



## Reclaiming the Streets: Closed Circuit Television, Neoliberalism and the Mystification of Social Divisions in Liverpool, UK

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### Abstract

The normalisation of camera surveillance on the streets of the UK raises profound questions about the strategies of contemporary urban political rule and the material and ideological re-mapping of urban space. Firstly, this paper will argue that an understanding of street camera surveillance requires a consideration of the operation of neoliberalism at the local level [in this case Liverpool on the north west coast of England] through a myriad of 'partnership' arrangements that have shifted the terrain of local democracy and the meanings of both the public interest and social justice. Secondly, in using case material from a paradigmatic neoliberalising city, the paper argues that surveillance cameras are part of a social control strategy that seeks to hide the consequences of neoliberalisation in creating a particular ambience and exclusivity regarding 'public' spaces. Thirdly, the paper critically considers whether we can understand visual surveillance as a technique for the 'exclusion of difference' in urban space *or* as a tool that suppresses the reality of social divisions.

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### Introduction

Iain Bundred's whole life is a movie. Every step he takes is captured on unseen cameras as secret watchers see his life unfold. It may seem like a plot for Jim Carey's Hollywood hit *The Truman Show*. But this is the reality in Liverpool today, not just for Iain but for all of us. [...]. The watchers do not care how we live our lives, as long as we stay within the law. But the pickpocket, the mugger, the armed robber, or the drunken driver knows that those hidden eyes are out there. Today the *Echo* takes you behind the scenes to show you a day in the life of an ordinary [Liverpool] citizen, through the eyes of the closed circuit television (*Liverpool Echo*, 1 September, 2000).

The 'story' above covers "a day in the life of an ordinary [Liverpool] citizen". It was told using closed circuit television (CCTV) stills which showed Ian Bundred, smartly dressed in suit and tie,

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as he went about his normal daily routine in the city centre. Iain, in his car, was captured: going to work; entering the office; at work at his desk; doing a spot of shopping on his lunch break; buying a paper in a newsagents; driving out of the city on his way home; going back into the city by train for the evening; buying a ticket at a theatre; having a drink in a café-bar; and, finally, on his way home by train at 11.15pm. The story of Iain as told in the local newspaper evokes the ‘responsibilized citizen’ for its readers, as someone who has “nothing to fear” from visual surveillance and cares not for outmoded arguments concerned with “invasions of privacy” (*ibid.*). Iain, a “volunteer” for this Echo “investigation”, was like the central character in *The Truman Show*, “astounded” to learn that his every move was caught on camera. Unlike Jim Carey’s incarnation, however, he more optimistically retorted, “it does make you feel safe” (*ibid.*). In Liverpool, the press have played a central role in “representing order” understood as a “morality, procedural form and social hierarchy” that is both symbolically and visually persuasive (Ericson *et al.*, 1991: 1). Representations of order are increasingly filtered through discourses of ‘safety’ and ‘quality of life’ that are a central foundation for the power and practice of urban ‘partnerships’ for economic and political growth. In marrying these discourses together, the newspaper article represents camera surveillance as *enabling* and *empowering*; it visually invokes an essentialised meaning of public space, and of ‘safety’ and a certain ‘quality of life’ for those who travel, work, consume and entertain themselves in contemporary Liverpool. However, this urban storytelling has more than a provincial significance. The ‘responsible citizen’ presented in the local newspaper mirrors a trans-local vernacular of power that is helping to shape the form and functioning of cities of the UK and North America. As this paper will argue, this vernacular emerges out of, and reinforces, a neoliberal urbanism that continues to be articulated by an increasingly powerful group of new primary definers (Coleman and Sim, 2000), whose project of urban reclamation is as tendentious as it is perilous for conceptions of citizenship, justice and processes of democracy.

What follows is an exploration of neoliberal rule as a strategy to ‘reclaim’ city streets. In the UK in particular, mass visual surveillance has been at the centre of this strategy and bound up with a larger and more substantive socio-spatial ordering project that, in order to be understood, must include an analysis of political processes over and above the procedural capability of cameras. In taking the wider context into account, the paper discusses the political-moral nature of social control, and in particular the adoption of closed circuit television, within the processes of neoliberal state building and governing in the contemporary city.

### Theoretical considerations

Theoretically, ‘surveillance studies’ remains relatively undeveloped. Work in the area has approached camera surveillance in a fairly predictable fashion in utilising, developing and critiquing Foucauldian and neo-Foucauldian conceptual frameworks. Most notably, this has meant a focus on the Panopticon as a tool to understand the rise of visual surveillance, its impact upon behaviour in public space, and the meaning, construction and varied perceptions of public

space itself.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat differently, some writers have rather uncritically and superficially applied ‘risk’ and ‘new penology’ frameworks to understand CCTV. These approaches have been useful (McCahill, 1998; Innes, 2003), but their use has been largely descriptive and reinforces a trend of saying very little, if anything, of the kind of social relations out of which CCTV has emerged and which it helps to reinforce. The same can be said of the much utilised governmentality literature with its notions of ‘power beyond the state’ (and, more implicitly, beyond ideology) and ‘action at a distance’ (see Barry, Osbourne, and Rose [eds.] 1996). This work is weakened by a desire for political neutrality (Rigakos, 1999) and, along with the literature on ‘risk’, has *overplayed* ideas of discontinuity and ‘newness’ in thinking about social control (Coleman, 2004). In their focus on the technical, they have *underplayed* the role of morality and censure in current official social control discourse along with a proper consideration of *who* is doing the talking. Without meaning to dismiss these studies en masse - as many have influenced my own work - they have failed to engage consistently and systematically with the political economy of surveillance generally, and CCTV in particular.

