Municipal Policing in Scotland by Dr.Daniel Donnelly, published in May 2008, examines municipal policing, and, specifically, surveillance and CCTV.

Up-to-date research is included and the author gives his views on the future of the contemporary model of municipal policing, based on years of experience as a senior officer.

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Municipal Policing in Scotland
Dr.Daniel Donnelly

Chapter Six – Surveillance – Extract

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CCTV

The vast majority of closed circuit television (CCTV) systems in the UK do not comply with the basics of the Information Commissioner's CCTV Code of Practice - according to the UK CameraWatch[1] CCTV compliance forum launched in Edinburgh in May 2007 (CameraWatch 2007). CameraWatch is concerned that there is misunderstanding and misinterpretation amongst CCTV users' surrounding legislation, such as the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The forum believes this could lead to the inappropriate management of CCTV systems and as a direct result criminals may escape prosecution. Another issue of concern to the police and the security industry is that many of the CCTV systems installed in the 1990s are becoming obsolete and that without considerable investment will hamper crime prevention and detection in the future (Mason 2007: 25).

The creation of CameraWatch comes at a time when we are constantly being bombarded with information that UK citizens are being filmed by 4.2 million CCTV cameras, estimated to be twenty percent of the world's total and that the average citizen in central London is captured on camera at least 300 times per day (Armstrong and Norris 1999; McCahill and Norris 2003). This gives Britain the reputation as the most watched society in the world. Although, this is not the case in European countries where there is little CCTV coverage away from motorways and specific crime hot spots. Surveillance cameras are frowned upon in France and Germany and militant pressure groups regularly cause damage to camera systems.

In the UK, the availability of government funding, has led to this rapid growth of CCTV – as politicians and community representatives are sold on CCTV as a crime prevention tool which promises enhanced security. The reality is that most of these systems are vulnerable to abuse as advances in technology enable camera images to be stored indefinitely. The potential for intrusion into individual privacy has never been higher and the average citizen feels powerless to control the advance of the surveillance society and very little heed has been taken of alternative viewpoints. The question is – how much more expansion will there be into our privacy and when should we draw the line? Some indication may be given by the House of Lords Select Committee Inquiry (HOL 2007) on the constitutional implications of the collection and use of surveillance and other personal data by the state and private companies, which is gathering evidence at present. In the interim period it is essential to ensure universal compliance of processes, procedures, techniques and to the discipline of a uniform code of practice.

At a camera exhibition during the Glasgow holiday week members of the public were being shown the many uses of the camera technology. One person who happened to be examining the figures being caught on camera witnessed to his amazement one man picking another man's pocket. The individual then gave chase and apprehended the culprit and handed him over to the police. The story continues that from these circumstances "the utility of placing such apparatus in all places of public amusement must be obvious", but whether it would be appropriate to do so in a busy public street under the inspection of an observer for the purpose of crime prevention is another matter! You may be less puzzled by this story of an everyday occurrence in the twenty first century, if it is revealed that the described incident occurred in 1824 (Glasgow Herald 9 August 1824: 4). Interesting that as far back as 184 years, society was still unsure about the legitimacy of

the use of cameras for surveillance purposes. The article further asks whether it would be possible to take pictures of the public in the street and relay the information to the police via the telegraph, and if the distance was too far – "the apparatus could be fixed up near the top of the Tron or Cross Steeple" (ibid.: 4). The article continued that it would then be unnecessary to send out police patrols since the public would be under constant surveillance of the police, and if any – "impropriety or misconduct were observed, it would only be necessary to send a posse to the particular spot where it happened" (ibid.: 4). Does this sound familiar? It took Scottish society nearly two hundred years to get to the present position with the active use of CCTV surveillance. Even the notion of the police responding directly to camera captured incidents can be found operating in a number of local authority areas in present day Scotland. One example, is a dedicated vehicle manned by two police officers who respond exclusively to incidents identified by CCTV camera operators, has been in operation since January 2003 in the East Renfrewshire Council area (East Renfrewshire 2008). But are citizens just as concerned about the use of CCTV now as in 1824?

