



# The Public Surveillance Functions of Private Security

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## Abstract

This paper is concerned with arguably the most pervasive body of watchers in society, private security personnel. Set in the context of the rapid post-war expansion of both mass private property and private security, the contention of the paper is that the inter-dependency between these two industries is key to understanding the significance of surveillance as a form of governance in privatised urban spaces. Drawing on an empirical study of private security in three settings: a cultural centre, a shopping centre and a retail and leisure complex, it is argued that surveillance practices represented much more than an approach to policing and crime prevention in these venues, and were central to broader management strategies for the three centres. These surveillance practices also became the basis for collaborative working with the police. In the conclusion, a number of concerns are raised with respect to the policing aspects of surveillance, in relation to both commercial and public policing objectives and the human rights and civil liberties being eroded along the way.

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## Introduction

Urban space in Britain has been privatised to such an extent that most sectors of the population now regularly spend time in publicly accessible spaces controlled by private interests. Such spaces are dotted through our towns and cities, forming venues for our leisure time (the shopping mall, the leisure park or the cultural centre), working hours (the business park or large office complex) and the facilitation of travel to other places (the railway station, bus terminal or passenger airport). In a process that began in Britain during the 1960s with the establishment of the country's first shopping centres, the urban landscape has been transformed in a manner that has been replicated in towns and cities across the globe.

The privatisation of urban space has raised concerns among many commentators, as a process that systematically sorts the privileged or compliant from the undesirable or disobedient (e.g.: Caldeira, 1996a, 1996b; Davis, 1998; Abaza, 2001), while subjecting those who patronise these forms of 'mass private property'<sup>2</sup> (Shearing and Stenning, 1981; 1983) to forms of surveillance and social engineering so pervasive that conformity to their rule systems is induced

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<sup>2</sup> They define this as large tracts of property controlled by corporate interests.

unthinkingly (see for example Shearing and Stenning's (1987) vivid recollection of a trip to Disney World). Davis's account of 'fortress L.A.' is perhaps the best known of such commentaries, observing the division of the contemporary city 'on the bad edge of postmodernity' into a series of fortified enclaves, in which one witnesses 'an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort' (1998: 224). Architects, interior designers and property managers are able to foster a sense of 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1990: 92) among the users of the spaces they construct and maintain: an undertaking that is key to nurturing the comfort and (more importantly) patronage of the customers on whom such developments rely for their commercial success.

Davis's observation of the 'single', 'comprehensive' approach to security evident in the 'enclaves' he describes, including the shopping mall, is highly apt. Yet, as I will argue in the first half of this paper, the unified 'effort' he describes is concerned with achieving more than simply security. Rather, the management of mass private property environments can be seen to reflect a holistic, joined-up form of *governance* (Wakefield, 2003) so that, as Davis conveys, each serve as 'private worlds' (Shapland, 1999) or 'bubbles of governance' (Rigakos and Greener, 2000; Shearing, 2003) with their own distinct social orders. The central argument of this paper is that surveillance strategies, executed primarily by private security personnel, represent much more than an approach to policing such settings, and in fact are pivotal to their successful governance. Furthermore, the effects of this surveillance-based mode of governance within such settings are being diffused further afield in their localities, due to the growing collaboration between private security and the police.

After setting the context for the research with respect to trends in property development, the growth of the uniformed private security industry and the relationship between private security and public policing in Britain, this paper draws on empirical research undertaken in three settings of mass private property: a shopping mall, a retail and leisure complex and a cultural centre. It is argued that 'people watching people', by means of localised foot patrol and closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, was the fundamental feature of a commercial management strategy common to these and similar venues in Britain and around the world. Furthermore, this approach was found to connect comfortably with broader governmental strategies for engaging non-state organisations in crime control as a shared responsibility, extending the surveillance capabilities of the police with respect to local populations in general, and 'troublesome' individuals in particular. The specific ways in which 'surveillance as a commercial management strategy' and 'surveillance as a responsabilization strategy' were achieved are explored in turn, with some key ethical considerations associated with both sets of objectives and related practices set out in the concluding discussion.

### **Property, security and partnership**

It is important first to focus on the relationship between property trends and private security, a connection that is central to Shearing and Stenning's (1981, 1983) explanation for the growth of uniformed private security. The rapid post-war expansion of both mass private property and

private security are important phenomena, but the inter-dependency between these two industries is key to understanding the significance of surveillance as a form of governance in privatised urban spaces. After exploring the growth of each in turn, the discussion addresses briefly the developments in British criminal justice policy which have promoted a reliance on partnership working and thus conferred new responsibilities on private security initiatives.

### *The proliferation of 'private worlds'*

The proliferation of mass private property is unsurprising when one considers the benefits such developments can offer their corporate tenants and individual users: safe and plentiful parking facilities, high levels of cleaning and maintenance, a range of amenities in close proximity, protection from the weather, and a sense of security by means of safeguarded perimeters and the ready presence of security staff. When considering property trends in the retail, leisure, business and residential sectors in Britain and elsewhere, it is likely that these advantages have been fundamental to the success of mass private property development.

