



LiSS

Living in Surveillance Societies

Newsletter 2010

Chair's Introduction

Welcome to the 2010 LiSS Newsletter. Here you will find information and news about the research activities associated with the Living in Surveillance Societies (LiSS) COST Action ISO807. LiSS is now over a year old – and it's been a very busy year: the 4 Working Groups are now well established, a website has been created and LiSS has facilitated a number of events, including workshops and a conference. Further information about all of these activities can be found on the LiSS website, at URL: <http://www.liss-cost.eu/>

Over the last year or so, LiSS has facilitated a number of high profile academic events, which have developed the LiSS programme and reached out to other audiences, including practitioners, academics, the media and the general public. Of particular note, was the first LiSS Annual Conference, hosted at City University London in April 2010 and organised in conjunction with the Surveillance Studies Network (SSN). This was probably the largest ever surveillance themed social science conference held in Europe. Other significant events include the 'Surveillance What?' Workshop in Hamburg in October 2009 and the 'Political Economy of Surveillance' Workshop in Milton Keynes in September 2010.

LiSS continues to grow. There are now over 150 LiSS 'Experts' and 26 different countries associated with the Action. Over the next year a number of LiSS events are planned, including a series of Working Group meetings, a Workshop, Annual Conference 2, a Doctoral 'Think Tank' and a number of Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM). All-in-all, it looks like being another productive year!

Finally, I would like to thank all those whose hard work behind the scenes allows LiSS to continue to flourish, in particular: the Working Group Co-ordinators, the Website Group, the Workshop/Conference organisers, the STSM coordinator and the Action Secretary.

William Webster, Chair, LiSS (COST Action ISO807)

Living in Surveillance Societies

The LiSS research programme started in April 2009, as a European Framework 7 supported COST Action (ISO807). The primary objective of the Action is: 'to increase and deepen knowledge about living and working in the surveillance age, in order to better understand the consequences and impacts of enhanced surveillance, and subsequently to make recommendations about its future governance and practice'. The Action will end in April 2013.

The underlying theme of the programme is that technologically mediated surveillance - the systematic and purposeful attention to the lives of individuals or groups utilising new ICT's - is a ubiquitous feature of modern society, with citizens routinely monitored by a range of sophisticated technologies. Despite these developments relatively little is known about the depth of personal surveillance or how personal information is used.



LiSS is the first international, multidisciplinary, social sciences orientated academic programme to consider issues relating to everyday life in surveillance societies. At its heart is a network of academic surveillance experts generating important knowledge for academia, citizens, government, public agencies and the private sector. Thematic collaborative research is facilitated through a series of active working groups, workshops, annual conferences, publications and short-term scientific missions.



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The Working Groups: Updates by Co-ordinators

Working Group 1: 'Living in the Surveillance Age'

Co-ordinator: Nilz Zurawski

Aims and objectives

Working Group 1 is focussing on the everyday experiences of those living and working in surveillance societies. This includes analysis of the ways in which surveillance technologies are felt or experienced, the ways in which they are interpreted and understood, and the ways in which individuals in society are aware of, and respond to, greater levels of technologically mediated surveillance.

Meetings

1 – London, May 2009.
2 – Hamburg, October 2009.
3 – Copenhagen, January 2010
4 – Ghent, November 2010
Workshop – Hamburg, October 2009
Conference Panel Session – London, April 2010

Progress to date

LiSS WG1 has adopted a programme based around a thematic seminar series which will result in a series of publications. WG1 hosted a conference panel at LiSS Conference 1, the papers presented during this panel will form a special issue of a journal. Catarina Frois and Nilz Zurawski organised a session on 'migration and surveillance' at EASA, Maynooth, August 2010. A call for papers for edited volume on 'Crime, Security and Surveillance, and Effects for the surveillant and the surveilled' has recently been published by Gudrun Vandewalle and Nils Zurawski.

Summary of the workplan

The activities of the Working Group will continue to assess the extent to which the transparency delivered by modern surveillance technologies impacts upon perceptions of personal identity, national culture, social trust and the norms of contemporary citizenship. The workplan will be developed by the Working Group meetings and the seminar series.

Working Group 2: 'Surveillance Technologies in Practice'

Co-ordinator: Kees Boersma

Aims and objectives

Mass technologically mediated surveillance is now undertaken on an unprecedented scale by a range of public and private organisations, yet relatively little is known about how this occurs, how these technologies are invented and configured, what they are capable of, or how personal information is used. Working Group 2 is examining the diffusion and capabilities of these practices, an assessment of their technological capabilities, and analysis of the institutional and organisational settings in which they are embedded.

