

Electronic Fortification in Phoenix

Surveillance Technologies and Social Regulation in Residential Communities

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This article compares experiences of surveillance technologies in low-income public housing and affluent gated communities in Phoenix, Arizona. Contrary to the popular discourse of surveillance as ensuring protection from external threats, in practice, both groups feel subjected to undesired individual scrutiny and policing of their behaviors. Nonetheless, key differences exist. First, residents in gated communities possess relative mobility and minimal personal risk compared to those in public housing. Second, in public housing, the underlying logics behind surveillance are toward the enforcement of state laws, whereas in gated communities, they are toward the enforcement of conformity in appearance and behavior. The article argues that the dissonance between popular discourse and discourse of practice about surveillance technologies is representative of deeper social instabilities engendered by neoliberal forms of governance.

Keywords: *electronic surveillance; public housing; gated communities; social control; neoliberalism; technology studies*

The quest for security organizes modern life. In a world perceived as increasingly unstable and insecure, the hyperregulation of boundaries and borders has become a dominant response. Boundary regulation in urban settings may be seen most clearly with the rise of private security forces and fortified enclaves, such as gated communities, but little attention has been paid to the ways in which technological surveillance contributes

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to spatial exclusion by means of its integration into urban space and its enforcement of social norms. Drawing upon qualitative research in one low-income public-housing complex and two gated communities in Phoenix, Arizona (a large and diverse city in the southwestern United States), this article illustrates how surveillance technologies and their related discourses communicate a sense of social stability that fails to match the lived experiences of people in these communities. As with gates and walls, electronic surveillance may operate as a less visible but similarly political fortification of urban space. Surveillance can police residents as well as outsiders, all the while presenting durable barriers to social inclusion for marginalized groups within cities.

The primary question addressed in this article is what differential practices and power relations are engendered—or rendered visible—by the incorporation of surveillance technologies into residential communities? I argue that remarkable similarities exist between the experiences of residents in low-income public housing and gated communities. Contrary to the popular discourse of surveillance as ensuring protection from external threats, in practice, both groups feel subjected to undesired individual scrutiny and policing of their behaviors. One key difference lies in the relative mobility and minimal personal risk of gated-community residents compared to those in public housing. For many living in public housing, this is not a choice but a necessity. A second difference lies in the underlying logics behind surveillance in these communities: toward the enforcement of disciplinary state laws in public housing (i.e., targeting residents who are attempting to cheat the system in some way) and toward the enforcement of conformity in appearance and behavior in gated communities. These differences are important because they underline the fact that while security regimes may be proliferating throughout society, the potential negative outcomes of surveillance are not distributed equally or with similar effects across communities.

The purposes of the research presented here are to explore differential power relations in cities such as Phoenix and to question the role that technological surveillance plays in structuring social experiences. It is telling that residents say that surveillance is for their own protection, while in practice, they are inordinately subjected to its gaze. The dissonance between discourse and practice found in both community types may be indicative of broader shifts in modes of governance throughout society: toward increases in social control mechanisms and decreases in public spaces, goods, or services. As I will review in the next section, this neoliberal form of governance manifests not only in state policies but also in cultural dispositions, such that people

come to believe in the benefits of privatization and security interventions even if they do not personally taste the promised fruit of these changes.

This research makes several unique contributions. First, it documents the experiences of those under surveillance, which are data that have been conspicuously absent from the field of surveillance studies. Second, it compares two radically different sites of fortification, whereas most recent literature has concentrated upon sites of affluence, commerce, or mobility that exclude marginalized groups. Finally, it theorizes technological surveillance as a form of fortification and a mechanism for social regulation that complements and reinforces built architectural forms such as walls and gates.

Theoretical Framework

The literature on fortified enclaves highlights the ways that built forms and social norms function politically to enforce sociospatial segregation and to send clear symbolic messages about who does and does not belong (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Landman 2002; Mycoo 2006). While design deterrents to social integration may take the form of gated communities or enclosed malls and office buildings, they also can manifest in the more direct if less visible forms of benches that cannot be slept upon, sprinkler systems that keep people away from buildings or parks, or inadequate public transportation systems (Davis 1990; Flusty 1994; Dear 2000; Monahan 2002). The naturalization of urban and suburban designs may simultaneously serve to maintain certain social orders and exclusions while reducing public awareness of social problems.

