



Beyond Liberty, Beyond Security: The Politics of Public Surveillance

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This paper examines the expansion of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras across the UK. In doing so it argues that the often-repeated dichotomy of ‘security vs liberty’ is an insufficient way of understanding the issue. In attempting to develop an overall appreciation of the growth of CCTV in Britain, this paper first looks towards its stated aims of reducing crime and terrorism. Finding the impact of CCTV on these phenomena as far from certain while also noting the lack of methodologically sound evidence to justify any claims of effectiveness, this paper identifies the wider political context surrounding the creation of crime-control policy during the New Labour administration as developing a context that elevates the likelihood that CCTV will become favoured over the assortment of available crime reduction strategies. In conclusion, the potential for CCTV to have a wider impact beyond simple dichotomies of liberty and security — such as the additional social costs of mass surveillance and the diversion of much-needed public funds — will be addressed.

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Introduction

In the future, new technology will allow police to solve 100% of all crimes. The bad news is that we’ll realize 100% of the population are criminals, including the police. (The Dilbert Future, Prediction no. 49)

Surveillance has been a consistent feature of human societies for hundreds of years. For some, a common lineage of surveillance can be traced back to antiquity (Sennet, 1990). For others, an emphasis on the visual represents the very essence of modernity (Heidegger, 1977), while the development of administrative surveillance has been viewed not simply as a mere feature of modernity, but an enabling mechanism that has facilitated its development (Giddens, 1992). Despite this long genealogy, surveillance remains a highly controversial issue today. One way of explaining this is that while surveillance



has always been present, it has not always been a mechanism of control. Indeed, current debates in the UK surrounding surveillance regularly evoke its less-than-benign functions, as can be seen in the discourse surrounding the debates on ID cards, the DNA database and public camera surveillance. Perhaps aided by the readily available dystopian imagery of Orwell, and often organised around the dichotomy of liberty *vs* security, many technologically advanced forms of surveillance have stimulated alarm and admiration in equal measure.

This paper examines what is perhaps the most commented upon and certainly the most visible form of technological surveillance in contemporary society — closed circuit television (CCTV). In doing so, it seeks to go beyond the dichotomy of ‘liberty *vs* security’ and the accompanying recurrent imagery to examine the key mechanisms that have propelled its extraordinary growth in the UK. In turn, the analysis of such processes raises important questions concerning the role of the state in providing security for its citizens, the appropriateness of particular crime-reduction strategies, the purpose they serve, their prospects for success and whether they constitute the most effective use of public money.

CCTV in Britain

The use of CCTV has a surprisingly long history in Britain. Indeed, the relationship between surveillance technologies and crime control can be seen as far back as 1824, following the arrest of a pickpocket observed through Glasgow’s camera obscura. In its more familiar electronic guise, cameras watched Britain’s public spaces during the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 and have been observing the capital on a more consistent basis since the late 1960s (Williams, 2003).

CCTV installation has increased exponentially since the early 1990s, and has ascended to a lofty status among crime reduction strategies. CCTV distribution stemmed from modest beginnings since its coverage of only three town and city centres in 1990 (NACRO, 2002). By August 1994 this had risen to 79 towns and cities (Home Office, 1994). The mid-1990s brought what Webster (2004) calls ‘an era of uptake’, seeing the rapid and enthusiastic installation of CCTV across Britain. So much so that, towards the end of the millennium, British citizens had become the most surveilled population in the world (Norris and Armstrong, 1999a). Currently, the actual number of cameras is unknown and predictive estimates range from around 40,000 (NACRO, 2002) to 4,285,000, one for every 14 people (McCahill and Norris, 2004; Parkins, 2007).

Such statistics tell only part of the story of the scramble to install CCTV. Perhaps more telling is the financial backing given by the Home Office. Between 1996 and 1998, 75% of the Home Office crime prevention budget was



spent on CCTV (The Guardian, 2002), while in 1999 this was 80% (Ditton, 1999), clearly demonstrating New Labour's embrace of the previous government's legacy in this regard. For some commentators, such elevated faith in CCTV has led to over £500 million of public money being spent on the cameras (Norris, 2006).

