Sometime near 2007 the world reached a ‘watershed in human history’ - the global urban population surpassed the rural (Davis 2007). Distinct from intimate towns and sprawling suburbs, cities are filled with strangers living in close proximity to one another (Jacobs 1961). Surveillance is a traditional element, perhaps even a defining feature of urban life (Coaffee et al. 2009): thus, surveillance is increasingly urban surveillance. In 21st Century cities, this surveillance is intensifying and mutating as the strangeness and anonymity of urban life is either fading or adopting new forms. This issue is about the new forms, arrangements, and representations of urban surveillance.

In the emergent highly-developed ‘cybercities’, where digital technologies and urban life converge (Graham 2001), surveillance is becoming more concentrated, hidden, passive, functional, mobile, and varied (Lyon 2007). If camera surveillance is often considered the prototype of surveillance (Doyle et al. 2011), then emblematic of growing mobility and mutations of urban surveillance is the ever-moving, police-controlled cameras and recent linking of public and private camera surveillance systems (such as in Chicago’s city centre (ACLU of Illinois 2011)); the recent proliferation of cell phone camera use and image transfer by average citizens to document and publicize police brutality (see: Finn 2011) such as during the G20 protests in Toronto; and similar use of mobile camera phones and hand-held cameras by police patrols on city streets (see: Kiss 2009: 212) to capture images of perpetrators or to surveil protesters, such as recent Occupy Movement participants in numerous city centres. Urban surveillance is not limited to the activities of the public police or to the spaces and forms of conduct in their formal purview and which become visible through routine patrols, though police practices are certainly changing with new urban trends. Nor is it limited to the natural surveillance constituted through distinctively urban architecture, buildings, and infrastructure. There is a proliferating diversity of agents, targets, and forms of urban surveillance. These developments blur distinctions between public and private and surveillance and ‘sousveillance’ (counter organizational surveillance – see: Mann et al. 2003) and suggest a need for new approaches and concepts.

Much work in urban studies over the last two decades has documented the demise of public urban space in cities of the modern West, and all that entails consonant with urban neo-liberalisation and gentrification (Smith 1996; Blomley 2004; Wilson 2004; Low and Smith 2005). These processes are typically linked to urban regeneration (or revitalization) projects. With these trends, specific urban forms, such as Privately-Owned Public Open Spaces (POPOS), condominium high-rises – vertical versions of intensively-surveilled and suburban gated communities (see, e.g.: Monahan 2006) – and business improvement districts (BIDs) have spread. POPOS in one form or other are found throughout Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. Condominium development in the big cities of China in the last decade rivals rates in
North American cities. The BID, invented in a Toronto enclave in the early 1970s, and described little more than a decade ago as one of the ‘most intriguing and controversial recent developments in urban governance’ (Briffault 1999: 366), has quickly diffused globally. Now a taken for granted feature of North American cities it is increasingly seen in cities in Europe, South Africa and beyond (see: Peyroux, Putz, and Glasze 2012). With these developments have come detrimental and exclusionary effects on the urban poor and marginalized populations. New surveillance technologies, ranging from digital camera surveillance systems to myriad control devices that prevent and enable access to commercial retail and residential spaces of the rapidly growing numbers of urbanites, have accompanied these forms (e.g.: Coleman and Sim 2000). Yet, the social sorting implications (see: Lyon 2003) of these newer urban forms, ranging from radio-frequency identification in stores in retail strips, to biometric technologies in condominium complexes, remain largely unexplored. Possibly due to application flexibility, these forms seem increasingly focused as much inward as outward. Closer attention to the iterations and implications of these technologies and their uses in the spaces of downtown commercial strips, commuter transportation vehicles and hubs, and condominium common spaces, those distinctively urban institutions and spaces involving these modes and agents, is overdue.

Yet other human forms of surveillance have also emerged with these technical forms too. For example, as much as camera surveillance systems in North America have been often BID-financed and encouraged, significant too has been the widespread introduction of BID-directed ‘ambassador patrols’ from Sheffield to Baltimore to Vancouver in BIDs (see: Huey et al. 2005; Sleiman and Lippert 2010). The former brightly uniformed and radio-equipped surveillance agents are not obviously security-oriented and often have no legal authority. The human ambassador patrols are not merely static backdrops or stage props to a real, more technologically-based urban surveillance. Rather, they are integrated into new urban surveillant assemblages (Haggerty and Ericson 2000) in complex ways, though sometimes awkwardly and contingently. Like other new forms of surveillance they are not stationary either; rather, ambassadors often move up and down urban streets in downtown and other commercial strips exchanging information with pedestrians and business owners (BID members) to come to know the urban in seemingly more diplomatic and certainly more intimate ways than would be possible with, for example, camera surveillance alone. Indeed there is increasing evidence that business members of BIDs themselves become the surveillance subjects of ambassador surveillance in some Canadian cities (see: Lippert 2012a) and through other means in U.S. cities like Los Angeles (see: Marquardt and Fuller 2012). Besides the remade commercial retail spaces of cities, a neglected area of urban surveillance is surveillance within the now immense private residential urban infrastructure of centrally located high-rise condominiums (see: Lippert 2012b). For example, consider the surveillance of condominium common spaces, which in some new developments may be both vast and intensive. Property managers install and use camera surveillance to watch conduct in common spaces, such as residents’ household garbage chutes and recreational areas, to identify rule-breaking residents and visitors; in other cases the equivalent of police informants (often called ‘condo commandos’) operate on behalf of condominium boards or property managers and engage in unmediated forms of surveillance (watching parking lots through their apartment windows, patrolling hallways, and taking meticulous notes). Concierges (or ‘doormen;) also function as surveillance agents in this regard by monitoring residents’ activities and access and egress in both mediated and unmediated ways, including by direct watching and camera surveillance, and by controlling electronic access codes to apartments and common areas within their purview (Bearman 2005). It would seem that both human agents and technologies and how they are assembled is relevant for understanding new developments in urban surveillance and within as much as outside the spaces produced by what Stephen Graham aptly describes in his opinion piece in this issue as the ‘logics of splintering, fragmentation, and polarisation’.

