

[The Urban Panopticon]

Abstract: In recent years, the use of closed circuit television (cctv) for surveillance, historically restricted to the private sector, has shown a shift towards the public sector, being implemented in the framework of public policies on crime prevention and social control. This paper analyzes how the presence of video cameras and the diffusion of its images through the mass media impact on the construction of a particular geography of the city and its inhabitants.

Keywords: Social control, CCTV, Surveillance, Panopticon.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the new century, the battle against crime has become central to Latin America policy agendas and political campaigns, both in central and local levels. In 2008, urban safety and crime were considered the main social concern by citizens, for the first time overpassing unemployment (Lagos, Dammert 2012). A survey carried out by Latinobarometro Corporation in 18 Latin American countries indicates that in 2011 28% of the interviewees identified “urban safety and crime” as the most important problem faced by their own country. If the category “violence and gangs” is added, the level increases to 32% (Latinobarómetro 2011). Crime and unemployment have dominated the agenda in Latin America during the last decade; however, they have recently switched their respective places in the agenda. The importance of crime has shown a sustained increase, reaching its highest level in 2011 (one point higher than in 2010) while unemployment has tended to diminish. In 2011, it dropped to 16%, three points lower than in 2010.

In this context, politicians’ discourses and practices have been focused on proposals and policies to solve the “insecurity” issue. As a consequence, social control mechanisms aimed at crime prevention were intensified, together with a growth of State interventions in the public spaces, such as increased lighting in streets, squares and parks or the setting of close circuit television (cctv) to monitor the city 24 hours a day.

The mechanisms of power that operated within the control institutions during disciplinary societies were recently applied to the whole society and, particularly, public spaces. The intervention on the bodies, turned into «docile bodies» through discipline, extends to all individuals, training them for continuous surveillance (Foucault 1975). In contemporary societies, where crime appears as part of a series of probable events, official answers to this phenomenon involve a cost-benefit analysis. In this regard, management of risks is described as a new and powerful mechanism of control linked to bio-power. A technology of power exercised positively on life (it can be understood as the sole prerogative of the modern nation state to «make live and let die»), management of risks involves precise controls and general regulations of entire populations (Foucault 2006). As a result, the biopolitical apparatus would not aim at penalizing infringements but at controlling hazards.

The use of cctv in the urban space leads us, in some way, to the dystopian reality described by George Orwell in 1984, where everything could be seen by Big Brother’s eye. It seems to be, in a socially enlarged scale, the Panopticon of modern disciplinary institutions, which keeps a constant eye on the whole population and, in this way, regulates their actions. «He is seen, but he does not see. (...) Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power» (Foucault 1975: 200-201).

By this watchful gaze, the government exerts its power over citizens. Nowadays we can say we are living in the so-called «societies of control»: the crisis of institutions has led us to a type of control applied systematically in

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open spaces (Deleuze 1990), with workers in monitoring centers that are able to see, in theory, everything that happens in the city.

The cctv systems of La Plata (*Monitoreo Público Urbano - MOPU*) and Tigre (*Centro de Operaciones tigre - COT*) reproduce the experiences of large capitals and urban centers from the whole world. This kind of systems are responsible for monitoring public spaces twenty-four hours a day, visualizing and controlling the images captured by cameras distributed all over the city but specially located in places that are considered as the most dangerous ones. These cameras are constantly watched by workers in the monitoring centers that notify the police of the occurrence of accidents, crimes or suspicious events.

Since 1980, surveillance has become increasingly globalized, as populations become more mobile and social relations have stretched more elastically over time and space. Mainly in Europe and North America, it expanded with increasing rapidity after computerization from the 1970s onwards.

The globalization of surveillance is directly connected with doing things at a distance. We no longer see, let alone know, many with whom we make exchanges or interact. They are geographically apart from us. As social relations are stretched, courtesy of the new communication technologies, so more and more interactions and transactions become abstract and disembodied, which jeopardizes the sorts of trust that once depended upon the face-to-face and the co-present (Lyon 2004: 139).

