



- (51) International Patent Classification:
G01H 3/12 (2006.01) *G10K 11/16* (2006.01)
- (21) International Application Number:
PCT/EP2013/071657
- (22) International Filing Date:
16 October 2013 (16.10.2013)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
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- (81) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY,

BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JP, KE, KG, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published: — with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) Title: NOISE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

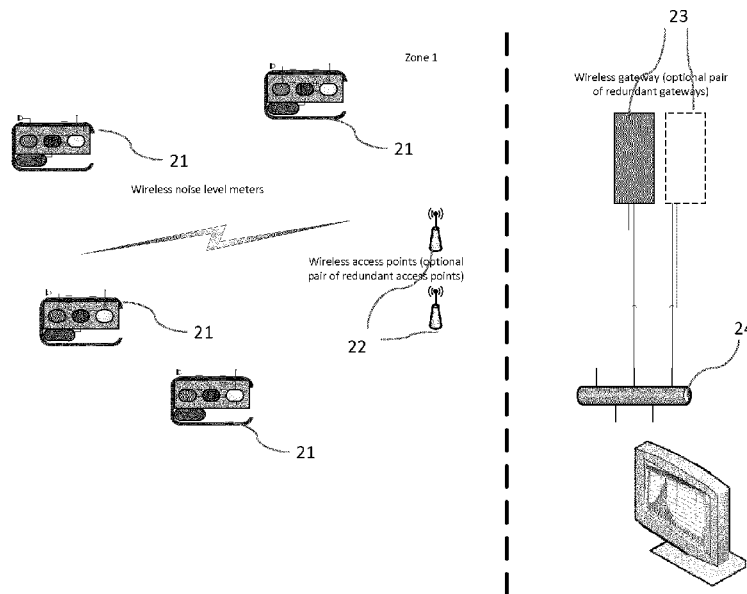


Fig 2

(57) Abstract: A method of dynamically generating an acoustic noise map of an industrial zone to be used for protecting operators within the zone from exposure to acoustic noise above a safety threshold, the method comprising collecting acoustic noise data using a network of wireless acoustic sensors located within said zone, generating an acoustic noise map using the collected noise data and a numerical model of the propagation of acoustic noise within the zone.

WO 2015/055244 A1

Noise Surveillance System

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 The invention relates to the field of acoustic noise measurements.

BACKGROUND

10 Acoustic noise in a work environment may cause hearing damage or hearing loss if the noise level exceeds a safety threshold. Monitoring the level of acoustic noise is therefore important for identifying areas of a work environment where safety levels may be exceeded and particular times during a production process when noise may exceed safety levels. Based on the measurements, decisions can be made on how long a worker may be permitted to work at the certain location or which places are excluded
15 for people to work in.

Examples of products for noise monitoring are the Norsonic Nor140™ sound level meter (www.norsonic.com) and the Brüel & Kjær 2260 Investigator™ (www.bksv.com). These are hand-held instruments, normally operated by persons with specific expertise
20 such as acoustical consultants.

The above vendors also provide stationary noise measurement solutions. Typical application areas are road-traffic noise and aircraft noise measurements at single locations. The detectors are not designed with process industry in mind.
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For long-term noise monitoring, Brüel & Kjær offers the Noise Sentinel™ service. This is a subscription-based monitoring service designed to support various industries to monitor and report compliance with noise restrictions and to help manage noise impact. It is a subscription-based system where a customer leases hardware and collected
30 data are stored at a central operation centre at the vendor.

SUMMARY

35 According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of dynamically generating an acoustic noise map of an industrial zone to be used for protecting

operators within the zone from exposure to acoustic noise above a safety threshold, the method comprising: collecting acoustic noise data using a network of wireless acoustic sensors located within said zone, generating an acoustic noise map using the collected noise data and a numerical model of the propagation of acoustic noise within the zone.

The method may further comprise correcting the estimated acoustic noise map by measuring acoustic noise within said zone at locations where initially no sensor is present. The method may further comprise correlating the acoustic noise map to operational process data of devices located within said zone. The method may further comprise predicting when acoustic noise will exceed a predetermined safety threshold. The network may comprise a plurality of fixed sensors and a plurality of temporary sensors.