The shopping centre has gradually become the modern version of the public marketplace since the first British shopping centres opened in 1964, and it was estimated in one study that 841 centres had been established by 2001 (Allegra Strategies Ltd., 2002). Supermarkets, superstores and out-of-town retail parks have proliferated in parallel to the shopping centre, while the number of small retail outlets has declined markedly (see Wakefield, 2003). In the leisure sector, the majority of theme parks (such as Alton Towers and Thorpe Park) have emerged since 1970 (Jones and Newburn, 1998), and a more recent trend has been the advent of multi-entertainment complexes, often located on the edge of towns, housing a range of leisure venues such as multiplex cinemas, bowling alleys, ice rinks, restaurants, nightclubs and bars. The expansion of business parks has served corporate demand for tailor-made business settings in spacious, out-of-town environments. And in the residential sector, the rapid expansion of large, enclosed residential blocks and estates in North America (Shearing and Stenning, 1981, 1983; Hayward, 2004) has not been mirrored to the same extent in Britain, although such developments are growing in popularity (Hayward, 2004).

### *The growth of private security*

The expansion of mass private property in Britain and elsewhere is identified by Shearing and Stenning (1981, 1983) as a key factor in the growth of private security in both size and profile, as property owners have recognised the commercial benefits of employing their own security forces. They are not only able to specify the functions performed by the security staff, but to empower these officers to uphold conditions of access to the property, and to exclude any visitors who breach these conditions, since in common law countries the law bestows on property owners the right to decide who may enter and remain on their land. For the mass private property owner, efficient use of private security services can be made due to economies of scale and a relative immunity to a 'free rider'<sup>3</sup> effect in their investment in security.

By resorting to private methods of order maintenance rather than relying on assistance from the

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<sup>3</sup> This relates to how neighbouring competitors can gain from one's security provision without contributing to the costs, as its protective effects are diffused further afield.

police, property owners are better placed to ensure that policing strategies within their territories complement their profit-maximisation objectives. As Stenning (1988) argues, for the commercial user of private security, any policing strategy must be proven cost-effective, since a business will not adopt a security solution more costly than the problem. In general, therefore, corporations will seek to prevent a loss rather than try to recover the loss after it has occurred, and to change the situation in which any problems occur rather than to draw on the slow and costly criminal justice process in pursuit of sanctions. Thus, private security personnel, and the security hardware that they have at their disposal (such as radio communication and closed circuit television (CCTV) technology), have become fundamental to the successful governance of such territories, enabling a pre-emptive approach to security in contrast with the reactive style of state police agencies.

Shearing and Stenning (1981) see 'surveillance' as being the central feature of the work of security personnel, reflected in many features that individually may appear to be too trivial to warrant this label. These include a low visibility, a continuous presence, membership of the institutional structures that they operate to control, the appearance of not being backed by 'authority', a generally 'unskilled' status, an infrequent recourse to physical coercion, and an 'integrative'<sup>4</sup> rather than 'segregative' approach. These authors argue that the preventative objectives of private security are facilitated by their unrestricted access to the areas that they are employed to patrol; and note that Peel's idea of an 'unremitting watch' (Radzinowicz, 1968) carries an implicit assumption that the watchers will have access to the entire area to be watched, a role that is now more characteristic of the private sector than the public police force that he created (Shearing and Stenning, 1981).

Studies by Shearing and Stenning (1987) and Shapland (1999) have offered some insight into the security requirements of mass private property owners. Their respective research suggests that such property owners impose higher behavioural standards in their territories than those implicit in the control mechanisms for areas of the public highway such as the high street or city square<sup>5</sup>. A study of Disney World by Shearing and Stenning (1987) showed how control structures featured in every aspect of its design and management, both to foster feelings of comfort, security and familiarity among customers and to facilitate their control. The authors describe the directions at every stage; innocuous looking physical barriers in the form of lakes, flowerbeds and vehicles carrying people between locations; and surveillance by omnipresent smiling and enthusiastic employees, many in fancy dress – identified as subtle yet pervasive measures to ensure that control was consensual, co-operative and even gratefully received. They detail an incident when Shearing's daughter developed a blister on her heel and began walking barefoot, and was immediately approached by a security officer in the guise of a Bahamian police officer, who informed the family that walking barefoot was, 'for the safety of visitors', not permitted. When they objected to this advice in view of the circumstances, they were told that their safety and how best to preserve it was a matter for Disney Productions to

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<sup>4</sup> Integrative techniques are about risk management in that they rely on generally-applied incentives and assimilative controls, rather than waiting for 'troublemakers' to surface and managing them through segregative techniques (Spitzer, 1975:648).

