

# Neoliberalism, securitization and racialization in the Irish taxi industry

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## Abstract

The Irish taxi industry was deregulated in 2000 during an era of neoliberal reform and record economic growth. Driving a taxi became a popular occupation for new immigrants, and the industry came to be associated with racial tensions. Today, the taxi industry is undergoing a process of re-regulation that includes a variety of security and identification measures. This article explores contested trends in governance, contemporary interventions that make use of new technologies and processes of subjectification such as racialization. We draw on several years of ethnographic research on the integration of African migrants in Ireland, which includes an exploration of labour integration, and extend this work here. We retrace the political rationalities behind deregulation and re-regulation and show the specific ways in which security interventions manifest themselves. We also look to the ways in which racialization processes operate within the industry and are nested in the modes of governance and (in)securitization.

## Keywords

Migration, neoliberalism, racialization, security, taxi industry

A proper government is only a policeman ...

– Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the

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common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and separate them.

– Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

## Introduction

During a debate on the *Taxi Regulation Bill, 2012*, Senator Paschal Mooney addressed his parliamentary colleagues. ‘There is more than anecdotal evidence that people are driving taxis around the city who do not know one street from the other’, he said. ‘I am not being discriminatory’, he continued, ‘when I say that it has nearly always been non-nationals who do this’. Indeed, the problem is now so bad, the Senator explained, that he would rather, ‘to go to a local taxi driver rather than somebody who is obviously a non-national’ (Seanad Éireann, 2013). The Senator’s comments sparked discussions about racism in public culture and the tensions and diversity in the taxi industry. Six months earlier, many commentators recalled, reports emerged about the appearance of green lights on several Dublin taxis apparently to indicate the ‘Irishness’ of the drivers (see Healy, 2012).

The Irish taxi industry was deregulated in 2000 during the so-called Celtic Tiger period of record economic growth and large-scale immigration. Barriers to entry were removed suddenly – a process described as ‘big bang’ deregulation. Racial tensions immediately manifested themselves at taxi ranks among a host of tensions between incumbent drivers, new entrants and part-time drivers. Nevertheless, economists still regard the deregulation process in Ireland as a successful model for emulation elsewhere (see Williams, 2011; cf. Jaichand, 2010). Today, however, there is a remarkable process of intensified re-regulation underway, heralded as the end of *laissez faire* governance. New legislation promises tougher licensing and assessment policies, and the surveillance of drivers by means of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems and new software applications. The Irish taxi industry, then, offers a striking example through which to explore contested trends in governance, contemporary technological interventions and processes of subjectification in everyday life.

Since the crisis in the Irish economy in 2008 and subsequent Troika bailout, there has been an understandable focus on issues such as unemployment and austerity measures.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, little attention is being given to the political rationalities and modes of intervention that have persisted or been amplified since the crisis began. Indeed, Troika guidelines recommend fiscal adjustments in tandem with the creation of conditions for economic growth, namely, a rather familiar prescription composed of the privatization of state assets and the deregulation of ‘sheltered’ sectors (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 2011). One Troika team member, István Székely, cast the experimental qualities of the situation in blunt terms: ‘We want to make the consumer king and we are close to the coronation here’ (quoted in Carswell and McGee, 2011: 31). What one may glimpse here, to paraphrase Naomi Klein (2008), is the doctrine behind experiments in economic shock therapy – a political project motivated by principles of ‘freedom’ and competition

that seeks to reengineer states and societies. Ireland, in this sense, is a laboratory for experiments in new forms of governance that is producing specific versions of more widespread effects (see Ong, 2006).<sup>2</sup>

Scholars of neoliberalism are turning to the historicity of particular sites of implementation, the various policies in action, the institutions implicated and the dispositions being produced. Although there is now a considerable body of work on neoliberal 'regulated deregulation' (Hilgers, 2013) and the social insecurities that inevitably flow, there remains a need to explore the relationships between neoliberalism and (in)securitization (see Goldstein, 2012; Wacquant, 2009, 2012).<sup>3</sup> Today, in many parts of the world and often behind the banner of 'smart cities' or e-government, there is growing momentum behind the uses of new software applications to bring transactions together with real-time services and security of identification (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011; Maguire, 2010). The post-deregulation moves to govern the Irish taxi industry by means of CCTV systems and new software applications are illustrative of these trends. Here, we wish to explore the historicity of neoliberalism, securitization and racialization. Too often these dimensions of the contemporary moment have not been understood as imbricated. Surveillance Studies, for example, has often focused on new technologies and the 'gaze' exercised by states without due attention to the ways in which technologies come to be nested in broader processes of (in)securitization and in everyday cultural worlds (see Bigo, 2012).<sup>4</sup> Leading Surveillance Studies scholar David Murakami Wood breaks from these constraints and argues that we must attend to the specific connections between surveillance, neoliberal policies and the contexts in which these come to be nested together. How, he wonders, does surveillance come to be normalized in everyday life? There must be, he proposes, 'a spectrum from empowering to exclusionary surveillance that can be mapped onto a spectrum of class, or race or other schema which chart political, social and economic centrality and marginality' (Murakami Wood, 2012: 342–343). Following Murakami Wood's provocations, this article will map the specific connections between contemporary governance, surveillance and racialization in the Irish taxi industry.