Meetings

1 – Brussels, August 2009
2 – London, April 2010
3 – Cork, May 2010
Conference Panel Session – London, April 2010
Workshop – Amsterdam, October 2011

Progress to date

The activities of WG2 has resulted in workshops at conferences (London, April 2010 and Trento, September 2010 - EASST conference) and in publications. An edited volume entitled 'Internet 2.0 and Surveillance', C. Fuchs, K. Boersma, A. Albrechtslund and M. Sandoval (12 chapters) is planned for publication in 2011 (Routledge).

Summary of the workplan

Working Group 2 will continue to consolidate knowledge about the surveillance technologies in operation, their technological capabilities, what they are used for and by whom. In this respect, the Working Group is addressing the need to develop knowledge about the extent and types of mass surveillance, how this is achieved, and likely future developments.

Working Group 3: 'The Business of Surveillance'

Co-ordinator: Bence Sagvari

Aims and objectives

Working Group 3 is primarily concerned with the role played by private and public sector organisations in the surveillance society. Its empirical focus is on phenomena which surround the collection, analysis and dissemination of personal data for commercial and increasingly security-based ends. Working Group 3 seeks to promote reflective and critical thinking about these practices, in terms of their ethics, consequences and political economies.

Meetings

- 1 – Brussels, October 2009
- 2 – Budapest, June 2010
- 3 – Milton Keynes, September 2010
- Workshop – Milton Keynes, September 2010

Progress to date

Good progress has been made in examining transformations of politics surrounding surveillance as well as seeking to understand the dynamics of surveillance based regulation as it affects the private sector. The Working Group also organised a joint workshop with the New Transparency project in September 2010 with the Canada/US international network in surveillance studies, and work is under way to produce an edited collection.

Summary of the workplan

This Working Group will continue to focus on how surveillance becomes embedded into everyday organisational routines, and entangled with pre-existing commercial priorities and rationales. Of particular interest is the creation of new theoretical understandings of visualisation as it becomes a pervasive commercial tool. The Working Group will consolidate its interests through using meetings as a seminar opportunity - producing working papers and editing books, journals, special issues etc.

Working Group 4: 'Public Policy and the Regulation of Surveillance'

Co-ordinator: Christel Backman

Aims and objectives

To generate new knowledge about the public policy and regulatory environments in which governments, at all levels, develop surveillance related policies and practices, and the extent to which public agencies seek to protect personal information. More generally, Working Group 4 aims to:

- 1 increase and deepen knowledge about living and working in the surveillance age, in order to better understand the consequences and impacts of enhanced surveillance, and subsequently to make recommendations about its future governance and practice, and
- 2 enable academic researchers in surveillance studies to share experiences and develop collaborative research arrangements, programmes and activities, to provide a platform to inform public policy and debate.

Meetings

- 1 – Brussels, September 2009
- 2 – Gothenburg, February 2010
- 3 – Ljubljana, September 2010
- 4 – Brussels, January 2011

Progress to date

Working Group 4 has focused on mapping existing research and knowledge gaps linked to issues of regulation and public policy. A number of themes have been identified where more research is needed to provide an understanding of how surveillance related policies and practices develop: the role of Data Protection Agencies; transnational regulation of transport; semantic aspects of regulation, especially in multi-language instances such as the European Union, and the media's influence on new regulation and policy.

Summary of the workplan

After the initial year of mapping existing research and knowledge gaps, the second and third years will focus on addressing knowledge gaps, plus developing comparative analytical frameworks and methodologies which will serve future research and knowledge production in relation to public policy and the regulation of surveillance.

Current Research Projects

Christian Fuchs: 'Social Networking Sites in the Surveillance Society'

Social networking sites (SNS) are internet-based platforms which allow users to construct profiles, establish display connections with other users, and support various forms of online communication. Examples are studiVZ, MySpace, or Facebook. Christian says: "On such platforms a multiplicity of personal data such as names, addresses, personal interests, hobbies, cultural preferences, friendships and contacts, images, videos, guest book entries, forum discussions etc. are stored, made available, assessed, and partly sold'.

The specific research questions are:

- 1 How important are the topics data surveillance and privacy in discussions by SNS users? Which arguments do they use for disagreeing or agreeing with surveillance on SNS?
- 2 Which advantages and disadvantages of social networking platforms do Austrian students see? What is the role of surveillance and privacy in this context?
- 3 Is there a connection between knowledge and attitude towards surveillance and privacy of Austrian students, and their information behaviour on social networking platforms?