Aside from the scale of funding, what is perhaps most striking is how the UK differs from other nations in its enthusiasm for observing its citizens in this manner. Every other nation state has yet to emulate the UK and displays a decidedly cooler view about the benefits of camera surveillance. For example, within the European Union (EU), the cameras are largely forbidden in many of Denmark's public spaces (Wiecek and Sætnan, 2002), are opposed by politicians in Belgium (Information Commissioner's Office, 2006) and Germany (Töpfer, 2006), and encounter significant public opposition in both France (Germain, 2007) and Poland (Waszkiewicz, 2007). Outside of the EU, CCTV installation has also been slow. In Australia, for example, the lack of federal funding accompanied by the mobilised opposition of public sector employees has limited the widespread diffusion of camera surveillance (Sutton and Wilson, 2004).

While the 'British model' of accelerated camera deployment is beginning to be adopted in some countries, notably Italy and Canada, a (currently) unique combination of drivers and processes can be identified as the rationale for CCTV's privileged status among Home Office crime prevention strategies. Particularly significant are faith in its effectiveness in tackling crime and terrorism and, also, the coalescence of CCTV into existing dominant administrative discourses of crime control.

Countering Crime

Despite the frequency of claims that CCTV has substantially reduced crime (see Horne, 1996), the effectiveness of CCTV has been a significantly contested area over recent years. Indeed, claims and counter-claims are commonplace as many evaluations of CCTV conflict on the same point. Such conflict occurs not only when discussing CCTV generally, but also in specific cases. For instance, one study of crime reduction on London's underground transport system suggested the positive crime-reduction effects of CCTV, while another identified increasing crime rates despite CCTV introduction (Webb and Laycock, 1992). According to Welsh and Farrington (2002), CCTV has little or no effect in city-centre or public transport settings. Moreover, for every study proclaiming CCTV effectiveness, another study exists pointing out an inconclusive or negative effect. Among those studies supporting the effectiveness of CCTV, overall reductions were seen to be small (*ibid.*, 41).



Evidence to suggest that CCTV can be effective is supported only in certain circumstances. Specifically, there is a broad consensus that CCTV is most effective in tackling vehicle crime, while having little (if any) real effect on violent crimes (a greater cause of fear of crime) (Tilley, 1993; Welsh and Farrington, 2002). Other studies have even identified an *increase* in violent offences in some locations following the deployment of CCTV (Gill and Spriggs, 2005). One attendant point concerns the way in which CCTV is justified and legitimised as a tool to reduce the fear of crime. Numerous studies show that people's fear of crime is overwhelmingly stimulated by worry about interpersonal violence, rather than crimes involving things they own (see Hale, 1996), yet it is in this regard that CCTV is least likely to be effective.

For advocates of CCTV, one of its major strengths lies in its versatility and potential for multiple applications. Within this scope, there is considerable debate over whether CCTV is more successful as a deterrent or as a detection tool. Of interest here is the legitimisation of CCTV throughout the 1990s on the basis that it would deter crime and thus prevent its commission. This is based on theoretical assumptions that cite crime as a rational choice whereby prior to committing the offence an individual undertakes a cost/benefit calculation of, say, the rewards of the crime against the potential for getting caught. Here, initiatives such as CCTV are seen to deter crime by amplifying such potential costs for the offender. Despite the volumes of criminological and penological research contesting the impact of such a 'deterrence' measure upon offenders (see Cavadino and Dignan, 2001), these 'rational-choice' models are particularly well represented within government and local authority crime-reduction policy-making spheres. Indeed, empirical research of offenders' decision-making suggests that, *at best*, increasing the certainty of apprehension and severity of punishment has only a small to moderate impact on criminal behaviour (Akers, 1990). More recent studies have argued that offenders are similarly indifferent to CCTV (Gill and Loveday, 2003), although this remains a significantly under-researched area. When considering the mounting literature highlighting the ambiguous deterrent effects of CCTV alongside recent technological advances that allow the mass digital storage of its footage, it may be reasonable to expect that the post-event evidential applications of the cameras will become more important in the coming years.

Aside from conflicting accounts concerning its overall effectiveness, there are a number of additional reasons to be cautious when discussing the success of CCTV. One such issue is the potential for camera installations to displace crime into other areas (Skinns, 1998). Another barrier to effective CCTV operation is the inconsistency of human mediation. Signifying the importance of individual action, both Norris and Armstrong (1999b) and McCahill (2002) demonstrate how communication between practitioners may break down and ultimately prevent the application of surveillance. For McCahill (2002), such



assumptions concerning the application of CCTV as 'given', without reference to human mediation of surveillance, constitutes a considerable failing of administrative approaches. Hence, the role of individual agency is important when accounting for the operation of CCTV. Therefore, regardless of whether CCTV *can* be effective, human operation may dictate whether it works in actuality.