According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of protecting an operator from exposure to acoustic noise above a safety threshold within an industrial zone, the method comprising tracking the location of the operator within the zone and warning the operator if the operator approaches a location with acoustic noise above a safety threshold or if the acoustic noise at the location of the operator is likely to increase to above a safety threshold using an acoustic noise map generated with the method the first aspect.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Some embodiments of the invention will now be described by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 illustrates schematically a wireless acoustic sensor.

Figure 2 illustrates schematically a network including wireless noise meters.

Figure 3 illustrates schematically a production site with sensors.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Disclosed herein is a method of monitoring acoustic noise levels using a network of wireless noise meters. The term acoustic noise refers to any acoustic signal including a signal with a single frequency and a signal with a broad spectrum of frequencies. The noise meters are capable of measuring acoustic signals and acoustic noise and those measurements can be recorded and transmitted via a wireless connection to a wireless access point. A combination of transmitted signals from multiple meters in the network can be used to create a noise map of a work environment. The noise map can be used for real time monitoring of a work environment and to anticipate when and where safety levels may be exceeded. A numerical model may be used to extrapolate the data and estimate the noise levels in locations where no actual noise meter is present. The safety of the work environment with respect to acoustic noise can thereby be improved.

Figure 1 illustrates schematically a wireless acoustic sensor. The sensor includes a microphone 1 which is arranged to receive an acoustic signal and convert the acoustic signal to an electric signal. The microphone is connected to a noise sensor module 2 including a CPU which is arranged to receive and process the electric signal from the microphone. The noise sensor module 2 is connected to a management CPU and memory 3. The management CPU is arranged to receive pre-processed noise data from the noise sensor unit and put them in a transmit queue for the radio module. The management CPU is also arranged to synchronise the noise sensor with the other parts of the wireless network and to optimise power consumption across all modules of the sensor. The output of the management CPU is connected to an input of a radio module 4. The radio module may use a standard wireless communication protocol, such as ISA100.11a. The radio module includes an antenna 5 which may operate at a standard frequency, such as 2.4GHz. The modules 2, 3 and 4 are provided on a common printed circuit board (PCB) 6. A batter pack 7 of a type complying with industry standards for wireless field instruments is included and may provide a voltage of 7.2V. The sensor is enclosed by an offshore graded enclosure, for example made of stainless steel 316S or a composite material. The sensor as a whole and the modules contained inside the enclosure may comply with ATEX certification for explosive atmospheres. The sensor may be designed such that is suitable for fixed point installation or such that it is suitable to be worn by an operator or both. The sensor

may further include radio technologies enabling location tracking, such as ToA (Time of arrival), RSSI (Received signal strength indication) or similar known technologies. The utilization of such RTLS (Real-time location system) functionality would require add-ons to the network infrastructure.

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Figure 2 illustrates schematically a network including wireless noise meters 21 as described above. The noise meters send and receive signals from a wireless access point 22. A plurality of wireless access points may be provided to add redundancy in order to improve the overall reliability of the wireless network. The wireless access points are connected to respective wireless gateways 23, which in turn are connected to a program controlled data acquisition (PCDA) module 24, or, alternatively, an operator station. The PCDA or operator station is connected to an information management system (IMS) as a process database for storing the collected data.

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The method which can be carried out by the network illustrated in Figure 2 is based on the combined and synchronised measurements of the sensors 21. The noise distribution throughout the entire process area of interest can be calculated based on the measurements. The data can be extrapolated to estimate the noise levels in those areas where no sensors are present for creating a noise map. A numerical model can be used for estimating the noise map which calculates how the measured noise levels propagate through the space and how the noise is attenuated. The shape of the objects in the area of interest may be a further input of the model to improve the accuracy of the estimation. The accuracy of the map can also be improved by using a large number of fixed sensors in the area of interest. The estimation of the noise in locations where no sensor is present is also referred to as using soft sensors or virtual sensors.

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The method has an initial stage of building up the noise map and a further stage of employing the noise map. When building up the noise map, a plurality of additional temporary sensors is used which can be moved around between a plurality of temporary locations. Building up the noise map is an iterative process which uses a learning algorithm. The noise map may be constructed using data based methods such as nonlinear regression and neural networks. Examples of methods used in acoustical wave propagation techniques are ray tracing, the image source method and FEM analysis (Finite element method). The noise is estimated at a location where no

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sensor is present using the measurements of the plurality of sensors and the estimation can then be tested by placing a temporary sensor at that location. After completion of the learning process the model is sufficiently accurate and the temporary sensors can be removed.