The project is co-ordinated by Christian of the Unified Theory of Information (UTI) Research Group, and is funded by the Austrian Science Fund (€267,284). Other UTI members and part of the core project team are: Thomas Allmer; Verena Kreiling, and Sebastian Sevignani.

Michael Friedewald: 'Privacy and Emerging Sciences and Technologies' (PRESCIENT)

Emerging technologies offer significant benefits but also risks to our privacy. How to deal with these risks is the subject of a new 3 year project funded by the European Commission: PRESCIENT.

'New technologies can often be used in ways that undermine the right to privacy because they facilitate the collection, storage, processing and combination of personal data by security agencies and businesses," says project co-ordinator Michael Friedewald. 'We have seen that with the rise of social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, this led to a dramatic increase in the amount of personal information available online, which is routinely misappropriated for identity theft or other fraudulent purposes. We know that employers mine these sites in order to vet prospective employees'.

'The project will identify and analyse ethical issues posed by new technologies and discuss them with interested stakeholders, providing scientifically based recommendations to policy makers on how to address privacy issues of emerging technologies. The PRESCIENT project is being undertaken by a consortium of 4 partners: Fraunhofer ISI (Germany); Trilateral Research & Consulting (UK), the Centre for Science, Society and Citizenship (Italy) and the research centre Law, Science, Technology & Society at the Vrije Universiteit, Brussels (Belgium).

Andre Jansson and Miyase Christensen: 'Secure Spaces: Media, Consumption and Social Surveillance'

While an increase in the use of media and communication technologies is often associated with more freedom, security and mobility, such systems also enable mechanisms of pervasive control and monitoring, hence bringing more insecurity and lack of control on the part of the user. The accelerated use of social media and other networking technologies, which is part and parcel of today's global consumer culture, adds to the complexity of the ways in which the logic of surveillance operates increasingly at the subjective level.

The current project, which runs from 2009 to 2011, aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the ambivalence between security and freedom, and control and insecurity is perceived and negotiated in the Swedish context. Drawing upon surveillance studies on the one hand and sociological accounts of mediation and communication such as cultural and material capital, moral economy and power relations, the study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

At present, the research output involves in-depth interviews with transnational migrants, primarily in the Stockholm area, and a national survey (2010) of attitudes towards surveillance, privacy and systems of monitoring/control, which offer a statistically representative picture.

Peter Lauritsen: 'Surveillance in Denmark: New Practices and Technologies in Police Work and Administration of Housing Associations'

This is the first Danish research project to investigate surveillance in the contexts of police work and the administration of housing communities. The project describes how surveillance practices and technologies are deployed, and explores the implications for organisations and citizens. The project has its starting point in Science and Technology Studies (STS), in particular the notion of socio-technical practice as this is developed within actor-network-theory (e.g. Bruno Latour and Michel Callon) and post-phenomenology (e.g. Don Ihde and Peter-Paul Verbeek).

The project consists of five interrelated sub-projects:

1. Closed circuit television (CCTV) in police work
2. DNA in crime investigation
3. Preventing crime in residential areas, with CCTV
4. Mapping as surveillance strategy in marginalised residential areas
5. Concepts, theories and ethics of surveillance.

The project is headed by Associate Professor Peter Lauritsen of the Department of Information and Media studies, Aarhus University. Other participants are Assistant Professor Anders Albrechtslund, Department of Information and Media Studies, Aarhus University, and Assistant Professor Christopher Gad, DOIT, IT University, Copenhagen. Two PhD students are enrolled in the project: Ask Risom Bøge and Louise Nørgaard Glud. The project runs from 1 September 2010 until 31 July 2013.

Helena Machado: 'Forensic DNA Databasing in Portugal – Contemporary Issues in Ethics, Practices and Policy'

This research project seeks to provide theoretical and practical knowledge which will allow an understanding of the ethical, political and societal issues raised by the implementation of a DNA forensic database in Portugal.

Whereas DNA technology is associated with high expectations, raised by politicians seeking to introduce new policies towards coping with crime and public safety issues, its success is dependent crucially on the performance of crime laboratories, state legislative support, public trust, legal professionals' use of DNA evidence and the presence of public debate on the ethical implications of the technology.