Teresa P. R. Caldeira (2000) has convincingly interpreted fortified enclaves, such as gated communities and shopping malls, as reactions against the unsettling of social boundaries—whether through the development of political democracy in Brazil or through demographic shifts in California. In both cases, she argues, the privatization of public space allows “new urban morphologies of fear” (p. 335) to acquire durable, material forms that threaten to attenuate democracy and delegitimize public institutions well into the future. Other urban-studies scholars draw similar conclusions with their work on the United States, illustrating how gated living exacerbates social fragmentation and forecloses social integration to the detriment of civil society (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Low 2003; Maher 2003; Romig 2005).

Many public-housing complexes also can be thought of as modern fortified enclaves. Under the rubric of “defensible space” (Newman 1972),

architects and planners have designed such spaces with the theoretical goal of deterring crime. The key tenets of defensible space are (1) encouraging territoriality through the use of material and symbolic barriers and thus catalyzing a sense of ownership by residents, (2) providing clear lines of sight for optimal individual surveillance, (3) creating aesthetically pleasing images to symbolically dispel any stigma associated with high-rise or other housing, and (4) situating housing for optimal geographical juxtaposition with areas considered safe.¹

Since the introduction of the defensible-space concept in the early 1970s, there has been significant—and ongoing—controversy about the empirical validity of the findings concerning crime reduction (Coleman 1985; Hillier 1986; Steventon 1996; Chih-Feng Shu 2000). Beyond these debates about efficacy, some have offered counterevidence suggesting that Newman erred in presupposing that crime was external to public housing in the first place and that residents would trust police officers, when they might have ample historical reasons not to trust them (Musheno, Levine, and Palumbo 1978). Nonetheless, planners and urban-studies scholars continue to mobilize and interrogate the defensible-space concept (Cozens, Hillier, and Prescott 1999; Blomley 2004; Hillier 2004), and as my research in Phoenix finds, housing and urban development (HUD) planners have intentionally designed spaces with these tenets in mind, thus obviating any perceived need for electronic surveillance systems in many locations.²

Greater residential fortification and social and economic segregation are also coincident with the emergence of new forms of neoliberal governance and hyperindividualized relations to the state. Rather than being the simple outgrowth of individual fears and demands, fortification and other security efforts become articulations of the simultaneous retreat from the welfare state and growth in the state's policing and security functions (Bourdieu 1998; Monahan 2005; Katz 2006; Kupchik and Monahan n.d.). Seen from this perspective, alterations in spatial relations tie back in to broader political economies, state policies, and cultural dispositions; these changes may be grounded in and mediated by local contexts, but they signal shifts in cultural logics and institutional structures that extend beyond any individual city or community being studied. As a working definition, I use the term *neoliberalism* to indicate (Monahan 2006, p. x):

the simultaneous advancement of social control mechanisms and retreat from social programs in societies. It manifests in *policies*, such as those for the privatization or elimination of public goods, services, or spaces; in *technological systems*, such as surveillance architectures or inadequate public transportation;

and in *cultural dispositions*, such as widespread beliefs about the inefficiencies of public programs and the necessity of individualized responsibility. As a cultural shift, neoliberalism advances new social and moral orders that normalize its assumptions as fundamental truths.

The integration of information technology (IT) into urban spaces operates within this neoliberal milieu. Modern urban telecommunications networks act to regulate the uneven distribution of goods and services, as do other infrastructures, leading to what Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) have called “splintering urbanism.” Under this planning paradigm, those with financial resources obtain privileged access to transportation systems, utilities, communications networks, and secure living spaces. Meanwhile, public infrastructures are increasingly restricted, privatized, or dismantled, such that individuals without sufficient resources are cut off from basic necessities and placed at increased risk. The result, as Zygmunt Bauman (1998, 2001) has theorized, is a state of social polarization and fragmentation whereby the affluent become disconnected from place and insulated from the plight of those outside their networks.

Urban information technologies do not simply regulate access to services or spaces, however; they also facilitate monitoring and control of the public through enhanced data collection. Technological surveillance systems range from the relatively obvious closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems to the almost completely invisible radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags embedded in smart cards used to access buildings or garages or pass through toll stations. When technological surveillance is incorporated into spaces and infrastructures, it increases the amount of data available both for social-control functions and capital-accumulation imperatives (Graham and Wood 2003), as can be seen with police profiling and public-private-sector data sharing, respectively (Lyon 2001; Gandy 2003; Curry, Phillips, and Regan 2004; O’Harrow 2005).