David Lyon stated that “surveillance studies today is marked by an urgent quest for new explanatory concepts and theories” and furthermore, “the most fruitful and insightful ones are emerging from transdisciplinary work” (2003: 27). Taking this cue, the paper will embark on an interdisciplinary path in order to understand CCTV within the social relations within which they inhabit, and in particular to conceptualise a view of power that provides a refocus on the state. Accepting the view that CCTV can be understood “as a form of power with a number of dimensions” (Norris and Armstrong, 1998: 8), studies of CCTV have had very little to say about ‘the powerful’ who stand behind the camera networks. Who are the powerful? How are they organised ideologically and institutionally? How have these processes impacted on the trajectory of urban social control and the meaning of urban space itself? The answers to such questions will bear directly upon how challenges to surveillance practices are formulated. Therefore, the paper will critique the view that surveillance practices can be challenged through a defence of ‘difference’ and/or ‘diversity’ as analogous with urban life.

An analysis of urban surveillance must attend to the role of the agents and agencies of the neoliberal state that are constructing the boundaries and possibilities of a ‘new urban frontier’ (Smith, 1996). Exploring the urban frontier, as a neoliberal landscape will be an important prelude to the argument presented in this paper; namely, that CCTV plays a key role in mystifying the social relations and iniquities of a landscape of power. The project of a neoliberal urbanism is uneven, contradictory and at times unsuccessful, but those in its vanguard continue to consolidate a project of social control that is as moral-political as it is technical, and will have far-reaching consequences for how we understand the meaning of public space, social justice and the parameters of state power.

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<sup>2</sup> More generally, Garland (1990: 170-1) has made the point that the Foucauldian conception of power is problematic in that it: “... is strangely apolitical. It appears as a kind of empty structure, *stripped of any agents, interests, or grounding*, reduced to a bare technological scaffolding” (emphasis added). Following this point, studies that fail to contextualize the concept of the panopticon within particular political interests and social relations are analytically weak from the start.

*i. Neoliberal rule: beyond the 'public' and the 'private'*

In writing about surveillance and social control many present a false distinction between 'the public' and 'the private'. This has consequences for how we theorise power and understand challenges and resistance to that power. Writers have distinguished between state surveillance ('public') and surveillance beyond the state ('Private') (Lyon, 2001; Shearing, 2001; Koskela, 2003: 302), as well as suggested the total decentring, plurality and dispersion of surveillance practices (Shearing and Stenning, 1996; Lyon, 2001). On the one hand, these writers acknowledge that state power is not 'disappearing'. On the other hand, the state is left unanalysed by these writers and therefore its supposed 'power' and scope for action has been left assumed rather than explored. The point made here is that it is not a question of *either* studying 'state-public' power *or* 'non-state-private' power, but of how the state form itself traverses these distinctions. For in reality there is not, and has not been, any easily maintained distinction between state and extra-state power, or 'public' and 'private' authority. States and markets have complex relations and interconnections that need to be understood in dialectical terms, not zero sum terms (Weiss, 1997; Tombs and Whyte, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2001; Latham, 2000). It is the process of state formation, and the creative and destructive actions regarding spatial projects that requires analytical attention. Regarding city spaces, we can understand their creation, representation and uses as "rest[ing] on powerful boundaries – ideologically based or otherwise – placed around the regulatory activities of states" (Latham, 2000: 8). Thinking about the state as a *process* rather than a *thing* can provide a corrective to theoretical traditions that have created fixed distinctions between state and civil society. Writing on surveillance can serve to oversimplify social control processes because it fails to recognise that state institutions are not mere political-administrative devices (i.e. local government) and will continue to be involved in many social relations normally defined as belonging to civil society. Within the contemporary spaces of the city, the process of state formation (and hence methods of rule in these spaces) has opened up, though in no way has pluralized, the boundaries of state power to incorporate 'expertise' found in the business/corporate sector. The ongoing construction of seemingly novel and 'growth' orientated institutions via the discourse and practice of 'partnership' continues to reconfigure the relations between, and the role of, other agencies such as the police, local authorities, cultural and educational institutions and media outlets, which all have a role in the processes of local statehood. In short the building of a neoliberal state is reconfiguring, blurring and mystifying boundaries between public and private. This state form also requires us to rethink how power is organised and legitimated.