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Figure 3 illustrates schematically a production site with fixed sensors 31 and temporary sensors 32 placed at a plurality of locations at the production site.

10 The IMS also stores general process data related to many different devices used in the process, such as compressors. The model may take these data into account and correlate the noise data with the process operation data. For example, if it is known that a compressor is switched on, or its mode of operation changes, at a certain stage in a production process, the corresponding noise can be identified and correlated to that event, thereby improving the predictive ability and accuracy of the system.

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After the learning process has been completed, the system provides a highly accurate noise map, both in real time and predictive. The map may be monitored offsite automatically or by an operator, who can activate an alarm if the noise level in a particular area exceeds a safe level. The operation may include tracking the location of an operator within the work environment and warning the operator if he approaches a location with acoustic noise above a safety threshold or if the acoustic noise at the location of the operator is likely to increase to above a safety threshold.

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The method may be used in offshore work environments, such as a production platform, or in onshore work environments.

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Although the invention has been described in terms of preferred embodiments as set forth above, it should be understood that these embodiments are illustrative only and that the claims are not limited to those embodiments. Those skilled in the art will be able to make modifications and alternatives in view of the disclosure which are contemplated as falling within the scope of the appended claims. Each feature disclosed or illustrated in the present specification may be incorporated in the invention, whether alone or in any appropriate combination with any other feature disclosed or illustrated herein.

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CLAIMS:

1. A method of dynamically generating an acoustic noise map of an industrial zone
5 to be used for protecting operators within the zone from exposure to acoustic noise
above a safety threshold, the method comprising:
collecting acoustic noise data using a network of wireless acoustic sensors
located within said zone;
generating an acoustic noise map using the collected noise data and a
10 numerical model of the propagation of acoustic noise within the zone.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising correcting the estimated acoustic
noise map by measuring acoustic noise within said zone at locations where initially no
sensor is present.
- 15 3. The method of claim 1 or 2, further comprising correlating the acoustic noise
map to operational process data of devices located within said zone.
4. The method of any one of the preceding claims, further comprising predicting
20 when acoustic noise will exceed a predetermined safety threshold.
5. The method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein said network
comprises a plurality of fixed sensors and a plurality of temporary sensors.
- 25 6. A method of protecting an operator from exposure to acoustic noise above a
safety threshold within an industrial zone, the method comprising tracking the location
of the operator within the zone and warning the operator if the operator approaches a
location with acoustic noise above a safety threshold or if the acoustic noise at the
location of the operator is likely to increase to above a safety threshold using an
30 acoustic noise map generated with the method of any one of the preceding claims.