As with spatial designs (Lefebvre 1991), technologies function politically to produce, mediate, and normalize social relations, all the while deflecting critical inquiry into their ramifications by means of their purported neutrality (Winner 1977, 1986).³ That said, there has been a vocal critique of this politics-of-technology thesis that is worth commenting on here. Scholars of the social construction of technology have asserted that this thesis falls into the trap of technological determinism, granting too much agency, meaning, and power to technologies whose design is contingent and whose future effects are unknown (e.g., Woolgar 1991; Pinch 1996; Joerges 1999). But the effects of technologies do not have to be intended to be felt. Neither are subsequent

societal dependencies on large-scale technological systems (such as interstate highways or nuclear power) neutral commitments when they structure social worlds and foreclose, in the immediate future, alternative ways of living. In this regard, individuals critical of the politics-of-technology thesis could learn a great deal from urban scholars and philosophers of space (e.g., Jacobs 1961; Lynch 1984; Lefebvre 1991; Engwicht 1993). Architectural design is intended to program spaces for certain uses, and even if the designs fail, which they invariably do to some degree, the spaces are no less programmed because of the designers' inability to predict their effects upon bodies, movements, or interactions.

Working from this theoretical backdrop, this article focuses on residents' experiences of surveillance and security systems in low-income public housing and gated communities. Surveillance systems provide a focal point that guides interviews, all the while facilitating inquiry into the interplay of personal narratives and institutional developments, local concerns and global forces. Although residential surveillance may function as a form of electronic fortification that operates upon logics of suspicion and exclusion, it also may have surprisingly similar effects upon the experiences of the poor and the affluent.

Methods

The research presented here on residents' experiences of surveillance systems took place from January to August 2005 in Phoenix, Arizona. Phoenix is the fifth largest city in the United States (City of Phoenix 2005), is home to heightened class and ethnic polarization, and is proximate to the United States–Mexico border, so surveillance and security issues are a clearly identifiable part of the social imaginary in this particular region. Phoenix is also a rapidly growing metropolis. The size of greater Phoenix is 2,000 square miles, and the population is projected to grow from 3.6 million to 6.3 million in the next 20 to 40 years; meanwhile, the region continues to develop in “leapfrog” fashion (Romig 2004, 6), sprawling into the desert with the establishment of “exurban” master-planned communities (p. 3).

Because of ongoing public resistance to limits on development, metro Phoenix is at a crisis point in terms of unsustainable water use, destruction of desert habitat, and dependence on individualized vehicular transportation (Gober 2006). Aptly, Patricia Gober describes Phoenicians as “thinking small and living big” (p. 201), meaning that their social lives are circumscribed by their immediate communities and individual needs, whereas their demands upon the environment and social structures exceed the capacity of those

systems to handle them. The effects are felt not only by the environment but also by the social fabric, with segregation and inequality intensified by master-planned communities that do not pay city taxes (Romig 2004). It is also important to note that gated communities across the region are heterogeneous in their design and composition and that some are much less exclusive and less disconnected from the city than others.

The research sites included one low-income public-housing complex of 136 units in downtown Phoenix, one somewhat porous gated community within the Phoenix metropolitan area, and one highly fortified gated community about 30 miles distant from the city. The sites were chosen primarily based on the criterion of their actively using video surveillance and secondarily on the communities' receptivity to participating in the research. Because of previous efforts at defensible-space planning that were deemed successful by housing authorities and because of reduced HUD budgets for security equipment, only one public-housing site in Phoenix uses—or admits to using—video surveillance. This site serves, for the most part, senior and/or disabled residents, but the population also includes children (some well into their 20s) and nonsenior, disabled residents. In contrast, the less secure gated community covers about 1,000 acres and includes approximately 300 houses. The main feature of this community is an elaborate central golf course with an attached country club inn and larger houses surrounding the entire course. Finally, the highly fortified gated-community site is an enormous complex that is actually categorized as a city in its own right. It covers roughly 5,800 acres with thousands of perfectly uniform, homogeneous houses. It also sports a country club, and all home owners have access to the two golf courses in this community.

The qualitative methods combined observation and semistructured interviews. At the public-housing site, ethnographic observation was conducted at tenant council meetings at which residents learn about new policy changes affecting their community and voice concerns about issues such as security. At the gated communities, observational research included sitting in guard booths as residents and visitors were screened before entry and accompanying known residents to common areas such as golf courses where they socialized with neighbors.

In addition to many informal conversations during fieldwork, a total of 21 semistructured interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes each were conducted with residents and employees at the three sites. The interview questions were scripted to elicit residents' impressions about for whom they thought the surveillance was intended and what their experiences were of being under surveillance themselves. In this way, data were gathered both

on the popular discourses of security and safety and on the actual practices of living under the scrutiny of such systems. The tensions and contradictions between discourse and practice, which are analyzed in detail below, point to interesting incongruities on the local level of the community, while at the same time, they appear to be reflective of tensions between security discourse and practice on a national level.