In addition to these pragmatic difficulties, there are a number of connected methodological problems associated with research on CCTV; too often, when seeking to ask 'does CCTV work' the question of 'how do we know it works' is overlooked. Critics have identified a range of methodological issues that undermine the optimistic claims of many CCTV 'success stories'. Chief among these is the reliance of many studies on recorded crime statistics (as opposed to more reliable — yet still imperfect — measures such as victim polls like the British Crime Survey). The problems with recorded crime statistics are well documented (see Maguire, 2007) and tend to over-represent certain offences — such as those that require a police 'crime number' for insurance purposes (generally vehicle and property crimes) — while under-representing others — such as sexual and violent offences that are less likely to be reported. Another methodological issue concerns the length of time for which evaluation studies are conducted. One reason for this is to measure any ebbing away of CCTV effectiveness over time (Tilley, 1993). Another reason for extended periods of evaluation is due to the seasonal changes in crime levels across the year. To mitigate this, Tilley (1993) suggests that 'before and after' studies of CCTV are of little value unless a time frame of one year before and after is used, while Short and Ditton (1995) suggest that this time frame should be doubled. Other key methodological problems include the difficulty of attributing reductions in crime solely to CCTV (given that it is usually installed alongside complementary strategies); the fact that increases in crime are cited as a 'success' (highlighting CCTV's capacity to detect crime) as well as any decrease; failure to measure any displacement effects; and problems of objective survey design.

Overall, there is evidence to suggest that CCTV can work, although it is likely that its efficacy is far from comprehensive. Despite this, the appetite for its installation has been persistent. Indeed, the paucity of methodologically robust studies citing any benefits of CCTV sharply contrasts with the repeated claims of many practitioners and policymakers that camera installations are an effective, rationally derived and objective response to identified crime problems (Fussey, 2007). Moreover, given such ambiguities, the aforementioned allocation of such high levels of public funding for CCTV is striking, particularly if reports of other, cheaper, strategies — such as enhanced street lighting having a greater impact on crime and fear (NACRO, 2002) — are to be believed. Ultimately, this issue of the most effective apportioning of public money represents a tangible and, perhaps, more effective means of considering



the value of CCTV to our society beyond the more dominant debate of security vs liberty, where the latter is often disadvantaged against the former.

Terrorism and Political Violence

Since the events of 11 September 2001, CCTV (alongside other forms of technological surveillance; see Lyon, 2003a) has been increasingly justified in terms of its capacity to counter terrorist activity. Particularly germane examples are the unquestionable role that CCTV played in identifying and halting the reactionary terrorist David Copeland during his nail-bombing campaign in London during 1999 and the iconography of the CCTV image of the quartet of bombers entering Luton train station on their way to attack London's mass transit systems on the morning of 7 July 2005. Moreover, it can also be argued that this particular function of CCTV can be seen as part of a wider process of transferring existing crime-control strategies and infrastructures onto the prevention of terrorism.

When considering such counter-terrorism applications of CCTV, it is important to temper uncritical enthusiasm in order to recognise the specific benefits and limitations of this approach. In particular, despite many claims to the contrary (see, e.g., Clarke and Newman, 2006), it can be argued that the commission of terrorist acts, while transgressive, entail substantively different dynamics and motivations to more conventional forms of criminality (see Bodrero, 2000). As such, a translation of any crime-reduction effects onto the prevention of terrorism cannot be necessarily assumed. One initial example of this is the value of symbolism in terrorist target selection, a consideration largely absent from more individually centred criminal activity and one that may override many potential deterrent effects. Moreover (like 'crime'), the term 'terrorism' masks a disparate range of activity, strategies and motivations (a range that has rapidly dilated under successive anti-terrorism legislation), upon which the successes of any surveillance strategies are likely to be uneven.