We draw on several years of ethnographic research among African migrants in Ireland, much of which includes an exploration of labour integration in the taxi industry in Irish border towns and in Dublin city. Here, we extend this work in a number of ways. First, we retrace the political rationalities behind deregulation and re-regulation, showing the ways in which a specific version of neoliberalism appears not simply as a transnational economic orthodoxy but more as a contested field of governance in which 'the market' is both a regime of veridiction and a problematic source of uncertainties and risks. Second, we examine the specific ways in which new technologies ostensibly offer solutions to a problematized taxi industry. Finally, we look to the ways in which racialization processes operate within the industry and are nested in drivers' everyday experiences and connected to (in)securitization.

## **Problematization and deregulation**

During the 1990s, as a consequence of political lobbying to restrict the issuing of new licences, approximately 3000 taxis operated in Dublin city. Some licences were sold

during that decade for over €100,000. Many wealthier, multiple licence holders even rented out their vehicles and licences to second drivers, so-called cosies, who worked long hours for low wages and were described in one influential report as the equivalent of ‘urban sharecroppers’ (Kenny and McNutt, 1998: 7). Nationally, the industry was fragmented both administratively and in terms of the fares charged, and a large and unregulated hackney industry mushroomed to meet the excess demand. Customer dissatisfaction was especially acute in Dublin during the 1990s because of public transport infrastructure lagging behind the demands of a fast-growing urban economy. The taxi industry thus became a problematization of governance: a problem for government and a problematization of neoliberal governance.

A review of key reports issued during the 1990s shows that deregulation and security were understood to be fundamentally imbricated. Economists Kenny and McNutt (1998), for example, extolled the ‘benefits of an enterprise culture and the free market’ and chided the authorities for failing ‘to recognise that competitive markets are superior to regulated ones’ (pp. 14, 6). But free market evangelism was articulated with references to security as ‘quality regulation’. One report complained that, ‘[T]he quality of taxi services (both driver and vehicle quality) are not directly observable’ (Faber et al., 1998: 5 and passim; see also Maguire and Murphy, 2012). In order to render vehicles and drivers visible, readable and intelligible, a number of recommendations were made, ranging from vehicle roadworthiness tests to identification systems and from tachographs to record speeds, distances travelled and drivers’ working hours to assessments of whether or not a licence holder would be deemed to be a ‘fit and proper person’ (Faber et al., 1998: 13 and passim). These recommendations were not adopted fully, thus security remained a partially latent presence in policy.

By 1999, legislators were under pressure from taxi industry lobbying and under attack by neoliberal economists. However, it was a legal challenge by the hackney industry that provoked change. In 2000, the High Court ruled that all citizens have the right to gain access to an industry for which they are qualified. A Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) industry was called into being by Minister for State at the Department of Environment, Bobby Molloy.<sup>5</sup> A leading taxi drivers’ representative recalled, ‘We were in shock, we knew it was coming in some form but just to have it happening like that, people’s livelihoods destroyed, it was incredible’ (quoted in Millar, 2010). Within a few short years, the number of taxis and hackneys increased threefold. This was ‘big bang’ deregulation in experimental form.

The *Taxi Regulation Act, 2003*, provided for the establishment of an independent Commission for Taxi Regulation responsible for governing standards. And everything possible was standardized: taxi meters, fares, identification cards, licensing, colour-codes, tamper-proof discs and roof signs. We interviewed the Commissioner for Taxi Regulation who painted a picture of a customer getting into a taxi with ‘the comfort and knowledge’ provided by licence numbers, photo ID, a drivers’ smart card and registration dates. ‘Enhanced information’, as she put it, ‘just for general security’. However, a blind spot remained in the quality regulation milieu: the actual people driving the taxis. Reports on the taxi industry following deregulation indicated that the costs associated with entering the industry were not prohibitive, running at about €7000. As a consequence, thousands of new drivers entered the industry, many from immigrant backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> During

weekdays, taxi ranks became crowded with the cars of incumbent drivers waiting on business alongside newer drivers. During weekend nights, the number of cars at the ranks swelled with part-time drivers; and hackneys and taxis cruised up and down the streets in search of fares. ‘Bats!’ as one seasoned driver put it, ‘Like bats, they just come out at night’. Average working hours increased to 60 per week while net earnings declined (Goodbody Economic Consultants et al., 1998). On more than one occasion, we recorded drivers complaining, ‘There are now more taxis in Dublin than in New York!’