<sup>5</sup> See Wakefield (2003), however, for a discussion of the ways in which high streets *are* becoming subject to increasing regulation.

determine on Disney Property, and that if they did not comply they would be escorted out of Disney World.

Shapland's (1999) study of two shopping centres demonstrated how a range of so-called 'nuisance' as well as criminal behaviours were regarded by the managers of both venues as being unacceptable, with the security staff expected to enforce the strict behavioural rules through the continuous monitoring of visitors and exclusion of the offending individuals. In the first centre, youths were ejected by security personnel if they were seen to be misbehaving, and vagrants were routinely excluded. At the second centre, security officers put into practice a more rigid company policy to eject street traders, vagrants, religious preachers, political demonstrators, people wearing offensive T-shirts and people collecting for charity.

A number of commentators have raised concerns about the ethics of employing security measures based on surveillance and exclusion within communal spaces. While Shearing and Stenning's (1987) depiction of Disney World is of a slightly sinister place, where one is carefully observed and having fun is conditional on following a strict set of rules, it is an exclusive holiday location (in terms of its entry fee and the cost of travelling there) and not an amenity that one uses on a regular basis. The shopping centre, by contrast, represents the modern-day marketplace or city square (Gray and Gray, 1999). Research by Norris and Armstrong (1999) and McCahill (2002) on the working practices of camera operators in municipal CCTV schemes details how individuals are selected for observation, questioning the ethics of methods which target 'known offenders', people engaging in non-criminal 'anti-social' behaviour, those appearing or behaving 'differently' in relation to area or temporal norms, or those seeming to question the presence of cameras by gesture or behaviour, in each case before an offence has even been committed. When an infraction *has* occurred within a mass private property setting, an individual may be asked to leave the premises. Yet von Hirsch and Shearing (2000) equate the exclusion of individuals from privately controlled public spaces with punishment without trial, and see it as a *disproportionate* punishment when that exclusion is long-term or permanent. Gray and Gray (1999) argue for a recognition in English courts of the principle that members of the public should have 'reasonable access' to such spaces, citing cases in the US and elsewhere where the principle has been upheld, and asserting that property rights permitting arbitrary exclusion are inappropriate to contemporary property relations. Yet when such rights apply, the commercial benefits of designing out crime and disorder through the deployment of a dedicated security force are undoubtable.

### *Policing partnerships*

The second strand to this paper is the participation of the security personnel operating within such 'private worlds' within governmental 'responsibilization' strategies. In Britain, the governmental promotion of private sector involvement in criminal justice through outsourcing and the fostering of inter-agency partnerships has bolstered the legitimacy of private security, which the government is currently striving to cement by regulating the industry.

Partnership working has gained status in British crime control policy since the publication of Home Office Circular 8/84, in which, according to Crawford, 'the development of crime prevention – community safety in particular – has become intimately bound up with the

proliferation of a “partnership approach” (1998:169). This has included an official reformulation of the nature of the problem to which policing resources must be directed, reflected in the shift in emphasis from ‘crime prevention’ to ‘community safety’, and embracing “‘lower level’ problems, such as youth disorder and neighbourhood nuisance’ (Audit Commission, 1999:13).

The development of partnership working received considerable impetus in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, passed shortly after the conclusion of the empirical research, and forming a statutory requirement for the police and local authorities. These agencies are now required to establish and promote community safety strategies in collaboration with police authorities, probation committees, health authorities, fire brigades and other agencies, offering scope for working alongside the private security industry. The Act also allows the police and local authorities to share information previously restricted under the Data Protection Act 1984, as amended by the Data Protection Act 1998, with other agencies. Personal data processed for the prevention or detection of crime, and/or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, may now be exchanged in the interests of community safety partnership objectives. This exempts such partnerships from key provisions within the data protection legislation, by allowing for the disclosure of information by the police to non-police agencies, for the purposes of the prevention and detection of crime or the apprehension of offenders, in circumstances in which failure to disclose would be likely to prejudice those objectives. Photographs may also be disclosed to persons who are members of a recognised crime reduction scheme, as clarified under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, s. 115, and by the decisions in *Hellewell v Chief Constable of Derbyshire*<sup>6</sup> as revised in *Regina v. Chief Constable of North Wales ex parte AB*<sup>7</sup>.

More recently the government has introduced the concept of the ‘extended police family’, provisions for which were first made in the Police Reform Act 2002. The Act introduced a number of new policing roles and partnership arrangements, intended to enable a ‘co-ordinated response’ against crime and disorder (Home Office, 2001:84), including two classes of non-police officer on whom chief officers of police forces may confer limited police powers: ‘designated’ civilians and ‘accredited’ civilians. While designated civilians fall under the control of the police, the accreditation arrangements offer the scope to confer further responsibility, and legal powers greater than those of the ordinary citizen, on non-police patrol schemes seen to fulfil community safety functions, including those employing private security officers. As I have argued elsewhere, the dispersal of authority to private sector and other agencies through partnerships – including these new powers as well as the access of community safety partnerships to information that was previously restricted under data protection legislation – raises the question about whether adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that such authority is not misused (Wakefield, 2003).