Surveillance has also become much more visible after the events of 11 September 2001. A new range of activities and processes was developed and intensified: what they have in common is that, for whatever reason, people are under scrutiny.

Such forms of visibility were new in the twentieth century, for although people have for centuries had to identify themselves or have been under observation, this has usually been for highly specific, limited, purposes and at particular times. Surveillance of all became routine during the twentieth century. Visibility became a social and a political issue in a new way (Lyon 2002: 2).

Therefore, cities have been transformed into a huge Panopticon and the «gaze without eyes» has modified the very nature of public spaces. As Koskela argues, the question here is not about crime control but rather about control in a wider sense: «Surveillance has become a mechanism with the aims of guaranteeing purity and the exclusion of feared strangers: “the Other” in a literal as well as metaphorical sense» (2000: 260).

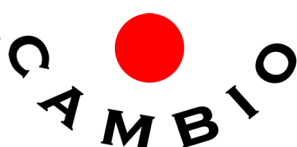
Images, news and media

How social consensus about the kind of crimes that must warn the public is built? Who decides which facts and people should the gaze focus on? In recent times, a new phenomenon has significantly grown and has become relevant: the public diffusion of certain images captured by the cameras distributed all around the city. This process could be thought as parallel to - or maybe a consequence of - the implementation of CCTV surveillance policies. In the Argentine context, it is nowadays possible to verify that some images - mainly what Cardoso (2012) called the «caught in-the-act surveillance scenes» - are exhibited in the media and circulate through new channels of information.

On the one hand, some local governments publish the videos through their web sites and social networks institutional fan-pages. On the other hand - and maybe more importantly - these images have taken an increasingly central role in the mass media. Furthermore, in the Argentine case, the exhibition of the images captured by public monitoring systems has resulted in a special TV show on surveillance cameras being broadcasted. Local authorities and police forces come to be the main information providers; hence, political communication strategies driven by local governments become central.

As Ferrer (2005) proposes, media and computer networks can guide our vision and operate as wills to power (*voluntades de poder*) seeking to establish an overall matrix in which a way of thinking and living is framed and from which the world is presented to us.

New visual technologies are increasingly embedded in everyday life. This way, they regulate our will to see,



guide our visual attention and show us convenient perspectives. Thus, as Ferrer says, «visible truths that are exposed in this context are not images of the world but a world graspable only in the form of an image» (2005: 29; *author translation*).

Power institutions and authorities have used the visual machine to enhance its momentum and to skew it with a certain ideological intent. «The visual machine is an assembly of lighting knowledge metaphors, institutional and architectural spaces and display technologies, whose articulation reveal an existential space where a period truth is unveiled» (Ferrer 2005: 33; *author translation*).

Consequently, public cctv systems have a direct impact on social life and can be used in order to organize people's way of life. While it is true that we can access a growing number of images of the city, we are not allowed to get them all: we are just entitled to see a selection made by someone else – the local government, the police or the media. Editors and image designers working for media companies (or the government itself) perform political rather than aesthetic functions. «Controlling perception means to found a political sovereignty» (Ferrer 2005: 116). That has always been the challenge of rulers.

The special feature that we can find in contemporary societies, according to Ferrer (2005), is that the individual corrected and tamed body of the panoptic society is being replaced by the collective body of the informational society. In this new context, «what today is referred to as *reality* should be legitimized and believed as a visible truth» (ivi: 121). Within this process, the surveillance camera could be the current template where contemporary practices of control are inserted. Moreover, video-cameras and monitoring software could be the frame in which the older forms of control are introduced.