In late 2000, several small protests flared throughout the state. On 28 November 2000, violence erupted during a large-scale protest at government buildings in Dublin. Several people were injured in what became to be known as the Battle of Nassau Street (see Cullen, 2000: 13). However, there was no government u-turn and the violence dispelling any public sympathy. Indeed, one *Irish Times* editorial dismissed the protests as ‘bully-boy tactics’ used in defence of a ‘closed shop, with its powerful political patronage ... and unwarranted privileges’ (*Irish Times*, Cullen, 2000: 19). But this same newspaper editorial captured one of the key issues in the whole process: the nature of deregulation itself. ‘There will still be a degree of regulation’, the *Times* editor informed readers, adding, ‘Deregulation does not mean a free-for-all’ (*Irish Times*, Cullen, 2000).<sup>7</sup>

What is at stake here is the nature of neoliberal deregulation and the role of state and non-state governance in transforming economic sectors and lifeworlds. The economic thought that obtained behind taxi deregulation did not take ‘the market’ as a natural order but, rather, understood deregulation as a process in which governance would be adjusted in order to facilitate competition. Anthropologists exploring the historicity of neoliberalism have also attended to the drive to achieve competition in different market ‘reforms’ around the world. Mathieu Hilgers, for example, draws insights from Michel Foucault’s prescient 1978–1979 lectures in the Collège de France to describe how neoliberalism demands a reengineered state to enable ‘the emergence and spread of a competitive market that imposes a process of socialisation and permanent formation on individuals’ (Hilgers, 2013: 82; see also Sandel, 2012). Indeed, Foucault was also prescient in observing the ways in which newer *laissez faire* economic theories were turning principles of competition back on the state in the form of a ‘permeant economic tribunal confronting government’ (Foucault, 2008: 247). By attacking the ‘regulatory capture’ of governance by the vested interests of a sheltered taxi industry, economists demanding deregulation were fundamentally engaged in political project of regulatory capture themselves, one aimed at reengineering the state to enable the emergence of a competitive market that would transform the economy and thereby the social for the betterment of all.

In a comprehensive review of Irish taxi deregulation, economist Sean Barrett expressed his position clearly: ‘The deregulation of the Irish taxi sector by the High Court in 2000 remains a resounding economic success’ (Barrett, 2010: 65). However, this position could only be occupied by apprehending the governance of an economic sector and people’s lifeworlds in particular ways. For example, Barrett described the taxi sector as ‘a major part of overall public transport’, an entirely rational argument but one that tears down the walls between for-profit, private provision and public transport provision by dismissing the political-economy sensibilities that maintain those walls.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he dismisses any suggestion that there was conflict between incumbent drivers and new entrants following deregulation, an issue we track closely below (cf. Maguire

and Murphy, 2012). In fact, post-deregulation the taxi industry became a site of conflict and insecurity. Strikingly, in the years after deregulation the lines of battle between incumbent drivers and economist commentators formed up over rationalities of re-regulation. Economists understood that deregulation would always require some regulatory interventions, not to facilitate a perfect market but to facilitate ever greater market competition. For their part, incumbent and even newer drivers fixated on matters of quality, safety and security – effectively domesticating their new role as providers of ‘public transport’.

By 2008–2009, when our research began, drivers were complaining of part-time operators with multiple identifications and ‘cloned’ cars – two or more cars often of the same make, model and colour operating off the same forged licences. And, most controversially, there were complaints about African and other immigrant drivers who swapped cars and appeared and disappeared at will. Tensions sometimes escalated into harassment and violence, though not in systematic ways or on a large scale (see Jaichand, 2010). Many drivers and taxi associations even appealed to the regulatory authorities for a 24-hour telephone hotline to report the transgressions of other drivers. Yet again, the taxi industry had become a site of problematization, but this time tilted towards the need for security in the form of surveillance measures.

### (in)Securitization

The *Taxi Regulation Bill, 2012* emerged as a regulatory framework intended to square the competing trends of over-expansion and insecurity. Much of the media and political commentary on the legislation has thus far focused on mechanisms for disqualifying drivers or barring their entry into the industry on the grounds of serious crime convictions. However, thinking in terms of surveillance better captures the regulatory instruments and technologies affecting drivers’ everyday lives. There are key legislative developments in the areas of CCTV monitoring and mobile phone–based software applications interfacing with identification systems.