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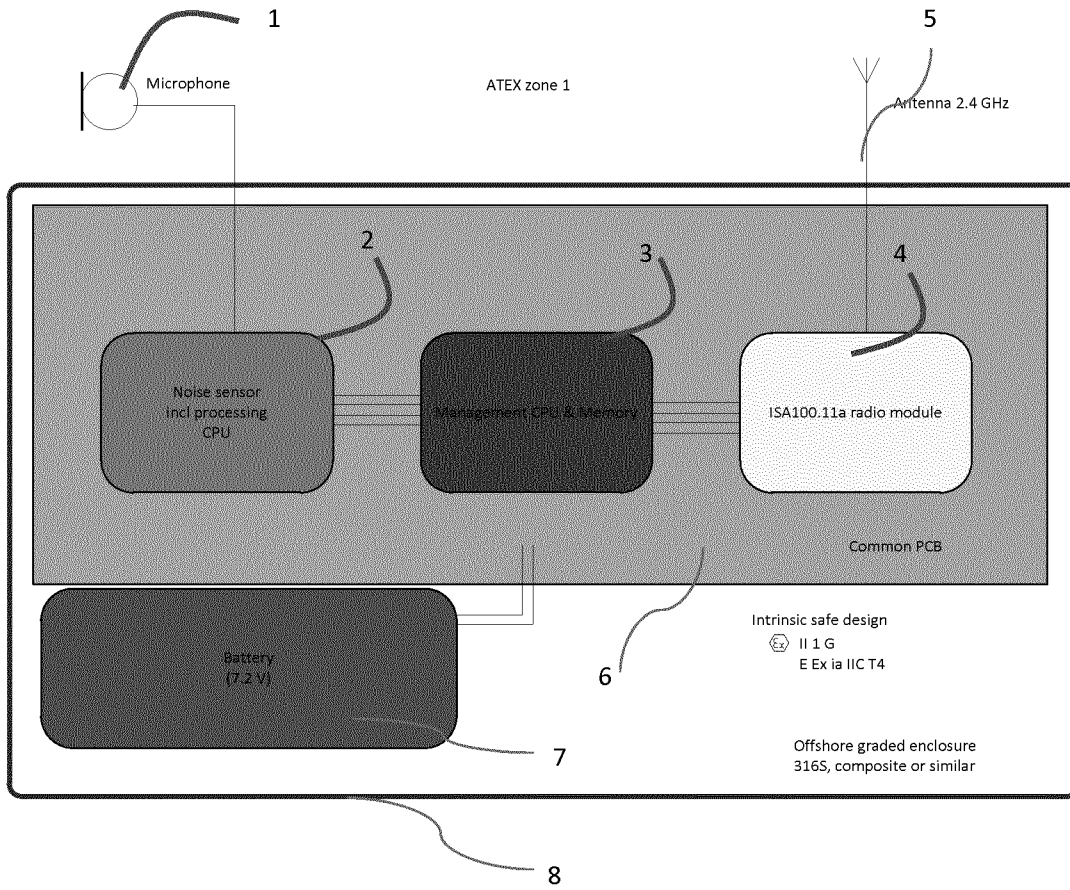