*ii. The neoliberal state and neoliberal space*

Political, economic and ideological activity has intensified in the cities of the UK in past 20 years. This activity continues to redefine notions of 'public' and 'private' (if not dispensing with them altogether, at least within official discourse) and, in a series of concerted efforts to materially and ideologically transform the spaces of cities, has reconfigured relations of power between and across the boundaries of local power elites, thus reconstituting the state form itself. This is a good place to start thinking about the notion and practice of 'partnership' as applied in the UK, North American and increasingly in Europe. As the buzzword of governments, 'partnership' has taken a peculiarly neoliberal inflection since the early 1980s and has wrought both creative and destructive forces in the process of urban rule. 'Partnership' is also the intersection through

which the development and uses of mass camera surveillance is rooted. Brenner and Theodore (2002: 363) have argued

neoliberalism represents a complex, multifaceted project of socio-spatial transformation – it contains not only a utopian vision of a fully commodified form of social life, but also a concrete program of institutional modifications through which the unfettered rule of capital is to be promoted

As a process of ‘creative destruction’, neoliberalism has been *destructive* of forms of welfare provision, regulation of financial and monetary speculation, forms of targeted public funding and certain rights and social entitlements. At the same time it has produced “moments of creation”, including the building of free trade zones; and privatised spaces for high earner consumption; the unleashing of zero tolerance initiatives and targeted surveillance; and the development of powerful and insidious discourses aiming to re-image cities within a vernacular of “renaissance” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 363-372). These discourses of ‘partnership’ at the centre of neoliberal rule “are not neutral” in the sense “that they construct problems, solutions and actions in particular ways that are congruent with existing relations of power, domination and distribution of resources” (Atkinson, 1999: 70). In articulating the means and ends of urban renaissance, a set of new primary definers – that include business associations, local media, developers, tourist agencies, public and private police, as well as elected officials – are engaged in a project of urban reclamation which is formulated within a post welfare, entrepreneurial politics that has promoted an ideology of self responsabilisation, itself underpinning a climate of moral indifference to increasingly visible inequality. In the attempt to build a “growth machine” that is “safe for development” (Logan and Molotch (1987: 13), the boundaries between public and private interests are being reorganised, with the result of “a heightened control of the polity by new bourgeoisie and property interests, almost exclusively consisting of businessmen” (Hall and Hubbard, 1996: 155, emphasis added). Thus neoliberalism is a political force that is recasting the politics of locality. It is “a class relation and a product of class struggle, an attempt to impose value discipline into society” (Eisenschitz and Gough, 1998: 761).<sup>3</sup>

What in effect is the “extraordinarily malleable character of neoliberal statecraft” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 345) covers a range of ‘visionary’ and ‘developmental’ organisations that purport to represent local public interest. These decision makers and definers of local problems exist usually at the behest of, but outside, elected power structures. They are funded by cocktails of public-private monies and relatively inoculated from public scrutiny, yet are central to the construction of new subjectivities and visions regarding the urban form and experience. As representatives of a contradictory and discordant particular social bloc, the agents of the rescaled state have been engaged in local political struggles to forge a “hegemonic project” (Jessop, 1990: 260) that renders both thinkable and practicable prescribed notions of ‘renaissance’ and ‘quality of life’. The marketing of place has intensified processes bound up with attempts to lever investment and provide the basis for positive re-imaging through the selling

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<sup>3</sup> This is in contrast to largely descriptive and technical understandings of neoliberalism (or ‘advanced liberalism’) offered in the governmentality literature.

of an area's economic 'benefits' in terms of infrastructure and labour force, the selling of cultural products, consumption and leisure facilities, tourist attractions, and a generalised 'quality of life' that includes 'crime and safety'. As well as attempting to make the city more attractive to potential investors, this 'manipulation of image' has played "a role in 'social control' logic, convincing local peoples as to the benevolence of entrepreneurial strategies" (Hall and Hubbard, 1996: 162). The local population as a whole are a category to be 'educated' in line with 'quality of life' and 'life style' issues as defined within central regeneration vernacular. As the local newspaper story at the beginning of the paper makes clear, these themes run coterminous with a desire to evoke a notion of self-governing subjects, autonomously choosing aspects of 'life style' offered by in the city.<sup>4</sup> The problem of place management, the selection of 'desirable' images and the dissemination of 'friendly' information about 'place' has been at the same time the problem of *representing* and *maintaining* order within cities. Meanwhile, within these 'new' urban spaces, the popular press focuses on the playfulness of consumption while ignoring the incongruous side of contrived 'culture' based regeneration, or what Parenti (1999: 95) calls "policing the theme park city". In other words what needs to be focused on here is neoliberal urbanism as it is implicated in the creation of normative orders impacting on city spaces. These orders are akin to contemporary state discourses and have been instrumental in setting the parameters of 'proper' and 'orderly' urban rule. The contrived spaces of the neoliberal city and their controlled playfulness is staged alongside the perception of a chaos-free and unified civil order (Swyngedouw, 1996: 1504), a perception integral to a politics of vision that seeks the realisation of profits and a channelling of capital into the built environment.