Our ethnographic work (2012) showed that taxi ranks became sites of contestation post-deregulation. In the true spirit of market competition, taxi ranks were largely ungoverned except by local by-laws. Therefore, taxis could line up for business but could not expect to collect a fare just because they were the first vehicle in the line – customers could and did choose drivers on the basis of appearances, even the racial appearances of the drivers. Especially during peak times or when nightclubs closed on weekend nights, ranks became crowded and conflicts erupted. Moreover, because of limited space for the number of taxis seeking fares at ranks, illegal parking became a hazard. Recently, indeed, we spoke informally with a member of the police who described weighing the risks posed by drunken night-time crowds remaining on the streets against the risks presented by illegal parking. ‘Something should be done’, he suggested, adding, ‘There isn’t enough of us to do anything’. The regulatory response to this problem is to deploy CCTV cameras. The legislation provides considerable latitude in the deployment of such systems to capture, ‘any incident occurring at an appointed stand [*taxi rank*] or other location’ (Oireachtas, 2012: 46 (author’s interpolation in [italics])). Moreover, while cameras

are primarily operated by the National Transport Authority, considerable room for sub-contracting is also allowed. When we discussed the issue of 'public' CCTV cameras with drivers, we were immediately struck by the enthusiasm with which they greeted such developments. Indeed, when CCTV coverage of ranks was raised, many drivers quickly segued into topics that they were far more interested in attending to: the potential uses of CCTV to detect 'cloned' cars, often imagined to be driven by illegal part-time drivers – some made explicit reference to 'Black' drivers – together with the important topic of in-car and self-installed security technology. Many drivers even hoped that public cameras would be equipped for automated number plate recognition – 'You've nothing to fear if you're registered', one driver explained. Many more drivers spoke about in-car technologies such as cameras, Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking and panic buttons. Indeed, not only have in-car cameras and tracking become common but also their use is now promoted by many taxi companies across the country. In 2011, the Data Protection Commissioner voiced concern about the use of in-car CCTVs, especially those with voice recording capabilities. In defence, one prominent taxi drivers' advocate, John Usher, not only pointed to the widespread use of these technologies in compliance with data protection regulations but also called for government subsidies to assist vehicle owners in purchasing the most up-to-date equipment (Daly, 2011).

But perhaps the most recent development is also the most fascinating one. In early 2013, a new smartphone software application (App) was launched called Taxi Driver Check. The App was designed by the National Transport Authority to allow passengers to check that a taxi is licenced and match the authorized driver to the licence and vehicle. Essentially, when a passenger registers their details and downloads the App, he or she may input the vehicle registration number, licence number, details from the dashboard ID card or scan the taxi disc even before entering the taxi and thereby confirm the taxi licence information and receive a photograph of the driver. The App also sends a message with details of the taxi journey and driver to a nominated 'friend'. Moreover, it is estimated that approximately 70 percent of vehicles are correctly registered; however, if no details are confirmed by the App, customers are encouraged to press a 'report' button to register a complaint with the National Transport Authority.

Although one might accuse the Minister of Governance by way of Android or the Apple Store, the App is simple and well designed for the purposes for which it is set. Because drivers face a fine if their vehicles are not correctly registered with the Transport Authority, Taxi Driver Check is already increasing pressure to register and by extension comply. Of course, compliance with registration also opens the possibility of removing taxi drivers from the industry who may be lodging fraudulent welfare benefit claims. Moreover, the App was designed and launched explicitly as a security measure, and it is a rather cost-effective one that shifts security from the conduct of government to the governmental conduct of conduct within the industry: now passengers and drivers may 'feel safer' by taking responsibility for engaging with the new system and by doing so police those who do not comply (see Gordon, 1991; see also Dean, 2010). And such governmental efforts are by no means unique to the taxi industry in Ireland. For example, prior to the launch of the Taxi Driver Check App, the company HailO had already established a foothold in the Dublin market. HailO originated in the London cabbie market and quickly spread across Europe and North America, offering a smart-phone App that

includes similar security services as Taxi Driver Check packaged together with social media, card payment services and various GPS locating interfaces. Similar Apps have been released globally, and in New York City what are essentially surveillance systems have been reworked to offer pleasurable experiences (see Haggerty and Ericson, 2000). Taxi Snapshot, for example, a Reddysset-designed App, now offers New Yorkers the opportunity to capture moments and see photos of previous passengers, transforming taxis from merely ‘... physical spaces into focal points for emotional moments, and makes them communal. It converts every single taxi in the city into a shared photo booth, and becomes a nexus of memory that transforms the space’ (Reddysset, 2012).