The promotion of inter-agency partnerships in crime control policy has promoted a blurring of agencies’ operational boundaries, as well as a movement away from a crime control agenda focusing on the spectacle of detection and punishment. It was Garland (1996) who described this trend as forming part of a governmental ‘responsibilization’ strategy, in which central

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<sup>6</sup> [1995] 4 All ER 473.

<sup>7</sup> [1998] 3 All ER 310.



government seeks to promote action by non-state agencies and organisations, with crime control no longer regarded as the sole duty of the professional police officer or other criminal justice agents but as shared property. For Ericson (1994), the shift towards responsabilization strategies, and away from a punishment-based criminal justice system, is reflective of the wider growth of risk management, whereby, 'The concern is less with the labelling of deviants as outsiders, and more on developing a knowledge of everyone to ascertain and manage their place in society' (Ericson, 1994:168). As part of this trend, Johnston has noted a growing orientation within the police towards 'information gathering, anticipatory engagement, proactive intervention, systematic surveillance and rational calculation of results', demonstrating 'an ethos comparable to that found in the commercial security sector' (2000: 57). Thus, the activities of security personnel have become increasingly compatible with police objectives, and the empirical research provided an opportunity to discover the extent to which inter-agency collaboration was occurring with respect to the security personnel in three mass private property settings.

### The research methods

The research, reported in detail in Wakefield (2003), was based on case studies of three publicly accessible commercial facilities and their use of security personnel. The first of these facilities was the *Arts Plaza*<sup>8</sup>, an arts centre in a major English city, with visual and performing arts and licensed refreshment facilities. The second case study was conducted at the *Quayside Centre*, a large shopping centre situated in a northern coastal town. The third was undertaken at the *City Mall*, a retail and leisure complex located in a northern city centre, containing retail outlets for daytime shopping, as well as pubs, restaurants and nightclubs.

The data collection included 20 days of observations at each site, carried out through accompanying security guards in the course of their daily routines. The observations were followed by interviews with representatives of a number of interest groups, specifically security staff, contract security managers, local police officers and managers from the three centres. Documents such as duty sheets and daily log books maintained during the course of the observation periods were also examined.

The sites were different types of leisure environment, chosen to reflect the increasing development and use by the British public in their leisure time of large, privately controlled, mixed-use centres. Today, most sectors of the population will have used facilities such as these, and together the three sites presented a range of customer groups, a range of facilities and a range of crime risks and problems.

### Surveillance as a commercial management strategy

Two of the key objectives of the empirical research were to explore the design and commercial functions of each of the centres in the study, and the core functions of private security personnel

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<sup>8</sup> The names of the research sites have been changed to preserve anonymity.

within them. To offer an insight into the character of the three centres, all of these served as public leisure facilities, relying on unimpeded public access for their commercial success, and forming functional spaces for attracting, retaining and monitoring visitors. Architectural, interior design and other cosmetic strategies worked in combination to enhance the physical environments of the centres, and easy access to, and movement around, the buildings was promoted by numerous entrances and the provision of lifts, escalators and stairways. The centres formed attractive, comfortable and convivial settings: the glass roofs of the Quayside Centre and the City Mall enabled the buildings to be flooded with light during the daytime; seating areas were provided in each of the venues to encourage visitors to linger; and cosmetic and entertainment features such as fountains, plants, exhibitions and musical performances were employed to enhance further the visitor experience. The image presented by the security staff at the Arts Plaza and the Quayside Centre could be seen to complement the design strategies: dressed in smart, gold-buttoned blazers and slacks, they appeared as ambassadors for the centres. This appeared to form part of a broader strategy in each of the centres to convey an impression that there was no problem of disorder, so that the visitor's sense of well-being was enhanced by the symbols of security formed by these numerous design features.

The centres appeared always to be evolving according to the apparent requirements of the market, as improvements were continually made in their facilities and services, design strategies and the image and approach of the security staff. Enhancements made to the centres since their establishment included the redevelopment of the Quayside Centre from an open shopping precinct into an enclosed, self-contained building; the installation of a new glass roof at the City Mall; alterations to the artistic programme of the Arts Plaza to take account of the latest trends; and recent changes to the presentation and approach of the security personnel at the Quayside Centre. These consisted of the replacement of military style uniforms with the 'softer' style described above; and a policy adjustment that took account of a customer complaint of an overzealous response by security personnel when she had carried a small dog into the Centre, as the deputy centre manager described:

... the customers, we were aware, didn't like the official 'I'm nearly a policeman' look, so we actually changed image totally at the beginning of this year into blazers and slacks. Up until then that look was ideal because the Centre was quite wild ... and now it's all calmed down ... you can bring the image down into the softer look ... people come up and talk to them quite happily when they didn't before ...

