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The Dangers of Privacy in Times of Smart CCTV

In the context of MuViT we identify ethical problems of smart CCTV. Because pattern recognition by smart CCTV does not need to make individual persons identifiable, privacy can be extended. Only suspicious behaviour will be reported to real persons or will lead to recording the video. Only at this point the involved persons will be identifiable and privacy will be intruded. Because privacy can be enhanced by smart CCTV an expansion of surveillance could be justified. But this ignores that also other values are concerned and that the new technology gives also rise to new problems:

(i) Smart CCTV recognizes suspicious behaviour either by statistical deviance from normality or by explicitly defined patterns. In this way a technological implemented normality in behaviour is expected of persons. This normalization can be very suppressive.

(ii) People don't know what behaviour is expected. The reaction of the technology on "real life" is not fully known and even if, it's hard for the monitored people to understand it. This could lead to a fear to behave suspicious and liberty will suffer even more.

(iii) Even if not intended (and often it is intended), there is a danger that pattern recognition will be combined with face recognition and further data so that even greater privacy problems will occur.

(iv) Political protest can be easily suppressed.

(iv) If surveillance expands because it has less privacy problems, the other problems will intensify.

Only in the light of these problems privacy enhancing pattern recognition can be justified.