Adopting a Hobbesian perspective, if there is fear there is potential government: fear and sovereignty are closely related concepts. As the author explains:

A commonwealth by acquisition is that where the sovereign power is acquired by force; and it is acquired by force when men singly, or many together by plurality of voices, for fear of death, or bonds, do authorize all the actions of that man, or assembly, that hath their lives and liberty in his power. And this kind of dominion, or sovereignty, differeth from sovereignty by institution only in this, that men who choose their sovereign do it for fear of one another, and not of him whom they institute: but in this case, they subject themselves to him they are afraid of. In both cases they do it for fear: which is to be noted by them that hold all such covenants, as proceed from fear of death or violence, void: which, if it were true, no man in any kind of Commonwealth could be obliged to obedience (Hobbes 1651: 122).

Following this way of thinking, we can say that every action a man performs, for fear of the law, is an action which the doer had liberty to omit. «Fear and liberty are consistent (...) So a man sometimes pays his debt only for fear of imprisonment, which, because nobody hindered him from detaining, was the action of a man at liberty» (Hobbes 1651: 129-130).

Fear, in the context of this kind of societies, is a key element for domination, control and governance. This perspective gives us an interesting point of view to analyze the particularities of our times: in Latin America, electoral campaigns and political debates are laden by the theme of insecurity. In recent decades, the battle against the phenomenon of urban crime became one of the most used governmentality¹ strategies, that is to say, the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections through which subjects are governed (Foucault 1997).

The discursive battle is focused around the definitions of risk and how to intervene against latent fear in cities. This process is fed, at the same time, by the mass media interventions. The emergence of the phenomenon of insecurity as a key topic in the media does nothing but deepens the potentiality of hazards by staging a series of preventive measures that individuals should take in self-defense, such as driving on well-lit places, providing themselves with monitoring equipment, keeping in constant contact with others or leave nothing to chance.

¹ The concept of governmentality «offers a view on power beyond a perspective that centers either on consensus or on violence; it links technologies of the self with technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject to the formation of the state; finally, it helps to differentiate between power and domination» (Lemke 2000: 3). When Foucault analyses the aspects of the formation of a political governmentality, he focuses on «the way in which the behavior of a set of individuals became involved, more and more markedly, in the exercise of sovereign power» (Foucault 1997: 68).

At this point, a process of continuous feedback can be observed: «The plausible statements built by newspapers legitimate its sources in this ‘reality’ to which society usually access through the speeches of the same media, that, in time, become sources for other social and institutional discourses» (Martini, Pereyra 2009: 23; *author translation*).

According to constructivist approaches to communication studies, subjects’ knowledge of reality is influenced by the media, as well as the nature of insecurity; the symbolic scheme about order and morality is delimited, determining as well what is right and wrong (Barata 2003). The consideration of the specific places and subjects in which the gaze of the watchers stares is a central component of the analysis.

It has been observed that policies on crime control that are implemented by local governments through the monitoring of public spaces focus on minor offenses, specifically aiming to what was defined as «incivilities» (Wilson, Kelling 1982). It is assumed that criminal types of greater impact to safety are those related to property crimes, such as thefts, vandalism and street robberies. The fear does not focus only on the possibility of being a victim of crime but also includes the anxiety about being bothered by «unruly» people. In this sense, these policies aim at increasing the level of law and order in the neighborhoods (Wilson, Kelling 1982). The numerous references in these kind of projects to «dangerous or suspicious situations», together with the wider category of «crimes», inevitably leads us to the question about what the «suspicious circumstances» are and how are they defined by the video-cameras in the public spaces.

At the same time, the community plays a key role since its contribution to the fight against crime is considered indispensable. In this way, informal control mechanisms and the interaction of police forces with the local community are strengthened. Whereupon cctv systems seems to recognize two groups of subjects, that are presented as mutually exclusive: on the one hand, criminals or disturbers of public order, on which cameras should focus their attention; on the other hand, neighbors or citizens, whose cooperation is required for these systems to work.