It is also worth introducing a caveat here that these findings may not be representative of other experiences of residential surveillance throughout the United States and elsewhere.⁴ The research was focused on three relatively unique communities in the Phoenix area and was not intended to be generalizable as such. Nonetheless, other research on living in fortified areas indicates that these findings are consistent with larger trends of sociospatial segregation, strict enforcement of the status quo, and attenuated avenues for democratic practice (Caldeira 2000; Falzon 2004; Kuppinger 2004; Waldrop 2004).

“Nothing to Hide” in Public Housing

Questions about security and surveillance in public housing—as with elsewhere—invariably invoke the response that if you are not doing anything wrong, you have nothing to hide. Those who do have something to hide, the discourse continues, are almost exclusively outsiders looking to commit crimes or otherwise cause trouble in communities. They are delinquents attempting to steal property, drug dealers looking to sell and users looking for a fix, prostitutes soliciting customers, and homeless people searching for a place to sleep. In public housing, one thing follows rapidly in the wake of such graphic examples and personal claims of nothing to hide: detailed stories of invasive, unwarranted monitoring of residents themselves. The holistic evaluation residents give of surveillance, once the platitudes are dispensed with, is that it is ineffective at preventing crime and ensuring safety and that it facilitates unjust particularism by those doing the monitoring. This section uses quotes from interviewees to convey the tension that exists between the discourse of intended uses of surveillance and practices of heightened scrutiny and control.

As I arrive to interview the property manager of the public-housing site, she spies me at the glass door as I fumble with the intercom system and opens the door for me via a remote control. Her office is situated immediately inside the main entrance to the building, where through pulled-down Venetian blinds she can keep an eye on people coming and going without

being all that visible herself. Upon entering her office door, which also is kept locked and is opened via a separate remote control, I see video monitors displaying surveillance feeds from throughout the building and its grounds, including the front door through which I just walked.

The surveillance system at this site consists of approximately half a dozen video cameras trained on hallways and points of entry and egress and a card-key system for regulating and remotely tracking building and parking lot entry. At least one of the video cameras has pan-tilt-zoom functionality for following individual movements through hallways. All the cameras are hard-wired (as opposed to wireless), and the video feeds are piped into the property manager's office, where they are saved in analog format on VHS video tapes. Unless there is a specific incident worthy of investigation, the tapes are kept for one week before being reused; periodically, the old tapes are replaced with new ones as a way to combat the unavoidable degradation of analog video quality. The card-key system, by contrast, is digital, and all data are stored indefinitely on the hard drive of the property manager's computer. These data allow for automated tracking of residents, who each are issued personal cards programmed with unique identification numbers. The data generated by this system include information on who entered the building or parking lot, what time they entered, and how long the door was left open. The property manager or others then can run queries on the data to search for suspicious activities such as someone's returning every night about 3:30 in the morning. Currently, the analog video surveillance and digital key-card systems are not synchronized, making it nearly impossible to link what is visible on the tapes with what is readable on the computer screen, respectively.

The property manager tells me that the surveillance systems are intended, foremost, to protect residents from external threats. Surveillance is explicitly part of the defensible-space design of the building, which qualifies for classification as a Phoenix Crime Free Multi-Housing Program site by demonstrating its compliance with such design criteria as keeping shrubs trimmed below the level of the windows and posting warning signs to potential criminals. The outsiders that the system aims to deter are characterized by the manager as "riff raff," or simply, "bad guys" who want to engage in theft, drug use, or prostitution. It is her hope that the surveillance will "push some of the riff raff and stuff a little further beyond our boundaries to kind of safeguard our residents."

Residents echo the property manager's sentiment of surveillance's acting as protection from external threats, at least initially, by describing crimes that they have experienced or have heard of. One woman in her early 40s related:

When I first moved in, the lady who was the manager then, she said, “You might want to close your window.” “No,” I said, “because you have to be pretty much like Superman to be able to come up to burglarize me.” She said, “Oh.” No. “Spiderman,” I said, “you have to be like Spiderman in order to get up there to do any harm.” No, you don’t. You know what, one of our ladies, Miss [X], lived up on the third floor, and they came up, clear up the third floor from the outside, and she was in bed. She wasn’t asleep. But she was, it scared her, she kept her patio door open like I do, dumb, dumb, but I do. And they came right in her patio door, and they robbed her, they took, they looked in her drawers, and I mean they got some jewelry, they got her money that she had in there, and they took her TV and her stereo. And they walked right out the front doorway.