The four articles that comprise this issue continue to reflect transdisciplinarity that has been a feature of Surveillance and Society and the surveillance studies project from birth. Urban geography, language and literature, sociology, and criminology are all represented here. This issue is also international in character. The articles focus on developments in cities of Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, and thus in Western
countries more generally; but their implications are not limited to the urban spaces of these places. The mobility-presuming ID scanning technologies and ID badges taken up in the two of the articles that follow, for example, are found beyond the particular usages described. Of course how and the extent to which they resonate in the ‘megacities’ of countries like Latin America’s entertainment districts of Santiago, Chile, and cities of Asia and beyond has yet to be seen. The patterns they discern are evident in cities beyond their respective national borders and, as Stephen Graham notes in his opinion piece, the city and the nation are intimately and digitally tethered.

We know Foucault is a foundational thinker of Surveillance Studies (Wood 2003), but what the articles of this issue on urban surveillance reveals with its particular attention to technology, mobility and diversity is that the Panopticon, that relentless spatial figure and metaphor that has been accompanied by extensive debate about utility and application, may have all but passed us by. The Panopticon is a recurring model that surveillance studies has had difficulty moving beyond, despite spirited and reasoned arguments why we should do so (see: Haggerty 2006; Wood 2007). Highly significant, therefore, and conspicuous by its absence in this issue, is any serious invocation of the notion of an ‘urban panopticon’ (Koskela 2003). This should not be taken to suggest Foucault’s legacy as a foundational thinker is in doubt. For instance, his attention to governance (evident in his now famous neologism ‘governmentality’) and the concepts refined in the wake of those later writings and lectures are of continued relevance to surveillance studies (see, for example, Lyon 2007; Lippert 2009). Highlighted in Foucault’s writings on governance (Foucault 1988), for example, is the concept of ‘police’, which refers not to the public police but more broadly to a regulatory power entailing coercive measures to ensure a community’s welfare and safety (Dubber and Valverde 2006). The relevance of ‘police’ to urban governance is suggested by Foucault’s claim that ‘to police and to urbanize are one and the same thing’ (Foucault, as cited in Valverde 2008: 35). Its relevance to surveillance studies remains largely unexplored and yet to the logic of ‘police’, with its dream of regulating everything urban, would seem to be highly dependent on surveillance. Hunt (2006), for example, explores the emergence of regulations and rudimentary signals in cities to control that perpetual urban problem known simply as ‘traffic’ as a form of ‘police’. But neglected in his otherwise insightful account is mention of discussion of just how much surveillance has been introduced in cities in the name of ‘traffic’, ranging from increasingly automated toll booths that collect information and images on the roadways or bridges into the urban core from the suburbs, to ticketing systems for parking garages to temporarily store vehicles that include technology that automatically issues tickets if a vehicle contrasts with a camera surveillance image taken an hour earlier, to sophisticated license plate monitoring by cameras while vehicles are on the move, to among the first publicly-funded and camera surveillance systems in cities available for public consumption set up to view problematic roadways and intersections on the way out of the urban core. While ‘police’ is often depicted – when it is mentioned - as the now defunct antecedent of early liberalism, it has a contemporary presence in cities that has yet to be explored and has not been fully replaced by neo-liberalism and similar exclusionary logics of government (Lippert 2012c). This is of course only one of Foucault’s non-panoptic legacies.

While it is vital to document the ascendency of myriad new technologies that bear down on and enable the urban, a perpetual issue in surveillance studies concerns how surveillance in all its forms is normalized too, that is, how these technologies come to be widely accepted (Murakami Wood and Webster 2011). Indicating that these new forms and arrangements of surveillance have appeared or accompanied new forms of urban governance and space is not an explanation of why they have been implemented without much opposition in the first instance. One reason, of course, directly related to the representation problem Lorna Muir identifies in her article is that this also pertains to strategies of resistance to surveillance (see, e.g.: Huey 2011), that is, how does one represent that which is increasingly mobile, diverse and hidden in urban spaces in order to problematize it? Only rarely have surveillance studies scholars directly addressed surveillance normalization (see: Murakami Wood and Webster 2011) and perhaps no normalizing force is more significant than mass media; what is known about surveillance is largely determined by media representations (Norris and Armstrong 1999: 63). This suggests the significance of the article by Warren,
Palmer and Miller which focuses on computerised identification (ID) scanning devices. These technologies are being deployed in urban night-time retail alcohol economies (sometimes called entertainment districts or urban ‘nightscapes’ that are often contiguous with BIDs- see: Lippert 2007), in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada.