The emergence of neoliberalism entailed a rethinking of what it means governing the insecurity. One of the changes that characterize this period is the shift from defending the society to managing focused on the insecurity levels in communities. As a result, local, punctual and situated interventions have emerged (De Marinis 2004). Thus, a heterogeneous mosaic of areas characterized by different levels of security is delineated; each of them requires the implementation of specific policies.

The huge growth in cctv coverage has modified the nature and experiences of space, generating the fear of unwatched places: «The more cctv coverage becomes the norm, the more excluded areas will fight to gain coverage» (Graham, 2002: 239). The incorporation of digital and algorithmic techniques enables cctv systems to automatically search for «abnormal» or «unexpected» events, behaviors or even people. By linking digital cctv with image database technology, algorithmic cctv would systematize processes of exclusion and discrimination. Thus, the use of video-surveillance can arguably be said to change the ways in which power is exercised, modify emotional experiences in urban space and affect the ways in which «reality» is conceptualized and understood (Koskela 2000).

Two case-studies, one single project

The issue of urban is a central element of the agenda setting: «In general, government policies and the media basically centralize the issue of insecurity in the issue of street crime» (Daroqui *et alii* 2003: 2).

The prevalence of this kind of uncertainty and the marginalization of the other kinds can be also perceived through the media’s approach to this subject. «The word insecurity is a signifier that comes from the journalistic discourse on crime, which ended replacing metonymically to crime (...) Other insecurities have become invisible or overlooked» (Martini, Pereyra 2009: 13-14; *author translation*).

In this context, new mechanisms for the surveillance of public spaces emerged as a central instrument to reduce minor crimes. While the installation of cctv was historically restricted to the private sphere, in recent years a shift towards the public sector was the result of situational crime prevention policies (Sozzo 2009).

In Argentina, the use of public cctv started during the first decade of this century. The town of Tigre was the

first to adopt them as a public policy and nowadays still owns the largest expansion and diffusion of video cameras in urban spaces. Surveillance systems have found the greatest growth within the province of Buenos Aires after the implementation in April 2009 of a security policy (*Programa Integral de Protección Ciudadana*) that emerged from an agreement signed by the National Government and the Ministry of Security of the province of Buenos Aires. In the context of this arrangement between national and provincial states, cctv has reached our second case-study, i.e. the city of La Plata.

The use of technological tools for urban monitoring is particularly widespread in the Province as a response to rising crime and the consequent public concern over this problem. According to the National Criminal Information System, from 1999 to 2003 the number of reported crimes at national level has increased, to remain stable in the following years. In the province of Buenos Aires, registered property crimes and homicides have grown since 1997, also reaching their peak in 2002. As a result – although concern over the issue had been increasing since the early 90s – insecurity has become the first national problem in 2004. However, fear of crime has shown to be relatively independent from actual crime. It tends to grow along with victimization, but once installed as a social problem, it no longer diminishes even if crime rates go down² (Kessler 2009).

In this context, and according to the widespread preventive discourse on security policies evidenced in the same period (Hener, Niszt Acosta 2004), the application of technology in this field has led to new mechanisms of social control.

This essay analyzes how the presence of video cameras and the playback of images captured by them in the mass media influence the construction of the particular geography of the city, as well as its inhabitants. We have chosen the cases of Tigre and La Plata for our analysis due to various reasons.

With about 370,000 inhabitants, Tigre is a middle-sized town among what is called *Greater Buenos Aires*³; it has been showing a remarkable growth in the last ten years. It has been a pioneer in implementing video surveillance systems in public space within Argentina. Its municipal monitoring plan was created in March 2008, one year before the launch of the agreement between National State and the province of Buenos Aires referred above. The system has expanded and diversified as any other in the country. Currently the city has 1300 video cameras and has moved towards the integration of public and private cctv systems in the area. It also includes the active participation of the community: the use of cctv is considered as one of the communication axes of the local government.