Although the surveillance system is designed to protect against such intrusions and residents are periodically informed about security measures that are being taken, residents ultimately place little trust in the deterrence capabilities of surveillance. For instance, when I asked one resident what she thought of the surveillance cameras, she responded:

I think they just got ‘em up there for show. To tell you the god’s truth, and I think, I’m imagining probably, that they don’t even [monitor] them, and sometimes maybe even forget to turn the suckers on.

When I followed up by asking about the potential of cameras to deter crime, she asserted:

Don’t do no damn good because yeah, it takes a picture of them, and if no one’s monitoring it, you don’t know ‘til the next flippin’ ass day anyways.

Answers of this sort show that residents are acutely aware of the human limitations of surveillance systems for providing the kind of security that would be meaningful in their lives. This does not mean, however, that residents are critical of the technologies themselves or of the technologies’ ability to facilitate intrusive monitoring of their activities.

When I ventured to ask questions about residents’ feelings about being observed, they would reply in a somewhat conflicted way. First, the popular discourse about wrongdoing came quickly to their lips: “I ain’t got nothing to hide” or “If I was doing something wrong, I would [feel uncomfortable].” The property manager similarly resorted to this formulation:

Clearly, if you’re not doing anything wrong, what are you worried about? It’s only people that are up to something that should be concerned about it. . . .

Every so often, somebody will say something, but I find usually they're the ones that I have to be watching anyhow.

This is a remarkable statement: that critics of surveillance are more likely than others to engage in criminal activities and that complaining about surveillance does nominate residents to be an increased target of it. This position also highlights the conflict that residents express in their secondary responses to the question of being observed. While surveillance systems are not bad in and of themselves, they say, the secondary examples they provide suggest that surveillance becomes one more element of individualized monitoring and social control in their everyday lives.

When I asked one man about whom he thought the surveillance systems were trying to monitor, he launched into a detailed personal narrative about his very real fears of individualized scrutiny. He told me that just the night before, he had let a friend of his sleep in his apartment because his friend otherwise would have had to sleep on the street. The property manager spied his friend with the surveillance system and confronted my interviewee, saying, "If I see that guy around again, I'm going to call the cops and you're going [to be thrown out] too." Throughout the interview, which was held in his apartment, he kept returning to this threat, saying that he was terrified about being evicted, but he knew that his friend had to come back to pick up his belongings. Compared to being on the street, he related:

Once I walk in the door here, I feel safe. I feel very safe. But then, especially if [the property manager's] on, on shift, I kinda shake in my boots until I get past her office and up the stairs. . . . Every time we have a dispute or something, she scares me. I lived on the streets for two years, and I'll tell you what, I'd kill myself before [living on the streets again]. I'm Christian, and you know, if I ever did it, I would pray to god for about five minutes and tell him why and everything, but I will never live on the streets again. I won't do it.

Rather than this being an isolated sentiment about surveillance of residents, other interviewees arrived at similar conclusions. One woman said:

It seems to me, they're more concerned of what we're up to than [with] people coming from the outside in. That's just what it seems like to me. But they're always wanting you to tell on everyone else when you see something suspicious.

Finally, the property manager herself confessed to actively spying on residents—using electronic surveillance and other means—to root out the "bad" ones to protect the "good" ones:

For a while there, I had a couple individuals I was trying to evict, and I was using [surveillance] as a means of tracking, dating, and all that stuff, and activity of people coming and going, and coming and going.

And if someone's living here illegally, do you call in the police?

Well, if we have an unauthorized person, you know, that's one of the hardest things to prove. Yeah, he has a couple shirts here, but every so often stays the night. Again, we'll try tracking their history as far as usage of the card, to see if you know it's being randomly used quickly, boom, boom, boom, if there's some kind of history there. We can say OK, we have reason to believe, I'm coming in to do an inspection. Now I can open up closet doors, I can open up anything that's [owned by the] city. But as far as their dresser drawers, under their bed, things like that I'm not allowed to touch. I'm not allowed to touch their items. I'll open up the vanity mirror and see if there's a men's shaving kit or whatever in there and I'll document those items. I can also ask.

It sounds uncomfortable.

Pardon?

It sounds uncomfortable anyway to—

Well, it is, it's really, really hard to prove [that someone is living there that should not be].

The property manager's description of her practices confirms that residents' concerns of being scrutinized are not without merit. Tellingly, she simply could not hear my question about being uncomfortable looking through other people's belongings—for her, it was an issue of practical difficulty, not ethical ambiguity.