It is important to recognize that many software applications may be understood as surveillance technologies in the sense that they exercise a gaze and afford the room for reflexive play. However, it is also important to note that the label ‘surveillance’ often fails to capture the complexities of technologies that render human sociality as code and thereby facilitate technologically mediated opportunities for forms of sociality and, indeed, economic gain. The market for taxi Apps is widely recognized as a potentially transformative one. Technology watcher Adrienne Jeffries paints the following picture:

Taxi apps give us a glimpse of a future in which everything is real-time – imagine attaching a moving dot on a map to every pizza delivery driver and FedEx package. There are only two examples of success with matching people together for a real life transaction in real time: taxi apps, and Grindr, the hookup app for gay men. Only one of those (we hope) involves cash. (Jeffries, 2013)

In Ireland today, both private customer service software and government measures are competing within the taxi market to offer security. The drivers within the taxi industry, as we have already indicated, are at the vanguard of pushing those applications and measures to increase their own and their customers’ security, but also as a means to capture the re-regulation process. Right in the middle of this contested terrain of political rationalities and surveillance interventions are the processes of subjectification and racialization.

In early 2013, in the immediate wake of the release of the National Transport Authority’s Taxi Driver Check, we took a taxi journey in the outskirts of Dublin city and spoke to the driver about new measures, legislation and relationships at taxi ranks – a habit of ours since our research project commenced. The driver spoke eloquently about the new legislation and the importance of customer safety, but when the issue of new immigrant drivers, especially African drivers, was raised he became increasingly animated. ‘It’s outside ... [*names popular nightclub*] that’s the problem’, he said:

There’s not enough space for our cars, and you might get a ticket if you double park. But they just want the crowd moved off home, so they turn a blind-eye. Now you have the lanes off the main street with these fellas, and they’re not licensed for here. And they’d give you abuse if you told them to move on. But they’re taking our business, because we’re where we’re supposed to be, but when they see a group – young girls, drunk – they’ll shoot out of the lane and shout to them. And half them are cloned cars; mostly African fellas driving cloned cars.



We transcribed the conversation retrospectively with the permission of the driver. But in the moment he felt challenged to prove his point using the new National Transport Authority's Taxi Driver Check App. He drove us up and down the lanes near to the nightclub scanning taxi registration details. There were several African drivers licenced to operate in the area but no 'cloned' cars. He volunteered to drive us to another town to continue the search.

The use of surveillance technology seems oddly suitable in a deregulated industry struggling over processes of re-regulation, but racialization does not 'fit' – it is a disturbing and messily cultural presence suggesting protectionism and 'regulatory capture' by white incumbent drivers on the ground and institutional and state racism at other levels. Neoliberal economic theory offers a clear perspective on racism: discrimination is in essence a form of regulation that *is antithetical* to the smooth functioning of the market. As the celebrated economist Walter Williams puts it, 'The relative colour blindness of the market accounts for much of the hostility towards it. Markets have a notorious lack of respect for privilege, race, and class structures' (Williams, 2011: 29). In this analysis, deregulation tears down the walls of exclusion and opens new industries to the radicalism of entrepreneurialism, meritocracy and the regulation by price of a competitive market. Williams is a commentator on the deregulation of the Irish taxi industry and holds it to be a success story. But a large number of scholars oppose these views, claiming that, 'neoliberalism effectively masks racism through its value-laden moral project: camouflaging practices anchored in an apparent meritocracy, making possible a utopic vision of society that is non-racialized' (Roberts and Mahtani, 2010). The experiences of African taxi drivers in Ireland speak to these debates.

## Racialization

Following deregulation, it became obvious that taxi ranks would be the focus of tensions. At ranks in Dublin city informal queuing systems began, with drivers insisting that customers take the first car available. These 'gentleman's agreements' sometimes operated equitably, but in other cases incumbents blocked customers going to new entrants' vehicles or 'boxed in' their cars. Because taxi ranks are generally only regulated by by-laws, these problems persisted for years. When customers did choose a taxi driven by incumbent drivers, they were often told stories or rumours about immigrant, especially 'Black', drivers overcharging. For their part, African drivers consistently pointed to the quality of their cars and their rigorous use of taxi meters. They claimed that 'older' or 'Irish' drivers often switched off meters and charged 'local' prices, and then interpreted their legally mandated use of the taxi meter as overcharging. In many of these cases, we find examples confounding William Lloyd Garrison's dictum: 'In making a bargain, the colour of a man will never be consulted' (quoted in Williams, 2011: 25).