La Plata, capital city of the province of Buenos Aires, has a population of approximately 650,000. The implementation of the cctv in public spaces has been framed in the province-wide programme designed for this purpose. The peculiarity in the case of La Plata is that the geography of the city has been a central aspect of the government's strategy, defining risky areas from the placement of the video cameras. In the communication level, this element has become particularly relevant during the 2011 campaign, in which the Mayor ran for a new election.

Our analysis was developed during the first half of 2011. The corpus included municipal plans and policies on public space video surveillance as well as communicational pieces related to the subject distributed by local governments through two main channels: official websites and social networks. It also included articles published by one nation-wide newspaper and three local media, in their printed and online versions. In order to analyze the spread of the videos captured by security cameras in public spaces, we used as main sources official websites,

2 The usual definition of the expression *fear of crime* is an emotional response to fear or anxiety in the face of crime, or of symbols that people associate with crime. We prefer what Kessler (2009) described as «a feeling of insecurity», on the premise that although references to fear still play a central role, this concept includes other relevant emotions, like anger, indignation, or impotence, and it includes political concerns, stories about their causes, and the actions that make up insecurity management. In the Argentine context, according to Kessler (2009), the particular characteristic of insecurity is the randomness of danger. Insecurity is described as a threat – to property and especially to human beings – which could swoop down on anyone.

3 *Greater Buenos Aires* (in Spanish, *Gran Buenos Aires*; GBA) is the urban agglomeration comprising the 24 municipalities of the province of Buenos Aires that are located close to the Federal Capital, extending southward, westward and northward. It does not constitute a single administrative unit. The «Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires» (Área Metropolitana Buenos Aires, AMBA), including Buenos Aires City and the *Greater Buenos Aires*, has reached, according to 2010 National Census, almost 13 million inhabitants, a third of the total population of Argentina.

YouTube and Facebook official accounts, and the TV show *Cámaras de Seguridad*⁴. We used a non-standard research design, addressing the problem mainly through discourse and document analysis. Quantitative tools were only used in order to control some regularities within the corpus.

The extension of video surveillance shows the kind of crimes in which policies on security designed by Buenos Aires Province are focused on. As Governor Daniel Scioli said during the inauguration of a local cctv system in October 2010, the main objective is to «identify hazards with the help of the technological eyes». The attention is concentrated on the «key areas», which are considered as the risky ones. Therefore, the State should «use measures in order to prevent crimes» with the aim of «caring for people's lives». We shall analyze what is considered as a dangerous situation and where are located the hazards within the city.

The intent of controlling youth, targeting drugs and alcohol as major problems, and focusing the attention on situations that «disturb the public order» are some of the elements that allow us to relate these mechanisms to the concept of incivilities described by Wilson and Kelling (1982). On the one side, video cameras are designed to monitor and control entire cities and populations. This fact seems to evidence the end of the division between clearly defined safe and unsafe zones and an extension of distrust towards anyone, reinforcing the feeling of a random and omnipresent threat. However, on the other side, the use of cctv also helps in the identification of the figures of fear: the most stigmatized images are supplied by young people from marginalized groups. Video cameras mostly focus on social groups considered «undisciplined» - a category including beggars, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, homeless and mentally disturbed people.

Another interesting concept for our analysis is the one of deviant subjects. According to Becker (1963), deviance is a «publicly labeled wrongdoing».

Deviance is always the result of enterprise. Before any act can be viewed as deviant, and before any class of people can be labeled and treated as outsiders for committing the act, someone must have made the rule which defines the act as deviant. Rules are not made automatically. Even though a practice may be harmful in an objective sense to the group in which it occurs, the harm needs to be discovered and pointed out. People must be made to feel that something ought to be done about it. Someone must call the public's attention to these matters, supply the push necessary to get things done, and direct such energies as are aroused in the proper direction to get a rule created. Deviance is the product of enterprise in the largest sense; without the enterprise required to get rules made, the deviance which consists of breaking the rule could not exist (Becker 1963:162).

