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## FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: LEAVE NO DARK CORNER

Airs 8.00 pm Tuesday September 18 on ABC TV and iview

China is marrying Big Brother to Big Data. Every citizen will be watched and their behaviour scored in the most ambitious and sophisticated system of social control in history. Matthew Carney reports.

It's innocuously called "Social Credit". In fact, it's a dystopian personal scorecard for every one of China's 1.4 billion citizens.

Jaywalking, late paying of bills or taxes, buying too much alcohol or, much worse, mouthing off against the government will see you lose points and accumulate punishments like the right to travel by plane or train.

Model citizens, fear not. You will gain bonus points and rewards like the waiving of deposits on hotels and rental cars.

*"If people keep their promises they can go anywhere in the world. If people break their promises they won't be able to move an inch!"* Jie Cong, Tianjin General Manager, financial credit system Alipay



“**Leave No Dark Corner**” is a slogan China’s authorities have long used to root out “unstable elements”. It can equally be applied to Social Credit, which builds on China’s formidable history of surveilling its people.

Already about 200 million cameras sweep its cities. That number is set to triple by 2020. Combine these with rapid advances in facial recognition, body scanning and geo-tracking, add each individual’s digital history and behaviours, and there you have it: a personal score ranking your trustworthiness.

Dandan, a young mother and marketing professional, is proud of her high credit score. If she keeps it up her infant son will be more likely to get into a top school.

*“China likes to experiment in this creative way... I think people in every country want a stable and safe society.”* Dandan

*“We need a social credit system. We hope we can help each other, love each other and help everyone to become prosperous.”* Dandan’s civil servant husband Xiaojing

Social Credit is still being trialled – it’s supposed to be fully operational by 2020 – but already an estimated 10 million people are paying the price of a low rating. Corruption-busting journalist Liu Hu is one of them.

*“The government regards me as an enemy.”* Liu Hu

After exposing official corruption, Liu Hu was arrested, jailed and fined. Now a poor Social Credit rating bars him from travelling by plane or fast train. His social media accounts with millions of followers have been suspended. He struggles to find work.

*“This kind of social control is against the tide of the world. The Chinese people’s eyes are blinded and their ears are blocked. They know little about the world and are living in an illusion.”* Liu Hu

From Beijing, Correspondent Matthew Carney travels to the north western province of Xinjiang, where China’s surveillance machine is at its most ruthless. Here, the UN estimates that about 1 million Islamic Uighur people are being held in re-education camps.

*“The surveillance system suddenly ramped up after the end of 2016. Since then, advanced surveillance technology which we’ve never seen, never experienced, never heard of, started appearing.”* Tahir Hamut, Uighur poet and filmmaker who fled to the US

**Leave No Dark Corner, Matthew Carney’s chilling report on China’s digital dictatorship, airs on Foreign Correspondent at 8 pm Tuesday September 18 and 1.30 pm Friday September 21 on ABC TV and at 7.30 pm AEST on Saturday September 22 on the ABC News Channel; also on iview.**

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