In making these connections between how cities are ruled issues have been raised about the reworking of the boundaries between public and private space, and a re-ordering of the uses of that space alongside an intensification in the reality and visibility of socio-economic inequality. Social control strategies enacted in entrepreneurialised landscapes are increasing the divergence of control tasks that traverse public and private sectors and open up spaces for the expansion of 'crime prevention' projects which are not necessarily directed at legally defined 'crime', but instead bring under punitive control target groups and individuals deemed incompatible with the neoliberal urban vision. Camera surveillance merges 'crime control' with a broader strategy that seeks to manage a notion of 'quality of life' that in turn reflects the re-imagining of 'place'. At the local level, this has been accompanied by a move towards 'public order', 'zero tolerance' or 'quality of life' policing that has formed a strand in urban regeneration discourse on both sides of the Atlantic and increasingly embodies reference to globalized 'nuisances' and crime referents. Political programmes developed to counter any negative local, national and international reputations and identities that particular 'places' are perceived to engender has become a central feature of entrepreneurial cities. The agencies of a neoliberal state - local business, police, local government, developers - attempt to forge a consensus around 'growth' orientated strategies and dedicate resources and ideological weight to the management of local problems and threats

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<sup>4</sup> In Liverpool, and in contrast to these new urban visions, poorer city centre business - market stalls, street traders and the "bargain basement sector" - which attract a rather less affluent citizenry were deemed out of step with the new urban façade and, for the locally powerful, pointed to a perception of a "downgraded economy" (Marketing Director, *Mersey Partnership*; see Coleman, 2004 chapter six), thereby attracting people of the 'wrong sort'.

deemed to destabilise a local growth strategy. As part of statecraft at the local level these agencies have reworked levels of interagency trust from which information exchange has become more fluid and an important component in investment decisions.<sup>5</sup>

The ‘recognition’ of the salience of ‘crime’ amongst local ‘growth machines’ and its importance in the competitive re-positioning of ‘global cities’ has been reflected in the UK through central government initiatives such as the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). Within ‘Third Way’ speak the Act is aimed at producing ‘joined up’ government<sup>6</sup> and integrating CCTV with other policing-come-surveillance practices. The Act of 1998 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act of 2003 are an attempt to formalize and bring a measure of coherence to the developments discussed in this paper. As well as subjecting behaviour in public spaces to a series of contracts these legislative changes explicitly celebrate and valorise expertise within the private/corporate sector (Home Office, 1998: Sec. 2.33).

Further, within ‘third way’ politics, a central aim is the restoration of sovereign or state control over the ‘socially excluded’, ‘hard to reach groups’ or, as we used to say, the poor (Stenson, 1999). The responsabilisation of actors in this process has not been a free-for-all, but highly circumscribed process veiled under the mantra of ‘partnership’. It is under this mantra that a neoliberal social control ‘logic’ has taken root deep within the social relations and powerful visions prescribed for contemporary cities.

### The Politics of Vision: CCTV and Mystification

Understanding and ‘exposing’ the ways that things, people, and social relations are made visible or invisible to the public eye remains an important political project (Katz, 2001: 96)

CCTV, particularly in the urban centres of the UK, can be read as a tool of an entrepreneurial urbanism that underpins a conception of the idealised citizen-worker-socialite hailed in neoliberal vernacular typified in the newspaper article at the beginning of this paper. CCTV has itself sprung from neoliberal political thinking, both in terms of the insistence by central governments that ‘partnerships’ should run and fund initiatives *and* in terms of the official orientation of CCTV towards aiding the process of urban consumption (Home Office, 1994: 9) and the wider city economy. Between 1994 and 1999, £38.5 million was dispensed from the Home Office with an estimated £51 million from the private sector to establish CCTV systems (Hansard, Written Answers, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1999, Column 112). Public and private sector money has given Liverpool city centre one of the most expansive CCTV networks anywhere in the United

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<sup>5</sup> For example, senior police personnel regularly speak at business conferences in Liverpool and act, as key members of the growth machine, as the symbolic – if not actual – guarantors of order.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Joined up government’ has been New Labour’s attempt at coordinating the partners within a neo-liberal state. This has been enacted “through a combination of inducements ... and sanctions” under a mantra of “corporate populism” which has assumed and consolidated a key role for business, in coalition with other ‘responsible’ partners, in the provision of local ‘services’ (Fairclough, 2000: 121).

Kingdom. The long-term aim of this network is the integration of comparable CCTV systems linked to a master control room overseeing 250 cameras in the city centre and outlying areas, as well as links to cameras in stores, public houses and night clubs (*Daily Post*, 22 August, 2000). Within the city centre this will incorporate “revolutionary talking cameras” so the “operators will be able to shout at would-be attackers to warn them they are being filmed” (*Liverpool Echo*, 24 March, 2001). The ‘entrepreneurial’ roots of mass camera surveillance provide a clue to the uses of CCTV as a social ordering tool. Indeed, within neoliberal strategies for order CCTV is central to a process of mystification in the cleansed urban form. We are now in an era of “roll out neoliberalism” (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 389) that, through intensified social surveillance and authoritarian statehood, is attempting to cast a veil over the harmful social consequences of neoliberal agendas.