Racial tensions simmered throughout the early 2000s (see Jaichand, 2010). We interviewed a key figure in the taxi industry in 2010 who describe the situation thus:

There was no queue system. ... You can pick whichever car you want because you cannot force people to get in and sit beside somebody that they don't want to sit beside. [...]

They were trying to enforce the first car system, we had meetings about this. The first ones who came onto that taxi rank, the Nigerians were very well educated. They came here when the economy was good, they didn't come from Mosney [*asylum seeker accommodation*]; they didn't come as asylum seekers. These people came as migrants to a good economy .... But as time rolled on ... a different kind of black driver, more aggressive and loud, you know, they would shout at the public. ... Ok, so what happened then was the public began to relate this story, it went around like wild fire. This black fella said this, this black fella said that, this black fella charged me €10 and it should have been €5; this black fella didn't give me my change; this black fella asked me could he keep the change because he has a family to feed. (Interview 2010)

This key figure in the taxi industry understood security and identification as key concepts:

One of our taxi drivers got on the radio and he said, 'There was a spot check Saturday night and all the African's disappeared off the town or fifty per cent of them at least'. Why did they disappear? They disappeared because they were not complying with the regulations. ... I have had a number of complaints with people not showing photo ID. I have had a number of complaints with people confused with who was on that photo ID. [...] The public said we cannot identify the blacks at night time in the taxi. [...] Now I have another incident where there was another fella not complying, and I was told that it was not his face on the photo. I went up to the car; I asked could I see his photo ID. He wouldn't let me; he drove away, nearly knocked me down pulling off the rank. Shut up his windows and drove away. He wasn't the guy in the photo ID, so he just drove away. [...] I would say the African drivers are doing it more than the Irish drivers, as I have just said to you, you cannot tell one from the other. How do you tell them? How do you tell them apart? (Interview 2010)

Of course, one could spend a considerable period of time unpicking this driver's perspectives, but for the purposes at hand it is important to simply tease out one key strand: the use of a variety of techniques to call into being a thoroughly racialized archetype, a phantasmagorical 'black' man who appears and disappears at will. To borrow from Judith Butler, here we have performance as the 'reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (Butler, 1993: 2).

During the course of our research with African drivers, we encountered many similar narratives about identity, racialization and the difficulties of operating taxis as new entrants to the industry. Most African drivers praised many their customers and their neighbours; they often expressed their sense of belonging in Ireland and hopes for the future, especially for their children's futures. But all the drivers we interacted with told stories of racial abuse and often racially motivated violence. Here is but one illustrative example drawn from a lengthy interaction with a driver:

You will find one or two [*customers*] that will be very fair, but I am telling you majority of them ... – it's nothing to write home about. They are as people, as racist, as people can be on the rank. I am going to give you an example about what happened about a week ago. One of us took about four passengers going to [*mentions neighbourhood*], so they said to him, well we are going to stop by and buy some food. The meter was running, and he told them that the meter would keep running, 'in case you say I am a cheat and am trying to rip you off'. 'They say it's ok: don't worry, we will pay you'. On the way, they tell him, 'No way, we are not going to pay

you that'. So they started calling him all sorts of names, they called him a Nigger, black c\*\*t, things like that. ... By now he was very scared, he was being threatened. ... The others were sitting behind him, and one of them started hitting him. ... They took his money that he made and then left -this was about 4am. [...]

I say, 'How would you feel now at this time, this age, this year, if you go to the UK and you still see where they put on the wall, 'No Irish, No Blackman'? How would you feel? Or if you go there to drive a taxi and as soon as someone opens your door and you talk they say, 'Oh, he is Irish, no, no', and slam your door. The next thing he told me was, 'Go back to your country'. (Interview 2011)

Another driver, in common with a great many we interacted with, reflected on the ways in which racism reached into his sense of being:

We are all human beings. I donate blood, my blood is not black. We cannot ask God: 'Make me white, or make me black?' So we are the same thing, we eat the same, we talk the same, we breathe the same, we have the same eyes. So I don't know why they are saying, 'Fucking Nigger'. And I hate that statement! I hate it! People say, 'Nigger'. They say, 'Oh no, no, no that is a Nigger taxi. I am not going with Niggers'. Sometimes, because when I am mad, I roar out, 'You are a prick'. (Interview 2011)