Yes we have a no dog policy, but when it involves a 76 year old lady who comes shopping for the first time, I can bend the rules. She was carrying the dog fine, it's just that I don't want big dogs running around loose in the Centre ... so we changed the directive yesterday – on that we said 'look, every case – it's on its merits' ... because I'd hate to think we lost a customer ... it doesn't [just] involve one customer ... The granddaughter who was with her was 21 years old. That is one of our future customers. When she gets married, so will her children be future customers ... you have to think long-term, and be very quick to change if policy requires it.



In both quotations, the manager's central concern is 'what the customers want'. His comments illustrate how readily he was able to respond to customer feedback in relation to the presentation and approach of the security staff. In being able to do so, it was likely that considerable commercial advantages were present over the less controlled and less carefully supervised retail environments of the public streets outside the Centre. The use of private security was equally fundamental to this reactive, customer driven approach to management, as becomes evident when describing the functions of security personnel. I identified six core functions that were common to the officers at each of the sites, and describe these as 'housekeeping', 'customer care', 'preventing crime and anti-social behaviour', 'rule enforcement and the administering of sanctions', 'responding to emergencies and offences in progress', and 'gathering and sharing information'.

The housekeeping duties of the security staff afforded them a central role in the day-to-day upkeep of the centres, in order to maintain the fabric of the buildings, to ensure that the centres operated safely and smoothly, and in so doing, to promote a pleasant and well-kept environment that members of the public would be encouraged to visit. These included monitoring the centres for safety risks such as the threat of fire or flood, closing windows, reporting spillages and storing keys. Such tasks were undertaken by means of foot patrols and CCTV monitoring, facilitated through continuous radio communication between the officers, and problems could be referred to other centre workers appropriately, such as cleaning and maintenance staff.

Customer care duties were carried out in the interests of public relations, with the officers usually acting as the first point of contact for customers needing assistance on account of their continuous presence through patrols of the centres. Common requests related to the provision of directions around the centres, information about events or details of opening times; the taking note of complaints; or the arranging or administering of first aid.

The officers' responsibilities in preventing crime and so-called 'anti-social' behaviour, in common with their housekeeping duties, involved them in proactive patrols and CCTV monitoring. They maintained the security of the centres by ensuring that doors and windows were locked as appropriate, controlling the access of people and vehicles to certain areas of the centres, escorting employees who were carrying cash, and remaining vigilant to the threat of terrorism by being alert to abandoned packages and bags. The officers also monitored the centre visitors for potential criminal and anti-social behaviour, and the types of people selected for surveillance appeared to divide into three categories: those thought to be behaving in an 'anti-social' manner; those who fitted 'risk profiles' in their manner or appearance, seen to indicate an above-average propensity to commit crime; and so-called 'known offenders' who were regarded as being constantly on the look-out for criminal opportunities.

The fourth function of rule enforcement and the administering of sanctions sometimes conflicted with the officers' customer care objectives since it required them to challenge certain customer behaviours – particularly actions that were seen to discourage the custom of other visitors. Since the officers served as agents of the property owners, whose legal rights enabled them to establish their own behavioural rules for visitors to the centres, standards could be enforced that well exceeded those applying to the users of public highways such as high streets and city squares.

Having identified the offensive behaviour through surveillance methods or reports from third parties, the officers' approach to this function was to ask visitors to desist from the behaviour that was causing offence, and if they failed to comply, to insist that they leave the property (resorting to assistance from the police if the visitors refused to leave).

The most common reason for excluding individuals from the centres was their past behaviour, although it was principally the Quayside Centre security team that accounted for the high rate of such exclusions. They applied to people who had been arrested on at least one prior occasion, or who had been present at times when offending (mainly shoplifting) was thought to be in progress. As 'known offenders' they were seen to be presenting risks to the security of the centres. The second most common reason for exclusion, on account of the policy adopted by the security staff at the City Mall, was reflected under the broad heading of 'drunkenness, drinking or vagrancy' (the officers' recording practices made it difficult to distinguish between these three activities, suggesting a lack of tolerance towards homeless visitors). Other common reasons across the three centres were playing or loitering by children or young people, being an associate of a 'known offender' or behaving in an argumentative or threatening manner.

A fifth function of the security personnel was responding to emergencies or offences in progress. Crime-related and other incidents were identified by means of surveillance by the security staff or through reports from visitors, other centre employees or staff from the tenant companies. The non-crime incidents occurring at the three centres at the time of the empirical research included four (false) fire alarms, a small fire, several water leaks and a number of occasions when first-aid was administered to patrons who had been taken ill on the premises or more serious cases when ambulances were summoned. In light of the terrorist threat, discoveries of unattended packages and bags were treated as situations of emergency, as were actual episodes of criminal offending. The most common offence type was theft, followed by public order problems of varying degrees of severity, although the officers recounted stories of dealing with the occasional serious incident including attempted rape, suicide and even a murder.