Consistent with what was stated about the Panopticon above, the shift to the ‘control societies’ of Gilles Deleuze is a development eloquently described by Lorna Muir in this issue’s first article as reflective of a migration from traditional Foucauldian notions of surveillance space. Muir argues the Foucauldian paradigm of discipline that treats space as ‘immobile and frozen’ may be an inadequate framework with which to make sense of surveillance of urban space. In Deleuze’s control model, urban surveillance is characterized by digital surveillance practices, leading to a view of urban space and urbanites as largely inside digital matrices. However, Muir asks: if surveillance conducted within this conception of urban space is intensified, hidden, passive, and mobile, how can it be represented in film? Muir then explores how cinema engages with urban space by analyzing scenes from *Erasing David* (2009) and *Minority Report* (2002) and, in particular, discerns the cinematic strategies of representing these new hidden urban surveillance practices.

The next article by Warren, Palmer and Miller readily deploys Foucauldian-inspired concepts of ‘governing from below’ and ‘governing from above’ (see: Stenson 2005) and normalization, along with other key concepts. The authors describe how one media outlet’s support of ID scanners helped normalize this form of surveillance and fostered their introduction into Geelong, Australia’s licensed establishments. They explore how processes of governance ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ interweave to produce political and media reactions to crime prevention and show how in media accounts of ID scanning emerged as the central strategy to respond to alcohol-related violence in the Geelong entertainment district. Several discursive techniques supported the normalization of the use of ID scanners. In particular the authors find that what was excluded was discussion about privacy, data security and the linking of systems. Simultaneously, a crisis of violence was fomented to justify a radical surveillance-based response and publishing anecdotal statements underscoring its success. The authors explore this in relation to the media’s central role in reforming the Geelong night-time economy and broader developments entailing the deployment of surveillance technologies at the expense of alternative freedom-maintaining measures.

In recent decades the evening urban economy has been key to the revitalization of downtowns with alcohol-related establishments as the driving force. Concerns about security and crime are not limited to Australian cities like Geelong. Van Liempt and van Aalst, the authors of the third article, focus on Rotterdam and Utrecht and their local safety measures, legitimizations, and effects. Indeed the article addresses how surveillance measures in these urban entertainment districts are legitimized in the Netherlands. It is argued that such entertainment districts are attractive to consumers precisely for their potential for both adventure and excitement (what is commonly referred to as ‘edge’). The authors highlight that these districts must be secure but also maintain this notion of edge which surveillance strategies threaten to eliminate entirely, thus requiring careful steering between the two. Their analysis therefore complements the account of Warren, Palmer and Miller by pointing out the complexities and potential pitfalls of using surveillance mechanisms in urban nightscapes.

In Lippert and Walby’s article, the surveillance arrangements and practices of new municipal government corporate security (MCS) units in Canadian cities are explored. These units have been appearing in most larger Canadian cities and reflect a centralization and intensification of urban surveillance that commenced in the 2000s but unlike developments described in other articles in this issue remain largely outside the media spotlight and representation. MCS does, however, encapsulate the dimensions of mobility, diversity and technology focused upon in this issue. These units are found to engage in surveillance of city workers as well as citizens on municipal lands and in municipal buildings, those looking inward and outward. The authors argue that MCS units are repurposing, enhancing, and
recombining surveillance technologies with existing forms. New surveillance agents, who are neither the familiar contract private security guards of outsourcing fame, nor traditional public police patrols, are being deployed too. Recent attention in surveillance studies and urban studies is correctly placed on private auspices and provision of externally-directed urban surveillance. Yet, this analysis of MCS practices suggests focus on public auspices and provision of security and institutional surveillance that is internally-directed is also justified. The authors argue that what characterizes the new urban surveillance may be less its privatized and technologically-advanced attributes and more its apparent comfort with a mutating amalgam of public/private, human/technological, and external/internal forms and foci.

Taken together these four articles serve as a beginning point from which surveillance studies scholars can further explore the new urban surveillance in all its iterations. They suggest several avenues for research in relation to both private and public urban spaces and agents. If these new urban assemblages are to be understood, it is crucial not only to document their technical and human elements but also to consider why they are emerging and how they are being represented and normalized. More broadly they show a need for greater exchange of concepts between surveillance studies and urban studies as there is plainly growing overlap between the traditional subject matters of these two literatures. While the articles above have started to illuminate them, perhaps most obvious, however, is a need to explore these developments, such as the intensification and mobility of urban surveillance, both deeper inside the workings of Western entertainment districts and city halls, or similar distinctively urban institutions and spaces of Western cities, but also in rapidly growing non-Western metropolises and their neglected urban elements where surveillance is unlikely to be any less intense, mobile, or diverse in the 21st Century.

References