One such example is the 'Real IRA' campaign of bombings in London and Birmingham during 2000–2001. Although overshadowed by the events in the USA the following month, during the August 2001 bomb attack in Ealing, West London, images of the suspect, the car containing the bomb and the explosion were all recorded on CCTV. Nevertheless, the police complained about the 'disappointing response' of the public to high-profile appeals for information based on the CCTV footage (BBC, 2001), and while three suspects were later convicted of the bombings, this was after a Customs and Excise investigation into a fuel tax fraud, not on the basis of CCTV footage. More traditional investigative approaches also led to the identification of the July 7 bombers. These include the investigative inference from the bombers' injuries, personal objects traceable to Mohammed Sidique Khan at three of the bomb



sites (House of Commons, 2006) and Hasib Hussein's family reporting him missing. Hence, the now-familiar grainy iconic imagery of the July 7 bombers was tangential to their identification. A number of additional issues concerning the relationship between CCTV and terrorism need to be accounted for when considering its potential effectiveness. One concerns how the continual expansion and convergence of surveillance networks exponentially increases the quantity of available data. A number of corollaries include the fact that the task of analysing these data becomes more labour intensive; that thresholds for what may be deemed relevant become elevated (see Lyons, 2002); and the question as to whether current surveillance provisions are already sufficient.

The Political Context of CCTV Deployment

Given the disputed status of CCTV in tackling its core objectives and owing to the paucity of available (methodologically robust) proof, it can be argued that CCTV does not represent an objective and rationalised response to crime. Instead, a number of political drivers underpin its deployment. The context and processes surrounding the delivery of crime-control policy at national and local levels of government provides a specific environment that favours the selection of CCTV as a strategic choice over other measures. Such developments are intrinsically connected to New Labour's overarching approach to crime control, instigated in their *Crime Reduction Programme* — articulated in their 1998 *Crime Reduction Strategy* and their subsequent flagship legislation, the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (CDA). These initiatives have provided the blueprint for the development and delivery of crime-control policy.

What is perhaps most striking about the crime-reduction strategy is that in addition to establishing core areas of action, it also instigated a fundamental restructuring of the structures and processes of policy delivery. Major elements of this component of the strategy include the devolution of key state responsibilities to reduce crime to local authorities, 'raising the performance' of crime-control agencies and implementing 'best practice' (Home Office, 1998). For agencies to raise their performance, the government demanded that partnerships incorporate components of new public managerialism, including the establishment of clear and quantifiable priorities and targets and, in achieving them, the development of performance indicators and tangible goals. Connecting with the government's increased emphasis on victims, a major aim of the new strategy was the reduction of high-volume crimes affecting the public, specifically burglary and vehicle crime. To reach established targets, attempts were made to base strategies on crime 'hot-spotting' and the 'problem-orientated' approach, target hardening, a commitment to new technology and a re-evaluation of existing sentencing practice (*ibid.*).



Together, this practice represents a commitment to rationalist approaches to policy-making. The aim of this approach involves local actors generating objective strategic responses to problems they identify through research and evaluation. In selecting the correct responses, practitioners are also required to draw on 'best practice' and advice on 'what works'. However, the aforementioned absence of abundant methodologically valid research into CCTV effectiveness raises significant questions over how strategies are quantified as 'working'. This suggests a range of different influences on the CCTV policy process that fall outside of rational and objective decision-making.

On the surface, this proposed selection of local solutions to local problems may signify the potential removal of central government from strategic decision-making (such as in the decision to implement CCTV). As such, considerable debate has occurred over the extent to which state power has actually been devolved to the local level. While the government has repeatedly acknowledged that the state cannot effectively tackle crime alone (*ibid.*), this does not necessarily signify the ceding of this traditional state function. For some commentators, such arrangements merely represent a 'trojan horse', whereby state influence in creating strategies such as CCTV is reintroduced into the local sphere under a different guise (Coleman, 2004). Conversely, others draw on Foucault's (1991) governmentality thesis to suggest that a real fragmentation of state power has occurred (see Smandych, 1999). In truth, a more complex interconnection between local and central government can be observed in relation to the creation of crime-control policies such as CCTV (see Fussey, 2004; Hier *et al.*, 2006). Indeed, government provisions for the brokerage of 'best practice' come from Home Office collation and interpretation of work going on elsewhere. Mechanisms for achieving this are through the creation of Home Office crime reduction 'toolkits', and the establishment of the Crime Reduction Task Force 'to oversee performance at a local, regional and national level' (Home Office, 1998, 2).