Fig 1

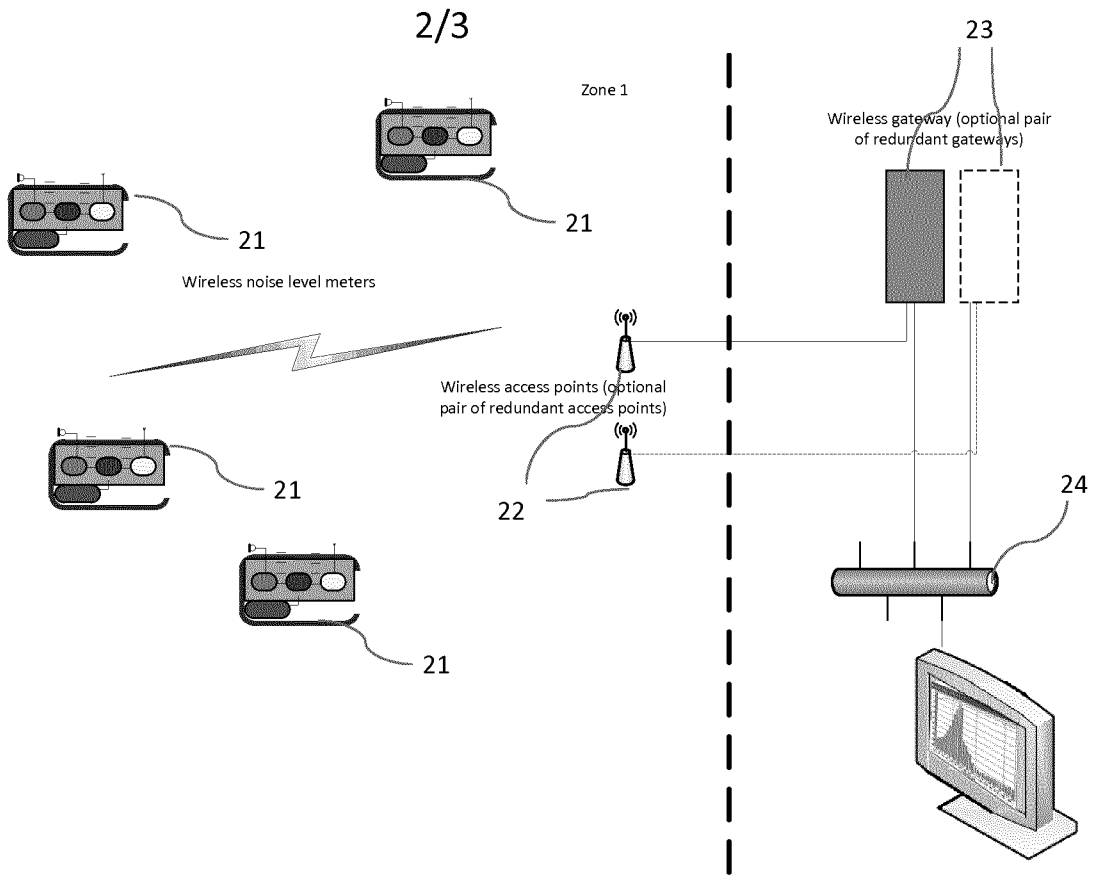


Fig 2

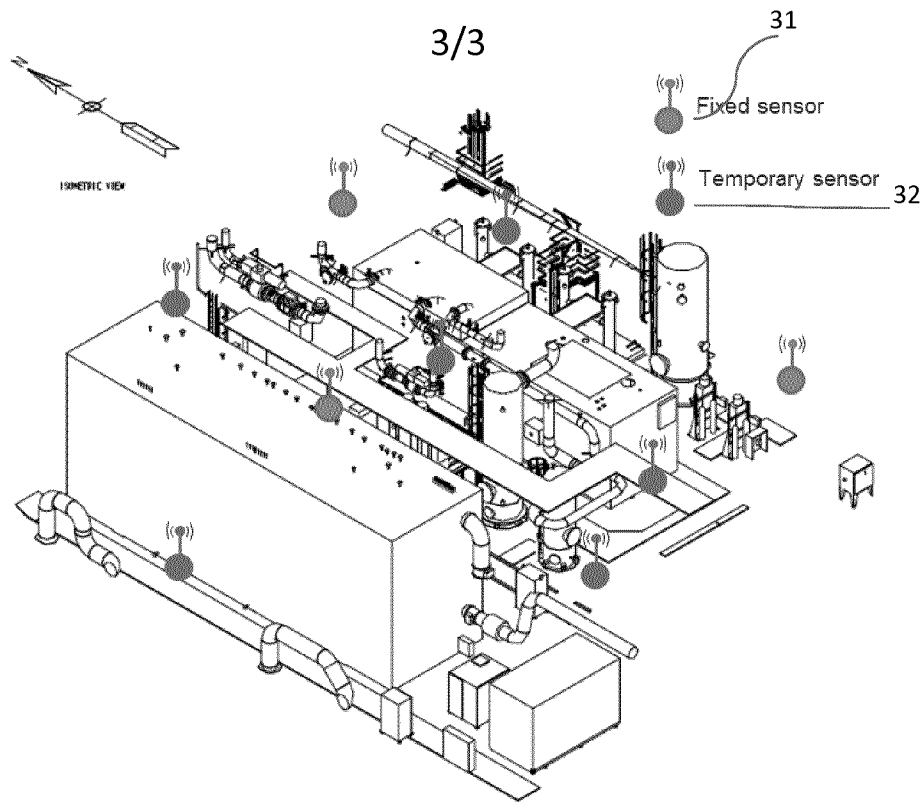


Fig 3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/EP2013/071657A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. G01H3/12 G10K11/16
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
G01H G10K

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 2013/150349 A1 (BUDAPESTI MUSZAKI ES GAZDASAGTUDOMANYI EGYETEM [HU]) 10 October 2013 (2013-10-10)	1,3
Y	page 9, line 24 - page 13, line 12 page 18, line 24 - line 28 page 30, line 10 - line 11 page 35, line 10 - line 13 figures 3,4 ----- -/--	2,4-6

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

13 June 2014

Date of mailing of the international search report

30/06/2014

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/EP2013/071657

C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	CHRISTIAN KAISER ET AL: "Enabling real-time city sensing with kernel stream oracles and MapReduce", PERVASIVE AND MOBILE COMPUTING, vol. 9, no. 5, 7 December 2012 (2012-12-07), pages 708-721, XP55123280, ISSN: 1574-1192, DOI: 10.1016/j.pmcj.2012.11.003 page 714, line 43 - line 46 -----	2,5
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/EP2013/071657

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