What is labeled as deviant, and therefore requires more attention from operators in the monitoring centers, is the result of a process of social interaction. For deviance to exist the rule must be previously defined; the latter is always created and applied by someone following its own interest. Then, the State develops mechanisms to respond to the issue recognized as a public problem, while the video cameras seems to construct the image of a normal subject and help install fear inside society.

Security is understood, by the Municipality of Tigre, as a right; citizen protection is presented as everyone's value. In this sense, the official discourses appeal to the active participation of the community, which is given a central role. Several techniques for community involvement are used, aimed at showing a shared responsibility in the fight against crime. Through the official website, the local government stated: «The community of Tigre designed, during the last three years, a local citizen protection system to help the government of the province of Buenos Aires, who is responsible for the safety of its inhabitants».

The local government and the residents of Tigre are presented as pairs; both members of the community that created the plan and contributes through its actions with provincial police forces. The municipality provides the network through the installation of cameras, the setting up of a monitoring center, the provision of operators, the purchase of automobiles for patrolling the zone and providing new channels for the citizens to make complaints. Neighbors, meanwhile, are responsible for initiating the flow of information, sending alerts through their POS system in stores, text messages from cell phones, the website of the COT or panic buttons located in buses and schools.

⁴ *Cámaras de Seguridad* is a TV programme broadcasted on a weekly basis by the Argentine TV channel *América TV* since May 2011. For our analysis, we used the five issues of June 2011.

Government and citizens are included in the same group, which is assigned a role associated with the State power in the fight against crime. However, it is clear that not all residents are members of the community.

There is also a large focus on the description of the citizen as a victim (Calzado 2009), a term that appears always opposed to 'offender'. Any possibility for the delinquent to be also considered a victim is excluded. The meanings that emerged from this concept refer only to a type of victim, associated to the concept of insecurity as crime that we mentioned above.

At the same time, CCTV videos broadcasted on TV help to build a certain geography of the city, which is determined by fears, risks and hazards. This construction regulates the use of public spaces, which are classified as safe or unsafe according to the presence or absence of the video cameras.

In the case of Tigre, CCTV images are distributed both through mass media and Municipality's own channels: the official web site and the Facebook and Youtube accounts. Among the videos that show thefts, police chases and car crashes, it is also possible to find rather peculiar situations that «disturb the public order», such as the arrest of two young men for carrying a goose in one's backpack. A newcomer to the city, who decided to bathe himself in a public fountain located at the entrance to the town of Tigre, was shown as adding an element out of place in the desired tourist postcard⁵.

By analyzing the videos spread through mass media, we can find regularities in the style of editing, music composition, subtitles, graphic inscriptions and the use of highlighting tools over the image. This permits us confirming that the municipal government delivers videos already edited and ready for playback.

As we mentioned, the public diffusion of images captured by municipal monitoring centers led to the making off of a special TV show, aimed almost exclusively at reproducing the audiovisual material caught by video cameras in public spaces.

Only 21.8% of the videos we checked in either towns displayed cases of robberies or thefts on public roads. The rest can be classified as between street fights (21%), drunk people (9.2%), car accidents (7.6%), exhibitionism (6.7%), young people in the night life (3.4%), «suspicious situations» (2.5%), domestic violence (1.7%) and varied situations that can be gathered into the category «other» (21%), among which dissimilar events such as the presence of stray animals, illegal motorcycles races, people doing stencils, graffiti or painting on public walls, fires or people sleeping on the street⁶.

The videos from the Tigre CCTV system characterize the subjects and build the urban space around the safe-unsafe opposition. On the one hand, an image of a good neighbor who is threatened by crime and committed to citizen participation in surveillance and social control issues is presented. On the other hand, threatening groups from social minorities or marginal areas that must be kept under scrutiny in order to avoid public order disturbances. The unruly and violent offenders are placed on one side. The residents, workers and citizens, on the other. The polarity that characterizes the social roles forces the viewer to decide which side represents him/her: watched or watchmen. The images help build the image of a city and regulate social relations.