This devolved 'reconfiguration' of policy-making structures has led to a significant infusion of crime-control priorities with a more localised flavour. In particular, this has led to a renewed and extended emphasis on criminal, semi-criminal and non-criminal issues pertinent to local community settings. Notably, these include the prioritisation of tackling low-level disorder (or 'anti-social behaviour' in the post-1998 lexicon), fear of crime and 'high-volume crimes' — such as offences against property and vehicles — which affect greater numbers of people as victims (in an arguably less-fundamental depth) than, say, violent and sexual offences. Moreover, concerning the latter, tackling high-volume crimes is usually less complex, makes a more substantial impact on crime levels (and hence meeting targets), fits with enforcement-based crime-control orthodoxies and also mirrors the more successful aspects of



CCTV's deterrence capabilities. Regarding the former — concern over the fear of crime and low-level disorder — these can be contextualised within a deeper shift of emphasis from the concept of 'crime prevention' to the broader notion of 'community safety'. Overall, these broader processes of devolved crime control policy-making and the emphasis on semi-criminal and non-criminal phenomena, such as fear of crime and 'anti-social behaviour', are enshrined in New Labour's 1998 Crime and Disorder Act.

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act

Perhaps the clearest statement of intent regarding the orientation of priorities comes from Section 1 of this legislation — the creation of the anti-social behaviour order (ASBO). While initially rejected and underused owing to their extreme unpopularity among many practitioners, sustained Home Office enthusiasm for criminalising the young has been a key factor in the proliferation of ASBOs in recent years. What is important here is the significance attributed to semi-criminal 'quality of life' issues — a theme that has pervaded much subsequent community safety policy-making. Moreover, this emphasis on low-level disorder also represents a theoretical assumption that by tackling minor crimes and incivilities, more serious crimes are averted — the 'broken windows' thesis (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). This assumption is regarded by many criminologists as problematic. For example, the links between minor offences and more significant crimes such as serious violence are unproven and not necessarily likely to be perpetrated by the same individuals (see Matthews, 1992).

Another significant component of the CDA is the rationalisation of the aforementioned devolution of crime reduction policy-making to the local level under section 17 of the Act. This outlines the responsibility on all statutory agencies (e.g., those involved with housing or youth work) to consider and take action to prevent any crime and disorder issues possible. As a result, a range of hitherto detached agencies became centrally involved in crime-control policy-making processes (Pain *et al.*, 2000), despite many previously being unacquainted with crime and disorder issues. As a result, many local actors and agencies became empowered and coalesced into local 'community safety partnerships', or their semantic equivalents (of which there are currently 376 in England and Wales), which also invited the participation of non-statutory, private and voluntary agencies. Together, these partnerships are responsible for identifying crime and disorder issues in their local communities and for developing suitable policies to ameliorate them.

Despite this emphasis on rationality and widened participation, it is important to note that the 'messy' realities of daily working make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to create policy in an objective vacuum. As many



criminologists rightly assert, it is reasonable to assume that underpinning many crime-control strategies, such as CCTV, are particular theoretical assumptions harboured by practitioners. As Crawford (1998, 1–2) stresses,

[with] every lock, security device, CCTV camera [and] neighbourhood watch scheme, community crime prevention carries deep philosophical and political assumptions, commitments to particular models of social explanation and implications for social relations.

More specifically, these ‘deep philosophical and political assumptions’ gravitate around consistent and recurring crime-control orthodoxies, many of which elevate the likelihood that CCTV will be selected as the most appropriate response. In general, these fall into a number of recurring categories. In an early, yet wide-ranging study, Crawford (1997) argues that local delivery of crime control is based on three main principles: increasing mechanisms of informal social control and maximising surveillance; the ‘broken windows’ thesis; and opportunity reduction. Later studies arrive at similar conclusions (see Gilling, 1999; Squires, 1999; Fussey, 2005; Hughes, 2007).

Although many partnerships attempt to introduce an element of pluralism in their strategic approaches, the staples of enforcement-based situational forms of crime prevention (as opposed to ‘social’ crime prevention) — tackling low-level disorder and the fear of crime — have gained ascendancy. Marking an abandonment of aetiological and rehabilitative politics, these approaches now re-orientate the focus away from criminals and towards offences, and hold popular ‘common-sense’ appeal. Not only is CCTV viewed as one of the most popular and ‘common-sense’ strategies (alongside increased visibility of the police), it is also seen to uniquely service these priorities of tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing the fear of crime and providing an enforcement-based response to crime and disorder.

