

Call for Papers

COUNTER-SURVEILLANCE: THEORIES, PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Université Paris Panthéon-Assas, 3-4 December 2026

Organised by the **Centre Bentham (Sciences Po), Law and Humanities (CERSA, Panthéon-Assas)**
and **CEThicS (Institut Catholique de Lille)**

Convenors: Malik Bozzo-Rey, Anne Brunon-Ernst, Claire Wrobel

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to explore the concept of counter-surveillance in its theoretical, practical, and representational dimensions. Bringing together scholars from the humanities (philosophy, law, political science, economics, international relations, sociology, architecture, English studies, history, cultural studies, linguistics and beyond), it builds on ongoing research on the Panopticon and contemporary surveillance.

The research that underpins the conference forms part of the broader PANBentham research project, funded by Sciences Po Paris Law School, dedicated to a renewed interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. The project aims to reassess the Panopticon not merely as a model of disciplinary surveillance, popularised by Michel Foucault's readings, and subsequently integrated into the conceptual foundations of surveillance studies, but also as a complex and multifaceted framework rooted in Bentham's theory of democracy, particularly through the concept of the constitutional Panopticon.

Drawing on recent scholarship and interdisciplinary collaboration, the project explores how Bentham's thought builds on a model in which citizens are empowered to monitor public officials, thereby ensuring accountability and preventing the misuse of power. In this perspective, surveillance is not only a mechanism of control but can also function as a democratic tool, fostering transparency and agency.

As a continuation of a first conference held in 2025 on a re-examination of Bentham's panoptic paradigm, this second event shifts the focus toward counter-surveillance. Counter-surveillance is understood broadly as practices that resist, subvert or reconfigure surveillance systems. In contemporary societies marked by digital technologies, surveillance capitalism and algorithmic governance, counter-surveillance emerges as a key site for rethinking publicity, agency and resistance.

By situating Bentham's theory in relation to contemporary transformations, the PANBentham project, which supports this event, seeks not only to contribute to Bentham studies and surveillance studies, but also to offer elements for a renewed theory of democracy adapted to the challenges of contemporary technological societies.

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This conference aims to foster a nuanced and interdisciplinary discussion on the evolving relationships between power and resistance in contemporary societies. We particularly encourage contributions that bridge theory and practice and that engage critically with the legacy of the Panopticon in light of present-day challenges, addressing (but not limited to) the following themes:

1. Counter-Surveillance and Democratic Theory

- Bentham's constitutional Panopticon and "reverse surveillance"
- Transparency, publicity and accountability in liberal democracies
- The paradox of empowerment: counter-surveillance as both resistance and potential reinforcement of surveillance systems

2. Contemporary Digital Surveillance Systems

- Datification and platform capitalism
- Facial recognition, algorithmic profiling and artificial intelligence
- Algorithmic governance

3. Practices and Tactics of Counter-Surveillance

- Forms of resistance: sousveillance, obfuscation, evasion, activism, etc.
- Collective and individual forms of counter-surveillance, notably the differential introduced by race, gender, class, etc.
- Legal, political and ethical frameworks of surveillance resistance

4. Surveillance Imaginaries and Representations

- Cultural and media representations of surveillance and counter-surveillance
- Literature, film and digital cultures as sites of resistance
- Surveillance imaginaries in public discourse

5. Law and Legal Frameworks of (Counter-)Surveillance

- Legal regulation of surveillance technologies and data collection
- Fundamental rights (privacy, data protection, freedom of expression, discriminations, etc.)
- Legal resistance to surveillance: litigation tactics and judicial oversight

6. International Relations and Global Surveillance Dynamics

- Digital sovereignty, cyber geopolitics and intelligence networks
- Surveillance technologies in authoritarian and democratic regimes
- Surveillance of migration and borders, with associated humanitarian concerns

7. Urban Space and Spatial Practices

- The built environment as a medium of surveillance (e.g. smart cities), and the tactical uses of space in counter-surveillance practices
- Public space and the privatization of surveillance
- Economics of spatial politics and resistance

8. Beyond the Panopticon

- Critiques and reconfigurations of Foucauldian models (assemblages, decentralized surveillance, self-surveillance and digital subjectivities, etc.)
- Revisiting Bentham beyond Foucault: plural and democratic panopticons
- New theoretical approaches in surveillance studies

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Submission Guidelines

- Abstracts: 300–500 words / Short bio: 100 words
- Language preferences: English (for the conference paper) and French (for the publication submission)
- Deadline for title submission: 01/09 2026 and deadline for abstract submission: 15/10/2026
- Notification of acceptance: 30/10/2026

Please send submissions to malik.bozzo-rey@univ-catholille.fr ; anne.brunon-ernst@assas-universite.fr and claire.wrobel@assas-universite.fr

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Publication

A selection of papers will be considered for publication in French in a special issue of *Nomopolis* ([Nomopolis - Revue internationale de Droit et de Science Politique](#)). Translation may be available for non-native speakers of French.

Contact: anne.brunon-ernst@assas-universite.fr