Gathering and sharing information was the sixth function that the security officers were found to undertake at the three centres. Five such duties were identified: CCTV monitoring, form-filling, participating in security networks, engaging in informal liaison with the police and providing information to police investigations – duties which considerably widened their role in policing beyond that of the centres themselves. Some information gathering activities, such as form-filling, were undertaken alongside the surveillance, whereas others, such as CCTV surveillance and liaison with other agencies, formed an active part of the surveillance process.

Echoing the observations of Shearing and Stenning (1981), these six functions can be taken to demonstrate how surveillance forms the central feature of the security officer's role. The officers' foot patrol and CCTV surveillance activities placed them at the centre of social life within the three centres, with radio and CCTV technology enabling the ongoing co-ordination of security staff. Acting as agents of the property owners and continuously present during the opening hours of the centres, they were ready to respond to management directives concerning their duties and the rule systems they were tasked with upholding. They were also positioned to provide or initiate quick solutions to safety, security, customer or other problems either through

their own actions or co-ordination with colleagues, other staff members (such as cleaning and maintenance staff), managers or the emergency services.

The strategies for manipulating the environment inherent in the centres' architecture and design were, in this way, extended to the management methods that were employed, with the security teams fulfilling central roles in these strategies. Some of these responsibilities, falling within the categories of housekeeping and responding to emergencies, were associated with the day-to-day upkeep of the physical environments of the centres, to reduce the direct costs of high insurance premiums, fines or lawsuits that could result from poor maintenance of the buildings or damage to property, so that the security officers offered the attention to detail of a caretaker or warden. Other duties reflected their roles in managing the social environments, to create the illusion of security and maximise visitor comfort, and this extended to the smart image presented by the security staff as already described. Some such duties placed them in service or public relations roles; attending to individual customer needs to enhance directly the visitors' experience of the centres. Yet those visitors were also subject to general surveillance techniques and the prospect of sanction if they behaved in a manner that was deemed 'inappropriate'. Promoting security – and pro-social behaviour – by means of general policing, crime prevention and patrol activities remained an important aspect of the security officers' daily roles within each of the centres.

### **Surveillance as a responsabilization strategy**

In the course of their daily routines, and often as part of their efforts to fulfil these six functions, security officers at the three centres came into routine contact with representatives of their local police forces, with whom reciprocal relationships were evident at each centre. The variety of circumstances in which such collaborative working was found to occur was so extensive as to require separate analysis. In this section, therefore, the nature of joint working between the security staff and the police is described and analysed.

In my research, evidence of collaborative work between the security staff and their local police demonstrated that the impact of private surveillance extended well beyond the centres it was intended to protect. Although the quality of the working relationships between the public and private sectors appeared to be closely related to the efforts of individual police officers and the personal connections that arose out of such efforts (see Wakefield, 2003), the research findings demonstrated the extent to which co-operative working practices could be fostered through such personal efforts, as well as reflecting aspects of the public policy climate in which they occurred. The variety of circumstances in which the three security teams and the police were found to work together appeared to reflect five distinct categories: 'responding to crimes in progress', 'investigating crime', 'intelligence sharing', 'knowledge sharing' and 'partnership working'.

The first category of 'responding to crimes in progress' related mainly to crimes being committed within the centres, prompting calls for police assistance. There was some evidence, however, of security staff becoming involved in incidents occurring in the public streets outside the centres, going to the aid of their police colleagues in situations whereby established partnership

arrangements enabled direct radio communication between the respective agencies. One police officer remarked on the Quayside Centre security staff, ‘... if I’ve ever been in sticky situations they’ve always been there ...’ – a real example of how the police could benefit from the concentration of private surveillance resources at local establishments such as the Quayside Centre.

The second category was that of ‘investigating crime’, usually concerning minor incidents of theft or criminal damage that had occurred within the centres and which were subsequently reported to the police. Occasionally, however, security staff at the three centres were asked to supply information (normally in the form of CCTV footage) to assist the police with investigations into more serious incidents that had occurred in the areas beyond the centres. Occurrences during the period of the research included two separate incidents of stranger rape within the city in which the City Mall was located. Thus, while the investigation of crime was principally a police function, the security teams were well placed to assist local police investigations, by nature of their ‘unremitting watch’ of the areas they controlled through foot patrols and CCTV monitoring.

‘Intelligence sharing’ about local offenders commonly brought security staff at the three centres into contact with the police. The sharing of intelligence appeared to be most extensive at the Quayside Centre, due to the efforts of two police constables to maintain a constructive working relationship with the security staff, and to the informal network of the on-site security manager as a former police officer. Although the flow of information was reciprocal, the security officers’ ongoing surveillance efforts and day-to-day contact with centre visitors once again ensured that they were a valuable source of information for their local police forces. The Centre’s CCTV system was a valuable resource for the police, and police officers were often provided on request with ‘stills’ of suspected offenders.