In the case of La Plata, the plan has been described, from the very beginning, with the aim of monitoring the most conflicting areas of the city. One of the initial axes on which the MOPU was based is the use of security cameras to control institutional or governmental buildings and its surroundings, in order to «keep under observation spaces that remain beyond human capabilities». In addition, the attention of the cameras is focused on the city center. The level of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in these areas turns them into «risky zones» requiring governmental control. Aiming at this objective, commercial corridors were created in La Plata city, giving special attention to «monitoring these consumption places to provide security for sellers and buyers». For the same reason, these corridors are also selected for the installation of emergency devices or anti-panic buttons, which are presented as a complement to surveillance cameras.

Following the same line of reasoning, in April 2011 the city council of La Plata adopted the public entertainment,

5 All the videos and texts are available at: www.youtube.com/user/policialestigre

6 The percentages were obtained on the basis of observation and classification of the videos included in the five issues of the television program *Cámaras de Seguridad* that were included in the corpus of our analysis. For the purposes of this essay, the term 'video' refers to an audiovisual composition generated from editing images captured by security cameras in public spaces which, by its characteristics and its space and time delimitations, can be considered a narrative unit with a specific beginning and end.

recreation and nocturnal activities code, which establishes that video cameras should be installed at the entrance of night clubs and restaurants, with the aim of reinforcing safety measures for the audience. A month later, the School Board of the same city announced the creation of a Safety Committee in order to study vandalism cases that occur inside educational establishments and install cameras in schools in order to draw a map of scholar insecurity. Consequently, video cameras began to be used in 26 schools of La Plata city⁷. In addition, in June 2011, the local government announced that security cameras would be placed in the surroundings of several schools, in response to a series of clashes between students from different schools held on public roads. As a result, the distribution of video cameras in public spaces helped to trace a map of the riskiest areas.

The local plan for video surveillance states that the location of the cameras was strategically determined based on a study of existing crime rates and a crime map. Within the document, the term 'crime' is often metonymically replaced by expressions such as 'suspicious activities', 'dangerous conditions' or 'vandalism'. This means that the cameras are viewed not only as a tool for crime prevention but also as a mechanism of control for what are defined as strange or unusual situations.

The cctv system seems to play a particularly relevant role in the construction of a specific geography and in the characterization of the subjects that inhabit it. The placing of the security cameras appears fully connected to the dangers that are attributed to each zone. Thus, crowds and commercial areas raise the thermometer of risk and, therefore, they should be closely monitored. Furthermore, the crime maps constructed with the data recovered from cctv installation are used repeatedly to show many issues related to crime and policies on security. Institutional communication and press coverage during the placing of new video camera are also very important elements for the local government.

Conclusions

The social panopticon seems to be aimed at watching entire populations, putting everyone under suspicion and generating, as a consequence, a deterrent effect: while people know that are being watched, they cannot identify when or by whom. By a watchful gaze, local governments extend their power over citizens and apply a systematic social control in open spaces. Everyone is under the observation of these technological eyes placed across the city.

However, at the same time, the use of these tools exhibits that the gaze is focused on certain places and social groups. These devices are intended for the pursuit of street riots and incivilities. The type of crime caught by cctv systems shows that video surveillance is dedicated to maintaining public order, seeking not only to prevent crimes but also to control certain social irregularities as begging, alcoholism, addiction and prostitution, all of them labeled risky situations. In addition, young people are described as potential disturbers of public order, and therefore they must be closely observed, as a strategy to prevent them from becoming criminals.