Apparently not, as many writers have commented on the absence of public protest on the introduction of CCTV. In a case study on the installation of CCTV in the Greater Easterhouse housing estate in Glasgow, Hood (2003) concluded, that even when evaluations failed to establish causal links between the introduction of CCTV and a reduction in crime, there remained a "shared belief" held by the funders, politicians, police, camera operators, community leaders and the general public, that the CCTV system is still worthwhile (Hood 2003: 248). In a recent paper by Smith (2006: www.cjscotland.org.uk) he identifies four ways in which CCTV has been sold to the public. Firstly, and not surprisingly, are the benefits the technology brings to society, whether perceived or otherwise. There are many examples of CCTV assisting crime prevention and detection, and in Scottish cities alone there are numerous instances of murders and serious crimes being caught on film, allowing the police to give the courts the 'best evidence'. As a result, many successful convictions have been obtained and hundreds of thousands of pounds and countless police man hours saved.

Secondly, the mass media have found CCTV a godsend, with its multiple images giving volumes of material for a variety of stories, series, articles and programmes. You just have to flick through TV channels to see the use being made of CCTV footage in all sorts of settings. Thirdly, politicians have given their full support to CCTV as it offers a so-called solution to the

recurrent problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. The call for more CCTV cameras can be heard regularly in the corridors of the Scottish Parliament and local town halls. Since 1996, the then Scottish Executive has, according to HMCICS annual report 2005-2006, provided financial support to "161 CCTV projects involving 2,102 CCTV cameras" with an investment of nearly £13 million up to 2003 (HMCICS 2006). Such positive support adds to public confidence in the systems. Though, the process that brings about the implementation of CCTV technology is more complex and involves a myriad of practitioners and agencies at the local and central level (for a more comprehensive analysis see Fussey 2007: 229-256).

Lastly, as Smith puts it "CCTV and the police – a match made in heaven". The advent of CCTV has been a tremendous tool for the police, with its officers, civilian staff and local authority employees using the equipment on a 24 hour basis to deter crime and apprehend those responsible. CCTV also assists in the efficient command and control of police resources at the street-level in attending incidents and public order events, marches and demonstrations (Smith 2006).

In 1969, there were 14 police forces using CCTV in the UK, with a total of 67 cameras (Williams 2003: 33). The cameras were mainly used as a crime prevention and public order tool and provided an extension of the surveillance offered by the man or woman on the street, whether a police officer, warden, private security, steward etc. Since this time, government sponsored open-street CCTV systems have been encouraged in the form of partnership bids, comprising the private sector, local authorities, police and other government agencies. These developments have dovetailed neatly into government-led strategies of encouraging more private sector involvement in crime prevention and control (Norris and McCahill 2007: 113). Camera systems cannot be overestimated as a major tool in the control and direction of a wide variety of community safety resources. As a result, CCTV plays an influential part in the new model of municipal policing.

Fixed and mobile red-light and speed cameras also play an important role in reducing road collisions and the police have welcomed the introduction of the latest version of this technology, the Road Safety Average Speed Cameras. The initiative is an automatic digital camera system that measures the average speed of vehicles between any two camera positions along a route. Initial trials of this technology have been encouraging, showing a

positive impact on the number of drivers exceeding the speed limit (HMCICS 2006).

Conclusion

Although, a supportive argument for CCTV in the debate about public versus private, is that, if it is reasonable to have CCTV in stores, shops, football grounds, shopping centres etc, then why not the public space? The issue is rather more complex in the 21st century, as modern digital CCTV technology offers new avenues in the application of CCTV. Under experiment at present is the proactive targeting of individual behaviour by camera operators and the development of new techniques and skills, along with new computer simulation software that can "analyse the flow of digitalised images to plot future outcomes" (Norris and McCahill 2006: 114). Although, from a pragmatic stance existing equipment would have to be replaced or adapted before any successful implementation of the new technology, as around two thirds of existing cameras are fixed rather than pan-tilted with zoom, and less than 5% of systems record in a digital format to allow for proper analysis (ibid.: 114). Concerns have also been voiced over the potential use of special listening devices that can be placed in lamp posts and street furniture. According to the ICO evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, these devices are already in use in the Netherlands to combat street crime and anti-social behaviour (ICO 2007a).

Until recently, many people in the UK assumed surveillance was about CCTV cameras and police practices. This is not so today, as it is slowly dawning on an increasing number of citizens that surveillance is more to do with the amount of information and data held on every one of us and the security of this sensitive information. This has led to a growing unease that the holder of such crucial information has an unprecedented 'vista' into our lives.

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[1] The new UK CameraWatch forum is dedicated to encouraging members to comply with current policy and engender consultation and education in the use of CCTV. It is an

independent, not for profit, self funding advisory body that supports CCTV users' and hopes to be a single source of best practice.