There was also evidence of the police supplying offender information in order to mobilise the Centre’s security staff in the active monitoring of those offenders. The Centre security staff received from their police contacts lists of people who were wanted for failing to appear at court, or for breaching bail conditions not to enter the Centre, and the local home beat officer often drew on the assistance of the security staff in enforcing bail conditions that were imposed on alleged offenders at the discretion of the police. Breach of those conditions facilitated further sanction through the criminal law, but it emerged from the police interviews that the enforcement of bail conditions also enabled incapacitative measures to be used against those who breached their conditions, temporarily removing them from the streets pending court hearings.

The fourth category, ‘knowledge-sharing’, describes the provision of expert knowledge on security provided by the police to the centres’ management and security staff. Four types of advice-giving were apparent: the supply of intelligence obtained through government agencies in relation to the prevention of serious (for example, terrorist) crime, assistance with the strategic planning of security for events in the centres, contributions to the training of security officers and advice on crime prevention. Such activities can be interpreted as relating to surveillance if conceived in the terms outlined by Ericson (1994) – as techniques of delegation by the police to enhance their web of surveillance.

Finally, the category of 'partnership working' reflected several initiatives that involved management and security staff from the three centres, police representatives and members of other organisations working together in formal partnerships against crime. The requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, still to be passed at the time of the case studies, underlay many of the inter-agency initiatives being established or already in place, including a Safer Cities venture which involved the deputy manager of the Quayside Centre in a local community safety initiative, and strategies to tackle retail crime involving management and security staff from the Quayside Centre and City Mall. In most cases these involved mobilising the security staff in the centres to extend local intelligence networks, therefore focusing on managing the risks of crime as opposed to dealing with its causes, and making the most of the preventative strategies characteristic of private forms of policing. Although the empirical research was undertaken before the Act was passed, interviews with police officers engaged in such initiatives indicated that the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Bill were very much in their consciousness and planning, and in many cases already reflected in their activities.

For the security staff, as well as the centre managers who allowed such working relationships to be fostered, there were clear advantages to be gained from collaborative working with the police. The centres benefited from police expertise and resources in a number of ways, including the processing of persons arrested in the centres, the planning and staffing of events and the training of security staff. The intelligence networks that grew out of partnership working could be seen to reflect the centre managers' concerns with managing the social environments of the centres, but there is some suggestion in the more detailed findings presented in Wakefield (2003) that the centre managers felt some sense of wider social responsibility in view of their positions in the community.

The contribution of surveillance activities undertaken by the security personnel to local community safety initiatives may be analysed in two respects: their role in extending the web of surveillance of individual 'known offenders' – those local people deemed 'troublesome' by local law enforcers; and their monitoring of the local area and the local population in general. Looking first at the surveillance of individuals, the security personnel enhanced the abilities of the police to monitor these supposed recidivist offenders in a number of ways. The research findings provided examples of security staff assisting the police in targeting individuals who were suspected of offences, or wanted for failing to appear at court or breaching bail conditions, often making use of photographic images supplied by the police. The partnership arrangements that were emerging at the time of the research in anticipation of the passage of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 were already systematising such information-sharing, with data protection considerations being watered down in the interests of local crime control. The security staff were able to benefit from such arrangements, in receiving reciprocal support from the police (including the processing of offenders), as well as hindering the activities of individuals seen to pose a threat to the centres as well as the local areas in general.

The security staff also contributed to the general monitoring of their local populations in a number of ways. Through the concentrated surveillance of their respective centres through foot patrol, CCTV surveillance and ongoing radio communication, they were well placed to assist the police with local criminal investigations as well as occasionally offering emergency back-up to police

officers in the vicinity of the centres. CCTV footage of the centres and their environs proved particularly valuable to the police – at the City Mall, for example, such footage was provided to two major police investigations in the course of the research period. The willingness of local police officers to undertake vehicle checks for officers at the Quayside Centre could also be seen as a recognition that security personnel could (and should) contribute to the general policing of the area, even if such actions reflected a bending of the rules.

In summary, the research findings suggested that government initiatives to promote community safety through ‘responsibilizing’ non-state organisations had fallen on fertile ground. The ethical considerations relating to many of the inter-agency activities that have been described in this section are explored in the concluding discussion.

## Discussion

The privatisation of urban space has undeniably promoted a massive increase in the extent to which citizens are subject to constant surveillance within the public realm. It has been argued in this paper that the surveillance being undertaken by security personnel within sites of mass private property such as the shopping centre is being applied in two main ways – as the overarching strategy for managing, or *governing*, these commercial settings, and as part of governmental efforts to ‘responsibilize’ non-state organisations in working towards crime control as a shared goal. The final aim of this paper is to discuss the social impact of these two forms of surveillance.