Thus, the community climate into which technological surveillance is being inserted is one already characterized by suspicion. The surveillance system then facilitates and amplifies these internal monitoring practices. Surveillance technologies may possess a valence for constructing subjects who are seen as suspect, and therefore, worthy of monitoring and control. Beyond this, the invasive uses of surveillance in public housing can be explained further by the underdetermination of the technologies. When surveillance systems are implemented in contexts marked by suspicion and inequality, the systems appear to absorb and reproduce those identities and relations.

The main discursive themes covered in this section were those of surveillance being for external threats, residents having nothing to hide, and residents' being exposed to heightened degrees of internal scrutiny. This is not to say that monitoring of residents is necessarily without just cause. Internal crimes exist, as many residents told me about drugs and prostitutes being brought into the complex. Nonetheless, experiences of surveillance show that the rhetoric of surveillance shielding residents from external threats is a somewhat misleading oversimplification because the threats are

not only external and because insiders are being watched and policed far more than outsiders by housing-authority personnel.

“Somewhat Protected, Somewhat Violated” in Gated Communities

As with the examples given of experiences of surveillance in public housing, a similar tension exists between what residents say are the intended functions and the actual uses of surveillance systems in gated communities. The first discursive move of residents is to explain the surveillance imperative as providing protection from external threats, often with no direct experiences of criminal activity in the neighborhoods. (Although the focus here is on the experiences and perceptions of residents rather than on official crime rates, reported crimes in these communities are quite low, relatively speaking, for the Phoenix metro.⁵) These phantom threats are perceived as being introduced, more often than not, by the many Latino workers maintaining the grounds, engaging in home repair, or building new houses. Soon after providing this rationale for surveillance, however, residents volunteer a series of complaints about being scrutinized, hassled, or made to feel uncomfortable by the security personnel operating the systems or by the systems themselves. Unlike residents in public housing, though, those in gated communities perceive security personnel as their disgruntled employees, who—it should be noted—could not afford to live in the same communities that they serve. Residents rationalize putting up with feelings of intrusion as part of a conscious trade-off in exchange for feeling (that their property is) safe and secure.

In this section, quotes from interviewees are used to demonstrate how technological surveillance becomes just one more mechanism, along with home-owners association (HOA) rules and regulations, for ensuring social conformity. Whether through video cameras, card-key tracking, or computerized databases of vehicle license plates and house addresses, technological surveillance intensifies existing practices of social surveillance, even to the extent of serving as a deterrent to active community engagement (such as walking around one’s neighborhood).

The security systems at the two gated communities studied represent two ends of the surveillance spectrum—nominal and extreme. The smaller site has two guard-gate entrances with small guard stations of about 10 square feet. Only one person is in each station at a time, and the stations are only staffed from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Residents enter either by means of a clicker or by manually punching a code into a number pad. While it is

policy that guests be screened by guards, they often will simply tailgate a resident's car into the community—entering before the guard gate descends; this is a practice ignored by the security personnel. There are surveillance cameras at these gates as well as next to gates leading into an adjacent community. The larger gated-community site, by contrast, uses four gates, two large guard stations that are staffed by four to five guards at all times, card-key entry, guards patrolling on bikes, and roaming checkups by the HOA to ensure compliance with community rules and regulations. This second community takes security seriously, so there is no possibility for entrance without gaining clearance from a guard or being in possession of a community member's key card.

At the first gated community, several instances of property theft motivated the installation of video cameras at the gates as a mechanism for the deterrence of future thefts. One resident explains:

There began to be some thefts in people's back yards of like pool equipment, backyard stuff, where people were either accessing the property, tailgating through the gates, or they're coming off the golf course . . . it was expensive pool equipment, like, not a net, but someone's jumping over the fence, taking filters or hardware.

One security guard in the community added that an incident of theft at the internally located country club inn, where guests can stay when visiting the golf course, was the primary catalyst for the purchase of surveillance cameras. The second gated community, by contrast, had cameras installed as part of the initial development plan, and residents had no knowledge of any thefts in the four years since the community was opened.

The perceived threats to property or human safety in both gated communities are from individuals who are external to the community but nonetheless have regular access to it—namely, Latino workers. When asked about the effectiveness of surveillance technologies, one resident responded:

Well, I think surveillance could be effective in determining potential crime candidates . . . I'm certainly sure [that management] can't screen [security personnel] to the extent necessary, so they don't know who they exactly hire all the time. So I'd say it's not necessarily residents that they're targeting [with surveillance] but outsiders. Whether it be employees that are working the grounds, like I said, or people that are just coming in contracting.