This paper is inserted in the line of several authors who have questioned the fairness of urban surveillance. Martinais and Betín (2004), for example, have describe the ways in which security cameras contribute to the social construction of deviance. Norris and Armstrong (1999) examine how target selection in cctv control rooms is socially differentiated by age, race and gender and ask whether this leads to discrimination. Finally, Lomell (2004) discusses, from a case study, whether video surveillance may be seen as a factor contributing to the increasing exclusion of unwanted categories of people from city centers.

Cctv systems can be considered as a material and symbolic mediator that modifies interpersonal social relationships between the watchers and the watched as well as their relationship to public spaces. Since socio-spatial relationships of social players may be considered as an inherent part of public space, their transformation directly affects the public space's qualities (Klauser 2004).

Neoliberal politics, that have promoted an ideology of self-responsibility within a climate of moral indifference to increasingly visible inequality, have also generated changes in the public space. As Coleman (2003) argues, the agents and agencies of the neoliberal State are constructing the boundaries and possibilities of the new urban

⁷ While initially the cctv systems in schools were run by private companies, both the school board and the local government wanted it to be centralized in the MOPI.

frontier while simultaneously engaging in a project of social control that will have far-reaching consequences for how we understand the meanings of public space, social justice and the parameters of State power. In this context, «surveillance cameras are part of a social control strategy that seeks to hide the consequences of neoliberalisation in creating a particular ambience and exclusivity regarding ‘public’ spaces» (Coleman 2004: 293).

In addition, the public diffusion of the videos captured by public cctv systems plays an important role in the process of building the geography of the city and its inhabitants. The use of these control devices has an inevitable consequence on the delimitation of the city and the way in which subjects assume their roles.

The diffusion and automation of cctv, and its linkage to digital image databases, however, means that the normative assumptions about the value and risk associated with particular individuals moves from the discretion of human practice to be embedded within the opaque codes of computer systems. Such a development would mean a tremendous change in our society's conception of a person. It would have dramatic implications for the nature of places, politics, planning and democratic practice, as automated, opaque systems start to inscribe complex normative ecologies of ‘acceptable’ people behavior into the fabric of urban places on a continuous and largely unknowable basis (Graham 2002: 241).

Public access to the certain cctv images holds a central role for various reasons. On the one hand, we access to a view of the city where we live in a way that pretends to be complete and which, mediated by the technological eyes that emulate our own eyes, tries to be transparent. On the other hand, as Ferrer (2005) states, the visual technologies, introduced in our everyday life, modify the way in which we see, regulating our will to see and orienting our attention.

Controlling perception means founding a political sovereignty. In this sense, the ones that vie for power would pay particular attention to control our gaze and to place their own «visible truth» as the legitimate one. In our case-study, the power is in the hands of municipalities, that own the images and decide what (and in which form) should be shown.

At the same time, as we saw, the placement of video cameras defines the safe and the unsafe areas within the city. The crowds and the youths seem to suggest higher levels of risk and, therefore, the spaces that they usually occupy are privileged by the watchful eye of the State. The insistence on the demarcation of certain areas as dangerous places raises the feeling of insecurity, generating a vicious circle.

Are crime statistics the factor that define certain areas as dangerous and, consequently, object of surveillance? Or the placement of the video cameras helps to define a place as risky, increasing the feeling of insecurity in that area? Although they are difficult to answer conclusively, these questions triggered some interesting reflections.

First, as we have seen, the installation of these public cctv systems has delimited a specific map of cities where cameras suggest, at the same time, higher levels of risk and of protection. Secondly, another question that arises from the above is whether these devices contribute to the reduction of perceived fear of crime or not. As Bruno Latour (2007) notes, objects play a central role in stabilizing social relations, which by definition fluctuate. Certain devices, such as security cameras, allow delegating the insecurity management to a third party, either an object or a person. However, these elements may contribute to raise the feeling of security as well as increase the fear of crime, as they help people remember the existence of hazards (Kessler 2011). The study of the relationship between people and objects is, then, a central axis in the analysis of the use of cctv for video surveillance in public spaces.

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