/foucault-disciplineandpunish-panopticism.html>

<sup>16</sup> George Orwell - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteen\\_Eighty-Four](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteen_Eighty-Four)

This “giving away” means that we have become the product itself, that the data we provide is more valuable to the retailer en masse than their entire marketing campaigns, in some cases it is their sole marketing campaign. This manner of dataveillance has become an ingrained, networked and socially acceptable way of being.

The Internet therefore, has become not only a tool that greatly enhances our access to knowledge in real time but it has also become the most successful tool of human oppression in a modern society.

The networked effect of global information systems connected via a myriad of things now hardwired into the very architecture we inhabit has been instrumental in shaping how we now interact with each other and more importantly how we have become enslaved to the very organisations who set this all up in the first place. We have a paradoxical habitation where on the one hand we celebrate the speed and efficiency of news and activity that is delivered by the system, yet on the other hand we recoil at the lack of privacy and autonomy we once had before that system took it all away.



The ambivalence and apathy we have adopted as to the permeance of this oversight from so many interconnected sources is probably the most dangerous of all human behaviours of the greater public.

In an Aboriginal context, across rural and remote communities and likewise across every single community in Australia there is in some way dependence on this network of networks, this nature of gaze through the very technologies we once thought were simply connections of convenience.

The fact is we all travel between centres of human habitation, fill our cars up with fuel under surveillance, shop under surveillance, interact in public spaces under surveillance, connect with and date others under surveillance and therein lies the paradox of it all.

Surveillance is not just the camera's that inhabit these physical spaces, it is in fact the hybrid of networked, electronic systems and connected devices that all combine to form a meshed triangulation of our activity no matter where we are located.

Surveillance cameras are simply the visible form of this oppression, a moniker for what we are losing on a daily basis as we agree to give up our rights to privacy in a trade-off for convenience.

### **Networked Gaze - No More Borders**

Of greatest concern is the fact that the Internet has provided a use case for the network of networks to grow opportunities that can gaze into other communities, to gather intelligence and by proximity to create a deep distrust in each other's motivations.

This allows for global forces such as the United States of America, China and Russia into the very communities we seek to remain open and free of this technologically facilitated and reinforced distrust.

It also allows for gross breaches of our civil liberties as Australian citizens as the Australian Government continues its oppression of Aboriginal and all Australian communities under its two year minimum mandatory retention of data laws that have recently been passed in the Senate.<sup>17</sup>

### **Smart Technologies**

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<sup>17</sup> Jon Lawrence - <https://www.efa.org.au/2015/09/13/huston-village-idiot-again/>

The reality is in many of the world's communities, from our beds we, as humans approaching a cyborg state of being, now answer social media requests, login to email systems, play games and jostle through sometimes hundreds of mobile applications on smartphones all of which require an acceptance of privacy conditions.

Privacy conditions that we never read, simply click 'yes' and proceed to use that application in most cases unaware that the application continues to track our location, logs our patterns of interactions between applications and even who we are in contact with and why.

We do all of this without any sense of what the broader implications are for our privacy or personal security.

It is obvious that the proliferation of wearable technologies such as mobile phones, GPS bracelets, exercise trackers all contribute to the omniscience of unseen service providers trawling through massive amounts of our private data to make meaning from what we have become blinded to.

*"...The emphasis on punitive law and order processes hasn't been shown to work in addressing youth crime and there's no evidence to suggest it's going to work here."<sup>18</sup>*

According to the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) The Northern Territory has the highest rate of youth incarceration in Australia with three-quarters of incarcerated youths are detained on remand, meaning they are awaiting court hearings or sentencing. Of those about 95 per cent of those detained are of Indigenous background.

The frightening reality is that GPS tracking and alcohol monitoring bracelets are currently being worn by 108 offenders across the NT serving out their sentence or on parole or other community based orders. The bracelet continually sends an electronic signal to a manned control room service to detect when a person is in breach of a curfew or in a restricted area.

On the consumer level, wearable technologies have taken this monitoring of our everyday activities to a more dangerous level by providing us with the convenience of knowing our own heart beats, our position using geographic information systems (GIS), our networks whereabouts and in many cases directly affecting our related services such as medical insurance or access to related services.

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathon Hunyor, NAAJA -

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-05/northern-territory-youths-wear-electronic-monitoring-bracelets/6444950>



On a trajectory of technological innovation, embedded technologies, subdermal injections of internet connected things are rapidly becoming accepted as the next step for humanity, where some claim that it is time for humans to be chipped as a matter of national security, of community safety and of personal well being.

In conclusion, the onset of automated, networked systems facilitated by the internet, the rapid shift towards wearable technologies as an everyday convenience and the pervasive manner in which every known space that humans occupy as being the camera for a data logger or surveillance camera, is potentially as great a threat to Aboriginal people of Australia, to everyone globally than anything else that has emerged as a threat to our humanity.

As evidenced by the fixations of a few on inventing a certain cyborg future<sup>19</sup> and those who would celebrate the demise of humanity in preference for a transhumanist existence, there is one clear and consistent message resonating.

*“...to wake up non-Aboriginal people to a relationship with the land; to foster trust, friendship and empathy between the indigenous community and the wider Australian and International communities.”*

*Goolarabooloo, Paddy Roe.*<sup>20</sup>

We must recognise that these hybrid, ambient and seemingly convenient technologies are part of a greater array of forces that take us away from ourselves. We lose ourselves if we surrender our autonomy, our life spirit, our life lead by intuition if we forget that it is our land, our country that comes first.