On the development of neoliberal spaces, Katz (2001) points to the ability of gleaming and spectacular architectures to hide the consequences of neoliberal rule; consequences such as the effects from welfare cutbacks, privatisation and under investment in various social services. Neoliberal spaces are erasing the ‘traces’ of inequality with the construction of self-congratulatory monuments that strategically remove the poor, the dirt and dilapidation resulting from “the wholesale disinvestments in social reproduction” (2001: 107). Furthermore:

The painful reminders of the unevenness and fragmentation brought about by capitalism have been pushed out of the central spaces of the city, and significant rhetorical and physical vigilance is mounted against their return

(*ibid.*)

Following this argument, the role of CCTV in major towns and cities of the UK can be understood as part of a process of ‘hiding’ through mystification of both the processes of rule in the urban order and its discontents. Firstly, through the eye of a street camera a host of urban social problems; including popular protest, homelessness, street trading and petty violations to local byelaw<sup>7</sup> become detached from any social context, and instead defined through the lens of *crime* and *disorder*. Secondly, what is most obvious and yet often unacknowledged is that cameras overwhelmingly focus on the street and ‘street people’. This reinforces prevailing definitions of ‘crime’, ‘risk’, ‘and ‘harm’ as emanating *solely* from powerless and ‘disaffected’ people. Any irresponsible actions and social harms propagated by neoliberal strategists and corporate actors<sup>8</sup> are thus further inoculated by the highly selective use of the camera networks that they have established. The process of mystification becomes most evident when footage from street cameras regularly appears in crime-come-entertainment TV shows. Thus surveillance cameras turn their intended targets into ‘other’, annulled subjects to be replayed on popular crime shows as the victims of Foucault’s “dividing practices” (1982: 208), whereby the camera

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<sup>7</sup> A byelaw in the United Kingdom is made by a statutory body, such as a local authority, under enabling legislation established by an Act of Parliament. Byelaws create criminal offences and cannot come into effect unless a Secretary of State has confirmed them.

<sup>8</sup> See Coleman, Sim and Whyte (2002) for a discussion of harmful corporate activities in Merseyside ignored in mainstream safety discourses.

“objectivizes” the criminal, the deviant and the wrongdoer more often than not for the titillation, fear and entertainment of the ‘law abiding’ audience. This media formula portrays in synoptical<sup>9</sup> fashion the nightmares that may follow were the forces of urban ‘degeneration’ to be allowed a free reign to threaten and contaminate the urban civic aesthetic.

### *i. Surveillance, Mystification and Popular Culture*

As surveillance cameras routinely monitor the street prohibitions of the neoliberal city, they also reinforce the moral codes, intolerances and normative prescriptions of its creators. Paradoxical as it may seem, for all the talk of cultural celebration and putting ‘culture’ at the centre of current urban renaissance drives, certain forms of culture are increasingly being subject to oppressive monitoring and curtailment. Recently lauded with the title of European Capital of Culture scheduled for 2008, Liverpool city council passed a byelaw to curtail a range of grassroots and spontaneous street protests. In particular, this came out of a response to marches and protests critical of the how the city’s ‘regeneration’ was being conducted. The broadness of the byelaw means it can also be used to attack a range of perceived ‘nuisances’ that are tied to the secondary economy in the city and that, for the new primary definers, give the city the image of a ‘bargain basement economy’.<sup>10</sup> It is an offence for people to sell or tout for business in the streets or other public places, including flower sellers to sell in restaurants and bars. The new law also bans individuals asking for money to ‘mind’ cars and prevents charities stopping people in the street.

As a key tool in the politics of vision, cameras in the cities of the UK are helping to put into effect what can and cannot be seen on the streets. As cameras aid the strategic balance between aesthetics and function, any notion of the city as a space of cultural expression for younger people continues to be highly circumscribed. In Liverpool, skateboarders can be fined from between £250 to a £1000 if they break a bylaw banning skating passed by city councilors in July 2002. Liverpool council claimed that skateboarding should be an offense as it is giving the city a bad image in terms of scaring off tourists and shoppers, as well as damaging statues and memorials.

In another development, cities in the counties of Essex, Hampshire, Cornwall and Devon police and private security enforce a policy that has banned the wearing of hooded tops, baseball caps and hats of various descriptions. For all the techno-hype, cameras cannot identify people accurately if they are wearing headgear. This measure is clearly targeted at young people who are stopped and told to remove headgear if they want to remain in the city centre. As one

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<sup>9</sup> We live, as Mathiesen (1997) argues, in a ‘viewer society’, were through the mass media, the ‘many can see the few’. In the case of popular crime shows, were the image of the street contextualizes ‘the action’ – or to paraphrase Michael Moore in ‘Bowling for Columbine’ – ‘the powerful white guy chases the powerless black guy’, the synoptic principle works by ‘disciplining consciousness’ through info-tainment in a manner that legitimates the definitions of crime and danger most congruent with the worldviews of the powerful.