Together, the degree to which crime-control strategies across England and Wales conform to these similar agendas suggests that practitioners rely on particular (and recurring) criminological orthodoxies. One explanation for this concerns the aforementioned responsabilisation of many hitherto uninvolved agencies in creating crime policy. As such, the police have occupied a ‘knowledge-brokering’ role (Ericson, 1994; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Norris and Armstrong, 1999b) whereby they disseminate advice and guidance on the appropriate methods of tackling crime. In addition, the overload of tasks experienced by public-sector policy-makers combined with acute constraints on the time available to achieve them leaves little time for reflexivity regarding the cultivation of evidence on which to base decisions. This increases the likelihood that new policy-making returns to furrows of established practices and priorities, such as situational-based approaches to tackle problems of anti-social behaviour and high-volume offences. Moreover, the



prospects of instigating alternative, more complex and more time-consuming strategies — such as socially preventative approaches — are reduced.

For many critics, such situational-based approaches represent heightened levels of popularism and of punitivity within local communities. For example, Hughes (2001) argues that these approaches to ‘crime control through consultation’, although ostensibly democratic, operate within a context of popularism and retribution. Other commentators warn how such populism favours particular groups in society, namely the ‘world view of the middle-aged, suburban, largely owner-occupied, largely male, section of opinion’ (Squires, 1999, 16). This can largely be attributed to the difficulties encountered by local authorities in acquiring the engagement of what they call ‘hard-to-reach’ groups — specifically the young and particular black and minority ethnic groups — into consultation processes. Indeed, in the context of CCTV deployment, the very groups most likely to be the subject of the camera’s scrutiny — the same ‘hard-to-reach’ groups — are the ones least likely to be involved in decisions over its implementation (Fussey, 2007).

Encouragement from Central Government

Despite appearances, crime reduction policy has not been entirely devolved to the local sphere. The government retains an influence through its brokerage of advice and provision of funding. This can occur in a number of ways, such as setting policy objectives for local authorities (such as an obligation to tackle burglary, even if this has not been highlighted as a problem locally, see Fussey, 2005) or providing ‘expert knowledge’ of solutions to local problems. These are largely disseminated in the form of a series of crime-reduction ‘toolkits’ for a range of different issues faced by partnerships (Home Office, 2007).

The government offers 21 different toolkits to partnerships, although 15 relate to some form of offending and 12 of these offer an ‘evaluated option’ as a solution. These are ‘vehicle crime’, ‘street crime and robbery’, ‘domestic burglary’, ‘alcohol-related crime’, ‘anti-social behaviour’, ‘rural crime’, ‘public transport’, ‘race crime and harassment’, ‘communities against drugs’, ‘persistent young offenders’, ‘business and retail crime’ and ‘arson’. In five of these (street crime and robbery, domestic burglary, anti-social behaviour, rural crime and arson), CCTV is number one on the list of recommended responses. The evaluated options for two other toolkits (public transport crime and communities against drugs) are subdivided into a complex structure, yet both heavily feature CCTV. CCTV is also mentioned in all others except for ‘alcohol-related crime’. Furthermore, in other toolkits (repeat victimisation and fear of crime) that recommend reductions to a range of offences rather than the adoption of particular strategies, camera surveillance still features. Leaving aside the significant conjecture in objectively identifying CCTV as an



‘evaluated’ response to these issues of crime and disorder, the above represents substantial Home Office recommendation for the practitioners to apply CCTV in a variety of contexts, particularly those aligning with the aims of the CRS.

The large scale of government funding for CCTV, it can be argued, is one decisive factor explaining the proliferation of cameras on Britain’s streets in contrast to other European states. The main source of funding for existing CCTV schemes in England and Wales is from the Home Office CCTV Initiative. Partly because of the absence of statutory regulations and the paucity of prohibitive planning laws in England and Wales, almost any public-space CCTV scheme can be implemented, provided finances are secured. In practice, however, the Home Office funds the capital cost (for installation and initial set-up) for the vast majority of new public CCTV schemes, whereas day-to-day management costs are met locally. Local reliance on Home Office funding is so great that if a bid for funding collapses, CCTV systems are often not implemented (Fussey, 2005). However, gaining cash resources from the Home Office is a complex affair, involving strict criteria and specific processes, and represents one mechanism by which the aims of central government can encroach into the local sphere. One of the most striking aims is a commitment to the expansion of CCTV in residential areas. Of the funds made available by the government for the massive CCTV growth during the early part of this decade, around half were allocated for this purpose (Home Office, 2000a, b). The magnitude of public money earmarked for CCTV is something unique to Britain. Indeed, this is *the* central reason determining why its citizens are subjected to greater levels of CCTV surveillance than those of any other post-industrial liberal democracy. Placing the entire burden for installation costs onto the user may also explain the higher levels of scepticism over the capabilities of CCTV in other nations.