It is important to note that it is readily apparent to African drivers that the deregulation of the taxi industry provided them with opportunities for employment, social mobility and, possibly even, integration. However, the perceived lack of governmental action beyond 'big bang' deregulation left the taxi ranks across Ireland as places into which informal regulation and racialized tensions flowed. Instead of a clean space for pure competition provided by a neoliberal doctrine that disguises its own political and moralizing conditions of possibility, we inevitably it seems find individuals and groups reasserting the social. A driver described the ways in which African drivers organized themselves, formally and informally, to call attention to their situations:

We met the taxi regulator then, we discussed the issue with them ... and they said, 'Well you can go to any doctor or GP you like, so people can take whatever taxi they like'. Well at the doctors they still queue, and people don't queue [*properly for taxis*]. We are charging the same amount; the meter is the same, nothing different. ... We are charging the same price. If they don't believe that well, ok. Yeah whatever they do, they should know that they will pay the same amount to us. It's supposed to be first come first served at the rank, but nobody listens. Nobody ever listens to us. [...] (Interview 2011)

This driver called for an 'education' or awareness campaign and pointed to the overwhelming trend towards compliance with regulations found among African drivers, largely as a result of their fears of being singled out by the police or gaining a bad reputation among customers in a constrained market.

While the broader sweep of drivers in Irish ranks are welcoming of new security measures as a way to re-regulate and control the industry, for many African drivers new measures promise to increase insecurity and fear. As one African driver explained,

Well I had this man yesterday; he put his hand on me. I said, ‘Well I may be in fear of you, fine, but I will not be afraid’. There is information on my receipt and the photograph there. If someone wants to track me down they can. (Interview 2011)

Speaking about new software applications, another immigrant driver said, ‘Why should I show my face to people: why should they have my photograph on their phones when they’re just passing me on the street. Now they are able to see me moving around on their phones’ (Interview 2013).

African and other migrant drivers are often quick to use satellite navigation and GPS systems to avoid getting lost and the inevitable aggressive exchanges about the routes they take passengers. When they rely upon these technologies, they risk accusations of not having sufficient ‘local knowledge’. On a much broader level, local knowledge is precisely what is missing – local knowledge of the situations immigrant and other drivers face in their everyday working lives; local knowledge of tensions in a competitive industry and local knowledge of the effects of (de)regulation and new technologies.

## Conclusion

Following the deregulation of the Irish taxi industry in 2000, a large, competitive and multicultural industry employing over 35,000 people emerged as a source of opportunities and challenges. ‘Big bang’ deregulation continues to be held up by economists as a model for emulation elsewhere. Indeed, from a God’s-eye perspective taxi deregulation offers a neoliberal narrative *par excellence*: a sector sheltered by clientelist government was tried by economics and found wanting; and the opening of the sector to competition resulted in the flourishing of individual interests. The experience of this narrative was illustrated during a recent moment at a major taxi rank. An immigrant driver turned his car to jump-start a Dublin driver’s car. We watched as taxi after taxi cut into the line to pick up fares. ‘Typical’, the driver said, ‘It’s every man for himself these days. We’re all earning nothing – but we’d cut each others fucking throats for €5!’

The market is not colour-blind in this case. Rather, the racialization evident in the industry has been largely ignored for over a decade, together with the modest requests by African drivers for campaigns and regulations to combat racism. Instead of government attending to the fundamentally socio-cultural nature of labour and acting accordingly, we see re-regulation by means of securitization in the form of CCTVs and new software applications. These technologies also promise race-neutral means of governing populations but tend to nest in already existing cultural configurations (Maguire, 2009, 2012). Thus, one must inevitably conclude discussions of actually existing neoliberalism and securitization by turning back to broader neoliberal forms of rule. In an important essay on neoliberalism, Pierre Bourdieu asked, ‘What if, in reality, this economic order were no more than the implementation of a utopia – the utopia of neoliberalism – thus converted into a *political problem*?’ (Bourdieu, 1998). Bourdieu’s question is an important one because it demands discussion of the future: beyond deregulatory ‘big bangs’, what vision is offered by the politics of neoliberalism? The example of Irish taxi deregulation indicates that the political project of neoliberalism was characterized by always-unfinished reform, an endless counterrevolutionary style of attack on the public interest

and protected sectors accompanied by seemingly endless levels of precariousness and insecurity. The process of re-regulation, heralded as the end of *laissez faire* governance, offers government interventions in ways compatible with neoliberalism. After all, as Ayn Rand, utopian writer beloved of the New Right, expressed it in *Atlas Shrugged*, ‘A proper government is only a policeman ...’ (Rand, 1957: 1062).