Centres such as the Arts Plaza, Quayside Centre and City Mall are appealing environments for many people, and the brief description of these venues illustrate how their design, management and policing were geared to fostering the comfort and sense of well-being of their visitors. In this respect they served their purpose well – it could be argued that the holistic management strategies evident within the three centres could teach us lessons about successful local governance in general – including the management of other types of public setting such as the high street or city square. Yet it is important here to make a distinction between the *structures* for governing the centres, and the *strategies* being employed within them. Within the structures for managing the centres, the security functions were closely integrated with other functions central to the centres’ day-to-day operations such as cleaning and maintenance, enabling a co-ordinated and reactive management strategy. This is one of the most fundamental differences between private security and state policing. The autonomy of state policing agencies and their strategic separation from other aspects of local government services – from health care to street-sweeping – limits considerably the degree to which they can form part of a joined up approach to local governance, so that their efforts to co-ordinate their activities with those of other agencies are largely restricted to collaborations through multi-agency partnerships.

The *strategies* of governance being applied in settings such as the three centres, or those that could potentially be adopted by virtue of the autonomy of mass private property owners, are the focus of concern here, posing threats to individual rights and liberties. Firstly, these strategies comprise high levels of social monitoring – based on ongoing CCTV surveillance and foot patrol,



co-ordinated through the use of two-way radio links – that enable such centres to be so carefully managed. Such monitoring erodes the privacy of all those persons who inhabit such spaces, and who may unconsciously be subject to close-up observation enabled by the ‘zoom’ function of a CCTV system, or the careful recording of their movements. By showing how practices identified by Norris and Armstrong (1999) and McCahill (2002) among public sector camera operators are mirrored in the activities of security personnel within these privately controlled environments, the prevalence and adverse social impact of such strategies has been further illuminated.

Moving from the ethics of surveillance to the ethics of exclusion, there is a growing danger that the social orders in settings like the three centres will come to be defined by the conservative requirements of the popular majority, closing off access to those who challenge these conventions. As Gray and Gray (1999) and von Hirsch and Shearing (2000) have emphasised, the rights of the mass private property owner in English law to decide who may enter and remain on their land, and to exclude arbitrarily any persons to whom they take exception, present the problem that individuals may be excluded from important communal spaces. The advocacy by Gray and Gray (1999) of legal recognition of the ‘reasonable access’ principle in English law is important here, but *how* this principle should be applied requires clarification. In assessing how such spaces should be controlled, ethically as well as practically, it is important that the costs and benefits of the strategies employed in the three centres are carefully evaluated, that questions are asked about what forms of behaviour might be seen as ‘reasonable’ in such environments, and that the rights of mass private property owners to protect their property are balanced against the rights of the obedient customer to feel safe and secure within sites of public life, and the rights of the non-conforming visitor not to be restricted from important communal spaces.

Moving next to the policing styles and techniques identified in the course of the research, and the ethical and social desirability of these, there were evident similarities in the research findings between the approaches used by the security officers and the police. For both agencies, there was an increasing reliance on information gathering and the regulation of broad populations as well as that of so-called ‘troublesome’ individuals. Considering the former first – the regulation of entire bodies of visitors using the three centres – the extent of the surveillance to which they were subject within the centres has already been established. Although these monitoring activities formed part of the management strategies within the centres, and were not instigated by the police, the close working relationships that were evident between the two sectors clearly showed the police drawing on private security resources to extend their reach – whether this involved the exchange of information, or delegation of responsibility to the private sector by offering guidance in the strategic planning of events, crime prevention or security officer training.

Looking finally at the monitoring of ‘troublesome’ individuals, the private sector had a key role to play as the police mobilised the security teams in such surveillance, which at the Quayside Centre frequently targeted those whose activities the police had aimed to limit through the use of bail conditions. Private sector powers to exclude individuals from the centres were mirrored in police powers to impose bail conditions on offenders and proactively enforce such conditions. The breach of bail conditions not only facilitated further sanction through the criminal law, but was used by the police as a tool of incapacitation, temporarily removing alleged offenders from

the streets pending court hearings. The willingness of the private sector to aid the police in surveillance of this nature could be seen to reflect a shared sense of those who were deemed the 'troublemakers' – particularly those who had been convicted of past offences. Those individuals who formed the targets for policing for both the security officers and the police were, therefore, likely to fall into overlapping groups, so that their movements were tracked by the police outside the centres and the security staff within.

Both forms of policing pose enormous social costs – the erosion of privacy affecting all of us, and the restrictions on freedom of movement placed upon those considered (but not necessarily proven) to be recidivist offenders. For the general population as well as the recidivist offender, surveillance is the central feature of strategies for their policing, performed by the public and private sectors working together. In spite of pursuing very different objectives, local partners have been able to capitalise on the considerable mutual benefits of such collaboration, so that partnership working and the questionable practices associated with it – with the seal of governmental approval – will surely continue to increase.

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