<sup>10</sup> The need of local people for lower-end priced products and so-called ‘bargain shopping’ is borne out by the fact that Liverpool was ranked the poorest area in the UK in terms of average incomes with a high proportion of families surviving on around £8,000 a year (*Liverpool Echo*, 25 October, 1999). This reality of the working class city has been hard to re-image for local marketers.

businesswoman stated “it’s a brilliant idea [but] some kids get stroppy when we ask them to remove their hoods. As long as it helps in the fight against crime it isn’t discriminating against young people” (*The Independent*, 23 May, 2003). As well as infringing upon the cultural expression of the young, such measures will further criminalize a generation and reinforce stereotypical discourses around ‘dangerous youth’ in the public mind.<sup>11</sup>

### *ii. Surveillance, Mystification and Social Divisions*

As some writers have demonstrated, CCTV disproportionately surveys and casts suspicion on the poor in the spaces of the city centres (Norris and Armstrong, 1999) and in the estates outside of the city (Malik, 1995). The construction of ‘the theme park city’ only reinforces these processes, so that those walking the streets who are teenagers, dressed inappropriately and without branded shopping bags are likely targets of security personnel whose ‘nose’ for suspicion has been directed at those who appear to be ‘walking or standing without due cause’. Public and private police are working together in organisations such as *Crime Alert*, established in Liverpool by the Stores’ Committee. Despite organisational differences, these policing agencies have found common ground in constructing and sharing a common sense morality of public space (Coleman, 2004). Normative processes are manifest in the discursive exchanges between public and private police and are integral parts of the low level social ordering activities that construct and demarcate ‘responsible’ and ‘irresponsible’ uses of city centre space. In my own research the members of Liverpool’s *Crime Alert* characterised the objects of their powerful gaze as ‘dross’, ‘scallies’, ‘knobs’, ‘hawkers’, ‘urchins’ and ‘fake homeless’ (*ibid.*). These constructions of city space complement and reinforce, albeit in less sophisticated tones, the broader visions for order in the city that emanate from the primary definers of the entrepreneurial city.

In such a city the normative demarcation of space strongly targets the homeless who have been successfully defined (along with other poor people) as just “so many ‘broken windows’”, the idea being “not to repair them but to remove them altogether” (Mitchell, 2001: 83). The war on the homeless has been particularly vengeful in many cities of the ‘advanced’ capitalist world. In Liverpool, sellers of the *Big Issue* magazine have been banned from the main indoor shopping mall and the stores of the larger retailers, and are subject to a “curfew” on sales after 8pm (*Daily Post*, 11 May, 2002). As part of a larger campaign against the homeless, this embargo denies freedom of movement around the city and refuses access to food, drink, shelter and facilities for cleanliness to homeless people in the city. ‘Operation Change’ launched in Liverpool in 2003 aimed to reduce ‘anti-social behavior’ among beggars and, in the words of a Chamber of Commerce spokesperson, target “people who allegedly can’t speak English, using their children to ask for money” (*Daily Post*, March 13 2003). Publicity posters were used (titled: “Fact: Nobody needs to beg for a bed”) showing a picture of a homeless person, crouched on a city street, whose face is covered by a cardboard sign that reads, “Help them make the change,

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<sup>11</sup> In Liverpool, questioning the legitimacy of young people to be on the streets has been filtered through a number of schemes. The latest initiative, straight from New York, is what is known in the local press as the “yob tank”. This police mobile prison tours the city locking up ‘anti-social youths’, fully kitted with internal and external CCTV and costing £20,000 (*Liverpool Echo*, 21 January, 2003).

keep your change’. A process of silencing the experiences of homeless people and *irresponsibilizing* their presence in the city is reflected in the poster campaigns, which discourage local people from talking to and handing over loose change to street people. In Liverpool, this has been coupled with undercover policing and targeted surveillance resulting in the arrest, caution or charging of over 800 people in 2002 in relation to begging offences. All beggars are now routinely finger-printed and placed on the Police National Computer (*ibid.*). Oppressive monitoring of the homeless is leading to outright removal as court injunctions are set to lead the way to a national ban on begging (*The Independent*, 22 August, 2003).

The hindrances to entrepreneurial spatial strategies show remarkable similarities across national borders and point to a role for policing and surveillance which not only provide a means of ‘social sorting’ (Lyon, 2003), but that relates to a wider process of *social removal*, a removal that attempts to render ‘invisible’ unequal relations both on the streets and in public and political debate. As in the 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalist city, the process of ‘moving them on’ (Brogden, 1982) and defending lines of demarcation survives as a mechanism for dealing with inequality. CCTV ensures an increasingly codified set of unequal rights regarding the use of space and, in displacing inequality, reinforces the development of a hidden city. Just as the broader politics of image dictate that main routes into cities are receiving makeovers to disguise the poor estates that lie on either side from visitors (mass tree planting on man-made hills) and renaming (from Street to Boulevard) – so CCTV can be understood as an attempt to disguise-through-exclusion the negative side of neoliberal city building.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusion: Surveillance, the Politics of Difference and Neoliberal State