From the perspectives of African drivers in Ireland, deregulation did offer modest economic opportunities albeit in a dangerous and racialized industry. But most of those drivers cannot understand why no effort was made to dispel rumours, marshal ranks or foster an inclusive industry. Those drivers, together with other immigrant and non-immigrant drivers, see themselves operating in a society and not just an abstract economy. Today, drivers compete in a precarious and atomized industry wherein their sense of the social is increasingly mediated by new software applications. Technologies, to borrow from Hannah Arendt (1958: 262 and *passim*), are public things and as public things exist in and alter cultural and political ecologies. Herein, we have shown some of the ways in which racialization and security technologies intersect; we have also indicated some of the ways in which these configurations suggest important shifts in contemporary rule and in everyday lifeworlds.

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## Notes

1. Troika denotes the financial rescue and governmental triumvirate composed of the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF).
2. Of course, the therapists may be new, but shocks and experiments have long been experienced at the sharp end of modernity. Historian F.S.L. Lyons, for example, noted the appearance of governmental innovations in 19th-century Ireland prior to their deployment elsewhere in Britain or its Empire, surmising that in Ireland, ‘Englishmen were prepared to conduct experiments in government which contemporary opinion at home was not prepared to tolerate’ (1971: 74). The need for security and surveillance, for example, led to developments of global significance in Ireland. Analysing Sir Robert Peel’s role in establishing the modern British police, historian G.A. Minto remarks, ‘Fortunately, he had in a manner of speaking, tried it on the dog. The dog was Ireland’ (quoted in Breathnach, 1974: 29). And, Ireland’s laboratory-like qualities persisted throughout the 20th century: from experiments in semi-state government in the 1920s and tax-free export zones in the 1960s to efforts to attract transnational corporations and liquid capital during the so-called Celtic Tiger period (see Coen and Maguire, 2012; Maguire, 1998).
3. Today, especially in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001, security is a leitmotif that suggests the phantasmagoria of real and imagined threats and the production of styles of reasoning, technological interventions and straightforward lethal actions. Disciplines such as International Relations, Strategic Studies and Security Studies often establish ‘heritage’ connections to a liberal intellectual tradition, from Thomas Hobbes to John Stuart Mill and beyond. This serves to naturalize security rather than emphasize its emergent and productive qualities. Thus, we discuss securitization processes. We also acknowledge the active production of real or imagined threats and the associated production of unease or even fear. Thus,

following the work of Didier Bigo (2006), we generally prefer to discuss (in)securitization processes.

4. Following Bigo (2006, 2012), we noted that Surveillance Studies has made important contributions by tracking the ‘surveillant gaze’ and its targets in a number of domains, especially in situations where new technologies are being deployed. However, there has not been enough attention to the connections between surveillance and broader processes of securitization, from the arenas of the military to intelligence or policing, historically and in different cultural contexts. Therefore, while we occasionally describe CCTV deployments and new software tracking as surveillance herein – after all an explicit gaze is being exercised – we broadly prefer to discuss (in)securitization in order to call attention to mundane governmental inscriptions and everyday fears, insecurities, unease, and desires for change.
5. Minister Molloy was Progressive Democrat (PD) Minister in a coalition government. The now defunct Progressive Democrats were a small political party that wielded enormous influence and held office as coalition partners in 1989–1992, 1997–2002, 2002–2007 and 2007–2009. The party was openly influenced by North American–style free-market economics. Veteran journalist Vincent Browne provides us with the following political obituary:

It was the PDs who exposed Ireland to the full gale of neo-liberal ideology – the unleashing of unrestrained market forces, the deepening of inequality and, of course, ‘light touch’ regulation. They laid the ground for the crisis that has now befallen us. (Browne, 2010)

6. Immediately, questions were asked about drivers with criminal convictions and the risk of ‘double jeopardy’ if one were to exclude them. During the debates of the *Taxi Regulation Bill, 2012*, some figures were mentioned of questionable accuracy. In fact, there is little reliable evidence on levels of fraud or crime within the taxi industry.
7. Those who have studied Milton Friedman’s documentary series, *Free to Choose*, broadcast by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) during the 1980s, will immediately detect a powerful resonance. In the addendum discussion with his critics at the end of vol. 1 *The Power of Markets*, Friedman responds to a challenger who wonders if the ‘free market’ of 19th-century America was not in fact government via security and policing:

I am not an anarchist! I am not in favour of eliminating government. I think we need a government, but we need a government that sets a framework of rules in which individuals pursuing their own objectives can work together and cooperate together. (PBS, 2008)

Government for Friedman, then, is limited to the removal of barriers to advancement and to providing for the security of the free market.

8. Barrett (2010) draws from a report by Goodbody Economic Consultants which found that ‘a higher proportion of adults had taken a cab in the last six months [*of 2008*] than had used train or local bus services’ (p. 62).

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