In this passage, the interviewee reveals that he sees manual laborers as marked in advance as “crime candidates” by means of their status as

minimum-wage earners and that one alternate response to surveillance might be to screen the workers more extensively in advance. The prospect of correcting vast income disparity or of paying workers more is not on the table as a solution to the potential risk to property that these workers pose. Instead, the technological fix of surveillance is conceived of as a more viable response.

Another resident, although obviously uncomfortable with the question of for whom the surveillance systems are intended, responds in an unusually forthright fashion:

I think probably [surveillance is for] working-class individuals and predators, whether it would be of a sexual nature or a criminal nature . . . Yeah, I think, just in general, just based on the location and our geography, I think that there's probably a general stereotype of what we would consider criminal, predators . . . I would probably say Hispanic [people].

What is revealed in this type of response is a disturbing stereotype of workers that is indicative of an uneasiness toward those from other class or ethnic backgrounds but also of the general hostility in the region toward anyone who might be an illegal immigrant. The surprising grouping of Latino workers with sexual predators demonstrates not only the extent of the stigma attached to such workers, but perhaps more importantly, the irrational level of fear engendered by the unknown other.

When the questions turn to interactions that residents have with security personnel, the narrative of external threats quickly subsides into a series of gripes about living under surveillance. Most of these complaints stem from a general climate of surveillance that includes monitoring by neighbors, HOAs, and security personnel to ensure adherence to community rules and regulations.

Technological surveillance, rather than signaling a radical change in living experiences, becomes one more mechanism contributing to this general culture of social control. As with the data from public housing, the point of discussing technological surveillance alongside other forms of social regulation is to draw attention to how social context and practices influence the use of surveillance systems and infuse them with meaning at the same time that the systems introduce subtle alterations in and intensifications of existing cultures of control. Surveillance technologies become part of the social fabric, so it would be misleading and empirically inaccurate to present them as external tools applied to discrete social problems.

There are many cases in which surveillance-facilitated social regulation can occur. One resident described breaking community rules by letting a contractor in on a Sunday (which apparently is an official day of rest in the neighborhood) and the shock of being traced back to his house by means of

his license plate number. Others described receiving citations for not conforming to HOA rules concerning parking on the street or acceptable yard vegetation.

On one level, these cases are simple inconveniences that homeowners must put up with in exchange for living in these privatized communities. Still, adapting one's life to such strict rules and being actively corrected if one does not self-police creates a living experience in tension with American ideals of property ownership and individual expression. As one resident put it, being under surveillance makes him feel

somewhat protected, somewhat violated. Protected from a sense of there's roaming security, there's drive-by security, violated in terms of like CC&R [covenants, conditions and restrictions] violations.

This is an interesting conflation of the two meanings of violation: of experiencing some kind of personal trespass on one hand and of being cited and fined for breaking community rules on the other. One can interpret this to mean that the condition of living under such strict rules and of having others tell you how to live is experienced as a form of personal violation, especially when these residents are paying so much for the privilege of living in these communities.

Some residents communicated an embodied sense of panoptic self-regulation (Foucault 1977), such that—in this case—the trend toward privatized public space serves to eliminate the concept of the public in the social imaginary, too. In one telling example, a resident confessed that he refrains from walking around adjacent communities because he feels too observed and worried about being confronted by security personnel:

I wanted to go walk around the homes under construction, and I got the feeling there that there was a camera on every corner. . . . It made me feel a little uncomfortable . . . it made me think twice because I know they're all centrally monitored, and I didn't want to deal with the hassle of someone saying, you know, technically, he's trespassing, if that's the issue. So I did not choose to go walk by any of the houses.

This person's concern about walking around the neighborhood is tied to clearly demarcated yet artificial boundaries placed between communities. As he expands upon this theme, he says that it leads to a great sense of isolation in his home life, because he lives alone and does not know any of his neighbors. Surveillance, then, is not necessarily about directed social control but is instead about the production of governmentalities that alter the field for social thought and action.

Finally, when interviewees begin to discuss surveillance throughout everyday life, not just in their communities, they will then say that they have nothing to hide but will confess that they are bothered by the conformity that surveillance practices enforce. In the following passage, a young woman introduces some interesting dissonances in her position on what it means to be aware of surveillance cameras:

Well, I know that if I go into a bank, that I'm being watched. I know that there's cameras. I mean you can see them, they're obvious. I think that in some instances, people are unaware that they're being watched in a grocery store or a department store. A lot of people don't pay attention to that kind of stuff. I just happen to notice them when I go in, because, you know, you see them. But had I not, if I go through life with blinders on, then yeah, you would never notice that there were cameras there. I think that people who really have nothing to hide, really are like, they really are unaware of where the cameras are, because it's not a big deal to them.

