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Technical Notes: Between “Big Brother” and the “Big Bad Wolf”

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Abstract

This technical note informs the readership about the start of an interesting series of field experiments in the European Union dealing with the territorial and social impact of surveillance camera networks. A project schedule is provided along with points of contact for further collaboration.

KEYWORDS: surveillance camera networks, urban planning, representations, psycho-social aspects

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ALARM 1 is an international program involving French (CNRS-PACTE Université Joseph Fourier de Grenoble), Italian (SITI Politecnico de Torino), and Swiss (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) research teams. They are all members of the international network called "Alarm procedures and hazard mitigation in urban areas; linking hazards mitigation to sustainable development" (<http://www.pacte.cnrs.fr/Recherche/Alerte/index.htm>). Three Alpine urban areas during major sport events are its research field: Turin (organizing city of 2005 winter Olympic Games), Geneva (entrant in 2008 Eurosoccer), and Grenoble (candidate to 2018 Winter Olympic Games). Its concern is to understand territorial processes induced by CCTV surveillance systems and to include them in urban planning strategies (Klauser F., 2004) in order to reach optimal efficiency and maximal acceptability (Honest T., Charman E., 1992) while minimizing CCTV's pernicious effects. ALARM 1 attaches great importance to territorial inscription of fear perceptions and representations (Mancebo F., Durand-Tornare F., 2003).

1. A Milestone Called Fear

During the past two decades, American and European societies developed increased sensibility toward terrorist threats and social tensions. As a result, surveillance and security have become big issues in public policies with widespread applications of CCTV (Close Circuit Television) systems (Norris C., McCahill M., Wood D., 2004) ; creation of homeland security.

CCTV surveillance generates ambivalent collective concern -- to be attacked where there is no camera and to be spied on where there is one. On the one hand, the *Big Bad Wolf* type works on the assumption that our societies are threatened by destructive forces (urban violence, terrorism, etc.) and asks for the surveillance of every nook and cranny in our cities. On the other hand, the *Big Brother is Watching You* type works on the assumption that generalized surveillance threatens individual and civil liberties and finally endangers the democracies they are supposed to protect. Hence, CCTV has dimensions of trust and mistrust, complacency and fear, privacy and intrusion that lie at the heart of surveillance's undesirable consequences (Brin D., 1998). To understand and minimize them through urban planning, we have to examine what brings together *Big Brother and the Big Bad Wolf*. The answer obviously is - fear.

Fear delivers information on representations, values and social distance in urban communities. It is both a primitive emotion and a complex social construction. As such, it involves numerous behaviors: escape in front of real as well as imaginary dangers. Prone to cultural variability, fear mobilizes simultaneously an individual dimension —as an intimate experience and a collective dimension shared with others in public space (Raffestin C., 1984). One should never forget that: "*Si l'espace est la prison originelle, le territoire est la prison que les hommes se donnent*" ("Space is our original prison, but the territory is a prison we build ourselves") (Raffestin C., 1980).

More specifically, many questions must be asked about the gap between fear and real danger. Perception of danger generates fears which are representations highly impacted by social, cultural, and political conditions. As such, they are vastly manipulated in a multi-media society. Fear becomes a political minefield where misunderstandings and rumors thrive. Since any place where power is exerted is a place where social knowledge and experience form, perceptions become reality in a CCTV fixated world (Lyon D., 1994; Fyfe N. R., Bannister J., 1996). Comprehension of this phenomenon is crucial to link CCTV surveillance systems to urban planning strategies.

2. Methodology and Plans to Proceed

An original assumption of ALARM 1 is that CCTV involves differentiated spatial practices —between private and public actors and agents, between users and inhabitants, between social groups and communities— which lead to territorial marking (Mancebo F., Durand-Tornare F., 2003).

A comparative approach on three locations. As mentioned above, ALARM 1 research program compares urban alpine territories, in a context of international sports events within the following places:

- Turin (organizing city of 2005 winter OG), which ensures *ex-post* assessment,
- Geneva (entrant in 2008 Eurosoccer), which ensures *in itinere* assessment,
- Grenoble (candidate for 2018 winter OG), which ensures *ex-ante* assessment and prospective research.

Three stages and a four-year research program. Each team will work on the ground in the country where it is located, according to the following stages, which specify the role of each team. It is collective work, where researchers of all disciplines (urban planning, development, sociology, criminology, geography, communication sciences) will draw up a theoretical corpus. It means that this program will be subject to multiple norms of scholarship that need to be clarified and made consistent one with the other (Ball K., Haggerty K., Whitson J., 2005).

___First stage: In view of complex urban territories, researches will follow two directions which complement each other:

- A diachronic analysis will center on each site life cycle (naturally, Torino is immediately exploitable as Winter OG just came to an end).
- A synchronic analysis will draw a parallel between data obtained on each site, after setting them temporally to compare similar moments. Comparison between inter-site similar data and their accessibility must be questioned too.