The nature of the neoliberal state as described in this paper, raises questions about social justice and challenges to the inequities of the surveillance society. Many have questioned the supposed impartiality of urban surveillance and have described contemporary cities as ‘hostile to difference’ (Sibley, 1995) or have identified contemporary social control methods as leading to “the exclusion of diversity ... in practice” within cities (Flusty, 2001: 664). Commentators on CCTV have come to similar conclusions in that contemporary surveilled cities are cities where “difference is not so much to be celebrated as segregated” (Bannister, Fyfe and Kearns, 1998: 27). Flusty notes that the rise of “interdictory space” may see cities develop whole areas that are “riskless” and empty of “those who practice other ways of being” (201: 264). The language of ‘difference’ underlines much critical work in the area of surveillance and urban space and seems to lament the fading of a past where ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ of conduct and identity were at least afforded a measure of recognition in ‘public space’. This assumption is questionable; public space has since the inception of the modern capitalist city, been, and continues to be, politically

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<sup>12</sup> The class based cues and norms of neoliberal urban reconstruction are not gender neutral (Coleman and Sim, 1998). With the advent of mass camera surveillance the extension of a threatening and objectifying ‘male gaze’ has not been challenged in neoliberal public space, not least in terms of the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual violence (Koskela, 2002).

constructed, having “highly scripted and delimited roles” (Ruddick, 1996: 135) for women of different classes, black people and different age categories.

The notion of ‘difference’ is analytically vague and sits uncomfortably with the issues raised in this paper. For some critics the language of difference has operated as an inferior replacement for a language that prioritises a focus on inequality (Malik, 1996), with the former mystifying the shifting contours of unequal social relations. A more critical approach is needed in this area, in particular a focus on how adaptations of the discourse of difference (in its more celebratory incarnations) is itself produced within the centres of power that orchestrate and market the neoliberal landscape.<sup>13</sup> This notion of neoliberal difference may be highly circumscribed and cynical but along with its postmodern, ‘radical’ counterpart it constructs a dematerialised notion of identity and deflects critical attention that should be focused on the dynamics of inequality within the contemporary city. The focus on difference does not apply to the issues discussed in this paper that has instead sought to encourage a political-economy of surveillance – and by implication, therefore, a political economy concerning the construction of ‘difference’ (Harvey, 1992: 596). Debates concerning the right to access, use and define the city need to take on material issues through which inequality is brought into focus as something to be challenged (not celebrated) or seen as merely ‘different’. Unequal relations between rich/poor, men/women, gay/straight and young/old are precisely *relations* that that have been managed and negotiated through state activities via combinations of welfare, moral education, and censure and exclusion from public space. For some who inhabit our cities, their identity, through the eyes of a surveillance camera, is constructed in wholly negative terms and without the presence of negotiation and choice that middle class consumers may enjoy. Therefore, it is not suggested in this paper that the homeless should be ‘returned’ to the city streets and be ‘celebrated’, as some exotic nomadic tribe in a city built on a “politics that celebrates marginality rather than seeking to redress it” (Mitchell, 2001: 82). Besides this being unrealistic in the current climate, it is also a politically irresponsible position to adopt for those who advocate and/or identify themselves as ‘progressive’, theoretically or otherwise. The icy winds of neoliberalism may have frozen-out the notion of universal rights and entitlements in the city, but that is no excuse for lapsing into the celebration of some bogus notion of consumption-led identity politics.

Surveillance that concerns itself with ‘social sorting’ does *nothing* to address, and *everything* to reproduce, boundaries of inequality. Lyon (2003) however, provides a challenge to this in the form of a post-privacy strategy. Again, though, this challenge leaves aside some thorny structural issues. According to Lyon, a problem with modern surveillance is that it lacks a ‘human’ touch. It is the ‘the face’ that needs to be brought ‘back’ into the equation, for it is the face that forms the basis for ethically and morally regulating and humanizing the surveillance society - of making it fairer. It seems that the presence of faces and bodies “calls data users to establish trust” (*ibid.*:

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<sup>13</sup> The language of difference lies at the heart of a current attempts to re-image cities. As a trend in official discourse, ‘diversity’ plays an ideological role at the centre of a politics of growth and ‘quality of life’ vernacular, as exemplified in Liverpool’s slogan for its current Capital of Culture status - ‘*The World in One City*’. This is not to say that such ideas must be discounted out of hand, rather they should be approached critically and seen as part of a wider politics of legitimation that contextualizes the possibilities and limitations of the ideas of ‘participation’ and ‘democracy’ in neoliberal cities.