Providing knowledge and assessing the situation in these different areas may contribute to answering the question: is the new technology appropriate for the Portuguese context where the incidence of serious crime is low and economic resources are limited? Moreover, the study will evaluate the impact of DNA databases in a society characterised by low levels of trust in the criminal justice system. The power attributed to DNA profiling affords its growing importance in the criminal justice system and this technology has been presented to the general public as a contribution to crime reduction and public safety.

Marc Langheinrich: 'PALS – Privacy-Aware Location Sharing on Privacy and Social Acceptance Issues'

Online social networking platforms have seen a tremendous growth in recent years, with the most popular networks featuring more than 100 million registered users. At the same time, technological advances have rendered location-based services truly affordable.

The intersection of social networking and location-based services is a natural consequence, offering users new levels of social awareness and opportunities to explore, while promising network operators new forms of revenue. Customers may willingly grant operators almost unlimited use of the (seemingly worthless) location data, in exchange for the tangible benefit of enhancing their online social network experience.

The PALS project aims at designing, implementing, and evaluating novel methods and tools to facilitate the privacy-aware sharing of location data with friends, strangers, and operators. Its goal is to offer a decentralised approach that supports all needed features of location sharing systems without the need to centrally collect location data. A decentralised yet efficient way to support the sharing of consumer location data without the need for central operators to collect such data will allow providers of such services to guarantee the privacy of their customers. It will simplify compliance with existing privacy legislation and ultimately increase consumer trust in modern telecommunication services.

Marc Langheinrich: 'PD-NET: Towards Future Pervasive Display Networks'

The PD-NET project aims to lay the scientific foundations for a new form of communications medium with the same potential impact on society as radio, television and the internet. The goal is to explore the scientific challenges and to assess the new technologies required to enable the emergence of large scale networks of pervasive public displays and associated sensors.

At the heart of PD-NET is the move from today's environment in which information is pushed to passers-by in the form of adverts, to spaces that can utilise public displays and ambient intelligence to reflect the hopes, aspirations and interests of its occupants using content and applications created anywhere in a global network.

The project will also explicitly focus on addressing the tensions between privacy and personalisation: as displays will have increased value if their content can be tailored automatically to the needs and interests of nearby people, the requirement to decide when personalised content can be presented without impacting on a viewer's privacy, coupled with the need to manage the collection, storage and exchange of data to facilitate this, represent fundamental challenges to the adoption of pervasive display networks.

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Previous Meetings and Activities:

LiSS Activities

LiSS Management Committee 1, 22-23 April 2009, COST Office, Brussels
LiSS-CHALLENGE Workshop, 18-20 May 2009, CEPS, Brussels
LiSS Working Group 1 Meeting 1, 29 May 2009, London
LiSS Working Group 2 Meeting 1, 24-25 August 2009, COST Office, Brussels
LiSS Working Group 4 Meeting 1, 23-24 September 2009, COST Office, Brussels
LiSS Working Group 1 Meeting 2, 7-8 October 2009, University of Hamburg, Hamburg
LiSS Working Group 1 Workshop, 7-9 October 2009, University of Hamburg, Hamburg
LiSS Management Committee 2, 8 October 2009, University of Hamburg, Hamburg
LiSS Working Group 3 Meeting 1, 29-30 October 2009, COST Office, Brussels
LiSS Working Group 1 Meeting 3, 20-21 January 2010, Carlsburg Academy, Copenhagen
LiSS Working Group 4 Meeting 2, 3-4 February 2010, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg
LiSS First Annual Conference, 13-15 April 2010, City University London, London
LiSS Management Committee 3, 14 April 2010, City University London, London
LiSS Working Group 3 Meeting 2, 9 September 2010, Open University, Milton Keynes
LiSS Management Committee 4, 9 September 2010, Open University, Milton Keynes
LiSS Working Group 3 Workshop, 9-11 September 2010, Open University, Milton Keynes
LiSS Working Group 4 Colloquium, 29 September 2010, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana
LiSS Working Group 4 Meeting 3, 29-30 September 2010, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana

Minutes of all meetings are available on the LiSS website

Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSM)

Congratulations to the following, who have been awarded LiSS STSM:

Jorgen Tietze, Aarhus University, Denmark – Performance Measurement as Oligopticon
Ase Ostensen, University of Bergen, Norway – Privatisation of Risk Management: the Norwegian Case
Jonathan Bright, European University, Italy – Online Crime and Online Architecture

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COST LiSS URL: http://w3.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=233&action_number=IS0807