___Second stage: This second stage will put great emphasis on collective representations and socio-spatial practices (differentiating local agents and organizations). It will be centered around urban planning documents and fluctuations in urban policies. Three steps will make up this stage:

- An analysis of fear representations linked to CCTV within these urban areas, followed by an identification of their contribution to space territorialization.

- Mapping of territorial differentiations induced by CCTV devices.
- Establishing logical connections between those fear representations and decision-making urban policies.

___Third stage: In this final stage various scenarios will be drawn up. They will try to identify inhabitants' adaptive strategies to accept CCTV surveillance. It will raise the issue of pertinent territories for public policies initiatives, public/private cooperation, and logical connection between factual and mental territories. Building these various scenarios will require modeling, in order to ensure implementation of the results to different areas and different situations.

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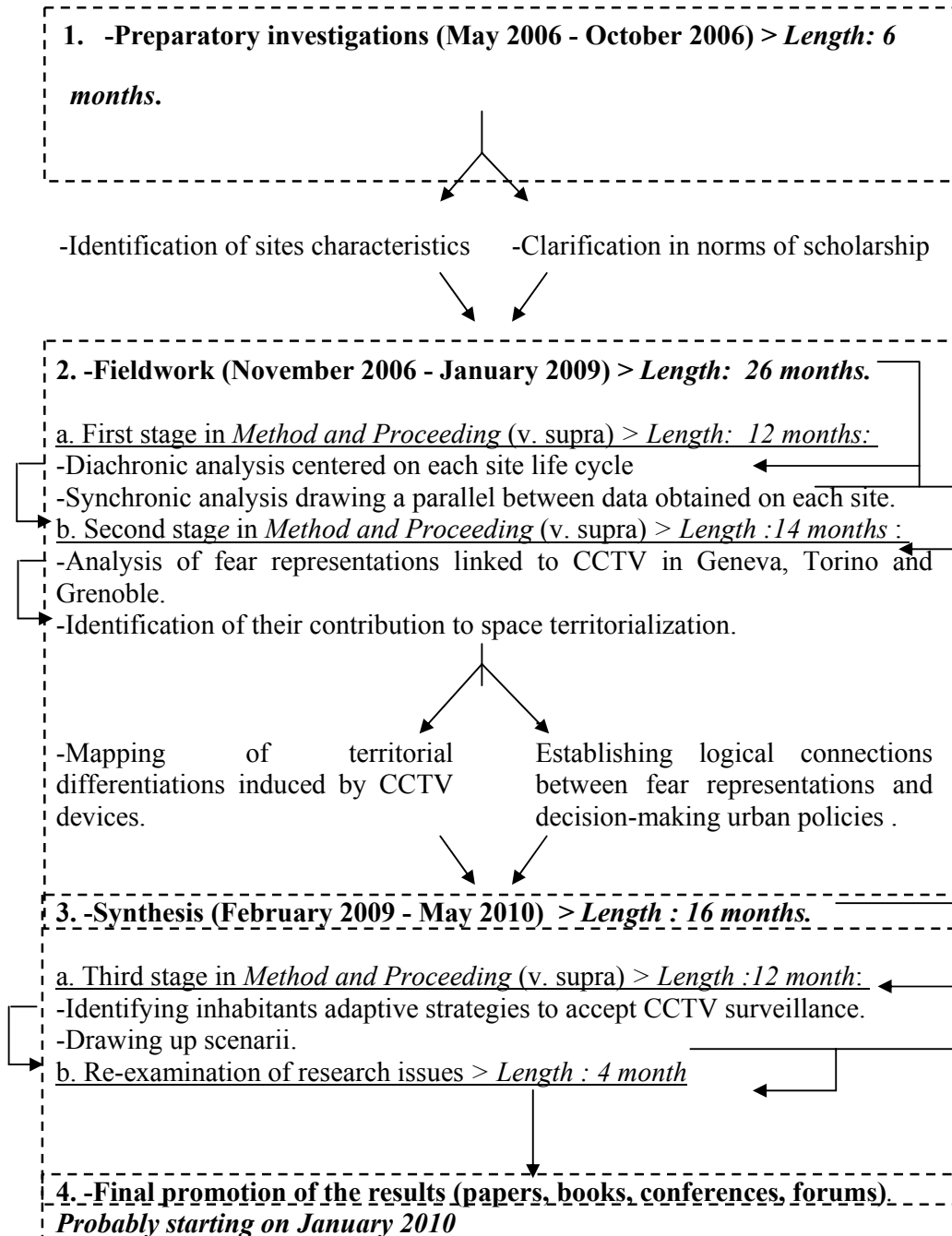
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Attachment 1 : *Projected schedule (May 2006-May 2010).*
(Possible fluctuation on projected schedule $\pm 10\%$, that is ± 5 months)



Attachment 2 : *Suggested Points of Contact for Collaboration*

Main contact:

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