This also raises interesting questions over the future direction of CCTV expansion. Primarily, this is due to recent changes in the government’s funding provision. Gauging the current climate, it is likely that this trend of direct government funding has come to an end (Parkins, 2007). Recent arrangements for funding crime-reduction strategies, such as the ‘Building Safer Communities Fund’, involve earmarking a sum of money (in this case, a minimum of £74.2 million in 2005/2006, Home Office, 2006) from which partnerships can bid for resources to implement a range of strategies, of which CCTV is just one. Given the recent (and often expensive) advances in surveillance technology — including the rise of ‘second-generation CCTV’ and the digitised storage of footage — it will be interesting to observe the extent to which the enthusiasm for such technological solutions is sustained or diminished in the face of cheaper alternative strategies. In any event, because future government funding for CCTV may be at the expense of alternate strategies (such as socially preventative approaches or those that critics have argued are both cheaper and



more effective, such as street-lighting — see NACRO, 2002), this conundrum underlines the absolute necessity of addressing the current lack of available, objective and methodologically sound evaluations of CCTV effectiveness.

Conclusions

Familiar claims of CCTV effectiveness in tackling crime and terrorism paper over a more complex picture depicting the uncertain and uneven impact of camera surveillance. Rationalistic claims that CCTV is installed as an evaluated response to particular issues of crime and disorder are difficult to justify given the lack of methodologically sound evidence and the limited degree of ongoing research. Instead, it is the political context, which contains the theoretical approaches and practical arrangements that shape the content and delivery of crime-control strategies, that constitutes the key driver behind CCTV deployment. Here, policy-making structures that allow certain criminological orthodoxies to remain established while eliciting empowered sections of the community to define policy outcomes ultimately generate crime and disorder priorities that invite CCTV to become the solution. Combined with the dissemination of (often unsubstantiated) pro-CCTV advice and available funding from central government, these factors create a context that elevates the likelihood that CCTV will become favoured over the assortment of available crime-reduction strategies. Given the strength of such contextual drivers, the issue of effectiveness is perhaps downgraded.

A comprehensive analysis of CCTV thus needs to go beyond the more established dichotomies of liberty *vs* security. Although both issues are clearly important they are neither in opposition nor an entirely comprehensive way of looking at the issue of surveillance in society. Promoting liberty does not necessarily reduce 'security' in a commensurate fashion and *vice versa*. Insatiable late-modern anxieties over security in the risk society (Beck, 1992; Ericson and Haggerty, 1997) may have stimulated a clamour for CCTV but, as indicated above, it has not necessarily provided the protection that has been craved. The fact that surveillance cameras fail to actively stop many forms of crime, are far from integrated and ultimately fail to exert their advertised level of control may provide some relief from the dystopian nightmares of some civil libertarians.

But a loss of universal liberty is by no means the only social consequence of public surveillance. Such additional social costs can include the 'social sorting' (Lyon, 2003b) of individuals on the basis of race (Norris and Armstrong, 1999a), gender (Seabrook and Wattis, 2001) or class (Coleman, 2004). It is clear that some feel the punitive effects of surveillance more acutely than others, particularly with regard to accessing services (Lyon, 2003b) or (hitherto public) urban 'consumer' space (Davis, 1998). Additionally, the allocation of



large public resources towards widespread camera deployment before it has been proven effective has denied expenditure in other areas. It is in these under-acknowledged areas that the application of surveillance has a significant impact. Although the dynamics of surveillance associated with CCTV differ from other forms of technological observation, such as biometric identity cards, the orientation of debates beyond the security and liberty dichotomy to incorporate issues of social and financial costs will allow a more informed understanding of the impact of technology on society.

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