If we surrender to networked digital technology as the mediator and the very reason of our everyday existence, as our law enforcement and if we do so without listening to country we lose ourself and our connection with each other.

We run the risk of being subservient to it, answering to it on the streets, shaking hands with robot's appendages whose only connection with us are ghostly whisperings of recordings when we once knew ourselves as humans.

*With reason dismissed, reason in itself is subsumed and becomes subsumed under this technical or instrumental regime.*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Steve Mann - <http://wearcam.org/steve.html>

<sup>20</sup> Paddy Roe - [http://www.goolarabooloo.org.au/paddys\\_story.html](http://www.goolarabooloo.org.au/paddys_story.html)

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger - <https://belate.wordpress.com/2010/07/12/heidegger-modern-technology/>

In listening to country we recognise that peppering our existence with these pervasive technologies is perhaps the worst possible route we have taken since the mid eighties as a nation. We must wake up and recognise that surveillance in all it's forms is an act of genocide, an epitaph inscribed on our tombstone of self-preservation.

We must wake up.

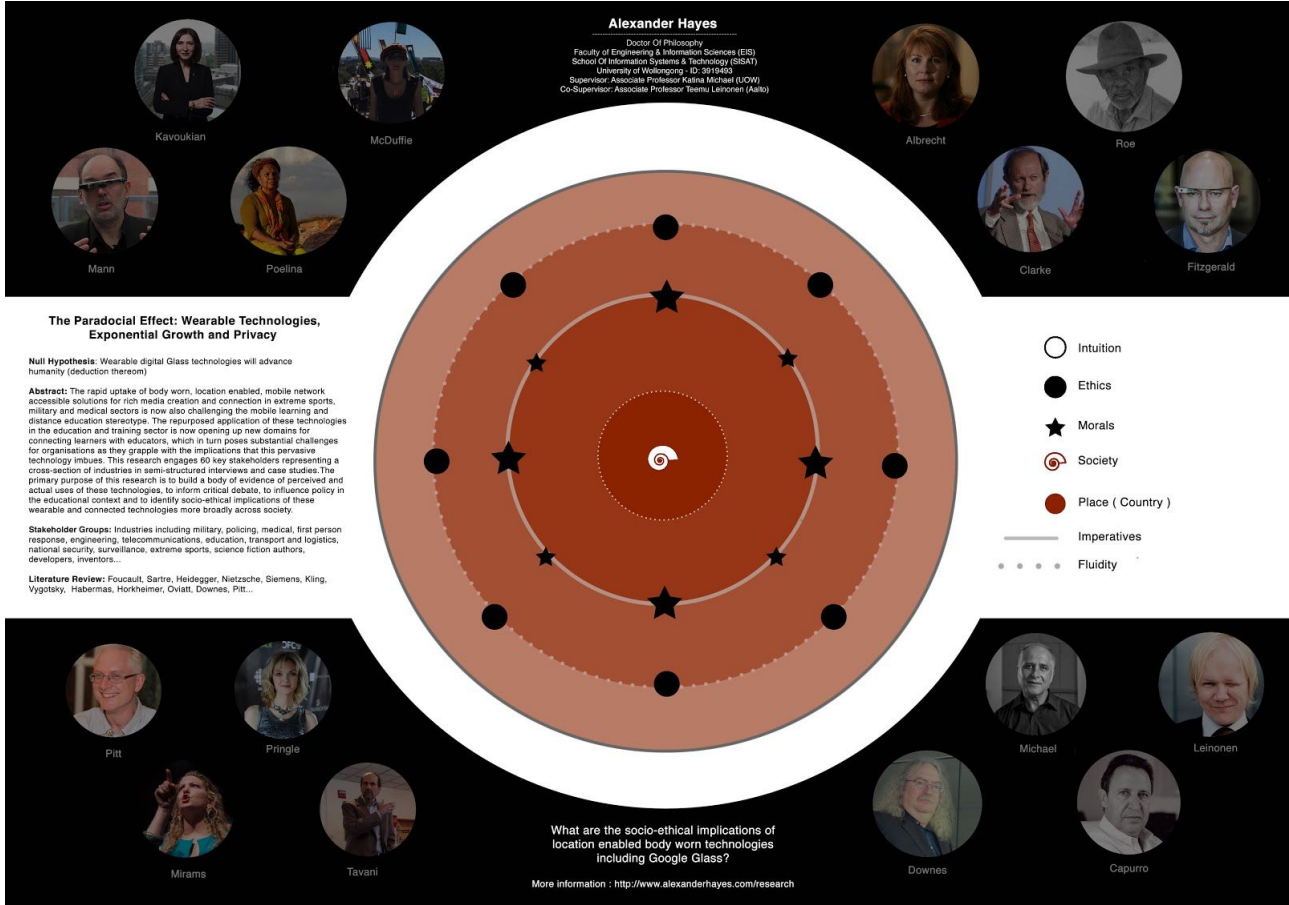


Fig 2.0

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1576423> Available at:  
[http://figshare.com/articles/2015\\_SCIT\\_EIS\\_Trade\\_Showcase\\_Poster/1576423](http://figshare.com/articles/2015_SCIT_EIS_Trade_Showcase_Poster/1576423)