27). But problems with this approach remain: such as how did ‘the face’ in historical terms make a positive impact upon the policing of black communities? As many studies demonstrate, this policing was very front-line, ‘in your face’ and embodied from the times since plantation and slavery up until today. The black body has been and continues to be hugely symbolic and representative of disorder for state and corporate servants – just take current stop and search figures as one indicator of this. This body continues to be a site for the enactment of brutalising violence. Sure, disembodied surveillance may make the path to social justice less likely but it will take more than the *presence* of the faces and bodies of the oppressed to transform unequal social relations. Lest we forget, the very presence of such ‘dangerous’ bodies has often been justified as enough to ‘cause’ anxiety, fear and mistrust as a basis for punitive intervention from ‘data users’ and powerful groups whose diminished propensity for ‘understanding and tolerance’ is all too evident. Rendering visible the faces of those *behind*, for example, the camera lens must also be a priority – if only in calling the powerful to account for their increasingly intrusive and unjust surveillance practices. Related to this it is important not to forget that CCTV does not operate in vacuum and, as this paper has argued, sits alongside and complements other regulatory and policing initiatives that contribute to local order. Along with intrusive camera surveillance, ‘older’ penal methods contribute to a curfew on freedom of movement in the city; of who can move where, when and how within a locality. Sovereign control in the city, as managed through a neoliberal state, maintains coercive aspects of rule as central to a process of territoriality, spatial control and social ordering (Stenson, 1999; Coleman, 2003a).

It seems all the more difficult to ‘humanise’ surveillance practices when the nature of neoliberal rule is so obscure to the public eye and lines of accountability so blurred. In the era of the ‘entrepreneurial city’, which has reproduced and marketed a reinvigorated ‘local elite’, this observation is particularly relevant (see Coleman, 2003b). The mushroom growth of partnerships aimed toward governing a range of local problems has highlighted the issue of locating ‘the powerful’ within often dense and informal alliances that are relatively closed off from public access and scrutiny. The democratic deficit within urban rule generally, and with CCTV in particular, is high, where millions are spent on glossy marketing and legitimisation strategies that appeal to inclusive ideals of ‘the city’ or ‘the people’, united by a circumscribed notion of ‘civic pride’ and ‘civic duty’.

This paper has called attention to trans-local developments in the political economy of social control, but this does not mean there are easy comparisons to be made between cities such as Liverpool and Los Angeles. Neoliberalism does not exist in any pure form and is constructed through programs that are contingent and operationalised within “inherited institutional and social landscapes” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 344). In noting the importance of ‘the local’, it does not prohibit a contribution to wider empirical or theoretical debate around the nature of contemporary social control and in particular the trans-local shifts towards ‘revanchist’ forms of social control (Smith, 1996; MacLeod, 2002). An over emphasis on the local can result in a masking of similarities between cities as well as a forgetting of the salience of trans-local challenges from the grassroots to neoliberal agendas that have sidetracked welfare issues, housing needs and environmental safety. Future research will need to map the contours of a “transatlantic diffusion” of a “new doxa on security” that is becoming increasingly visible at street

level (Wacquant, 1999: 319). The technologies of this neoliberal doxa are less important than the normatively sanctioned outcomes that have intensified the criminalisation of poverty.

Challenging the ‘surveillance society’ also means – at the very least – questioning the embeddedness of neoliberal mentalities that have seeped into the wider culture and taken the form of a new ‘common sense’. As this paper has argued, the ‘neoliberal order’ sets the context through which ‘risk’ categories, underpinned by a normative and moral vision, are identified. This vision neither has its roots in some generalised notion of ‘panoptic power’ nor does it exemplify some notion of “action at a distance” (Rose, 1996: 43). Instead, the vision for urban order outlined here is a highly interventionist, tendentious and political vision of social control that seeks to deny, partly through mystification but equally through coercion, the less equitable consequences of neoliberal rule. As a sponsor of the freedoms that the citizen-worker-socialite enjoys, CCTV attempts to filter out and re-represent the meanings of social inequality and social justice. It simply cannot be imagined in a neoliberal landscape that a CCTV inspired narrative could appear as a press story and sympathetically relay ‘a day in the life of an ordinary homeless person’,<sup>14</sup> a day of being threatened by local businesses, and of verbal and physical abuse from public and private police - not to mention coping with the weather. Protecting the truly vulnerable is not the job of a contemporary urban surveillance camera. In building ‘safer cities’ for corporate growth, the poor, if visible at all, have become irresponsibilized eyesores whose stake in the new fangled neoliberal channels of citizenship and political representation is being eroded (Harvey, 2001; Centre for Public Services, 2002).

It is the very complexity, at times obscure, nature of the neoliberal state form that confounds researchers. But understanding this state form is important if we are to confront processes of exclusion and disempowerment that run conterminous with the surveilled city. The wider challenge lies in grasping and responding to the wider authoritarian tendencies in the neoliberal state as it skews public accountability and scrutiny under a veil of self-congratulatory promotionalism. Identifying and unmasking these institutional state forms will aid the challenge to a surveilled and unjust urban space. Questioning the efficacy of neoliberal forms of rule also means questioning the efficacy of mass camera surveillance as providing ‘answers’ to the continuing inequities and socially divisions that have intensified under the neoliberal agenda itself.

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<sup>14</sup> Nor indeed has public space been ‘imagined’ in the local media from the point of view of the potential dangers for women as they move through ‘public’ and ‘private’ space. The same applies to those subject to forms of racial violence in the city. As the paper has argued, the ‘friendly eye in the sky’ is *construed ideologically* as ‘friendly’ to some beneath its gaze more than others.

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