One tension here is that cameras are obvious and impossible to miss, yet many people have "blinders on" and are unaware of them. At the same time, the woman concludes by saying that if people have nothing to hide, then they will probably be unaware of surveillance, implying that because she does notice cameras, she might have something to hide. Judging from her tone of voice in the interview, she definitely did not mean to say that she deserved additional scrutiny. If anything, she felt critical of others who were not as aware as she was. All the same, she fell back upon the popular, ready-made discourse of surveillance's being worrisome only for those with something to hide.

Other conflicts can be seen in articulations of concern about the social dangers of conformity brought about by increased surveillance in the world beyond the gates of the community. As one woman said:

You pretty much force people into boxes. I think that if you want to create robots, that's exactly what you will do. If you have cameras all over, you will create robots, you know, do this, do that, whatever.

There are also nuanced status performances inflecting surveillance practices in these gated communities. Seemingly, one of the things that bothers residents the most is that security personnel do not treat them with the degree of respect that they feel they deserve:

I don't really know what [training] those guards have. I mean, a majority of the time, if I ever run into them, I'm not impressed by them personally. . . . I've had a run-in or two with a couple of them just because of their lack of, I guess, of respect.

Gate guards, on the other hand, see a lack of respect on the part of some residents who are always complaining about the money that they are spending in HOA fees for security or about the guards' not being diligent enough at screening people out.

When it comes down to it, though, residents willingly submit to the additional scrutiny, inconvenience, and conformity to gain peace of mind, especially when they are out of town, which many homeowners are for the summer months when temperatures can exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit. One resident put the trade-off into perspective by saying, without any hint of irony, that the community was "like the family living place where you know you could be free." He meant by this that the community embodied the ideals and values of "traditional" American neighborhoods, where one need not worry about crime. Technological surveillance is just one more component in the social-surveillance apparatus of gated communities, designed to safeguard a restricted form of freedom that seems to mean freedom not only from exposure to people from other classes, ethnic groups, or cultural backgrounds but also freedom from the responsibility of outwardly demonstrating signs of individual difference from one's neighbors.

This section identified two dominant discursive themes. The first stressed the use of surveillance to protect community members from outsiders, and the second conveyed a sense of heightened demand for conformity by residents in the communities. That residents hold both those things to be true, unlike those in public housing, who ultimately placed little faith in the protective functions of surveillance, could indicate a need on the residents' part to construct a rational trade-off to justify living in their highly scripted environments. In gated communities, surveillance may act as another form of fortification that insulates community members from outsiders and possibly increases fear of unknown others, but it also tightens the net of scrutiny, conformity, and social restriction within which community members are already entangled.

Conclusions

This article has built upon the literatures on urban and suburban fortification, neoliberalism, and technology studies to analyze the experiences of those living under conditions of surveillance in low-income public housing and affluent gated communities. Whereas much has been written about gated communities of late, this present research's explicit comparison of community types calls attention to the troubling dissonances and unexpected

resonances in the narratives of individuals operating in radically different social worlds. The use of qualitative data to highlight differences and similarities between community types makes a unique contribution to urban studies while also adding to the growing field of surveillance studies, which has seldom taken the experiences and perceptions of those under surveillance as a point of inquiry. Finally, rather than perceiving technological surveillance simply as a tool, it has been theorized here as an additional layer of fortification that actively mediates social relations and co-constructs identities.

The embedding of surveillance technologies into residential spaces simultaneously reinforces and masks emerging forms of neoliberal governance. Residential surveillance intrusively polices the poor in public housing, attempting to root out those who might be plotting to cheat the system in some way. Surveillance also guards the fortified enclaves of private gated communities, under the rubric of keeping out—or at least keeping a close eye on—those who cannot afford to live in such spaces but are necessary for maintaining them. Interestingly, surveillance also subjects the affluent to a type of scrutiny that heretofore has been reserved for the poor (Gilliom 2001; Campbell 2005), and this scrutiny is justified as a necessary sacrifice of rights associated with living in privatized environments. In these ways, residential surveillance operates within and contributes to a neoliberal environment of reduced social programs and increased social control throughout public and private life. As with architecture, surveillance technologies function as political tools with agential force to shape human practices. The valence of these surveillance systems is for monitoring internal everyday activities, not external exceptional ones.

In the examples provided in this article, both the poor and the affluent say, initially, that surveillance is intended to protect them from outsiders. The personal experiences they describe, however, illustrate that much of the monitoring capabilities and control functions of surveillance systems are directed at the residents themselves, whether in public housing or gated communities. I see this as a revealing dissonance between discourse and practice—or more accurately, between popular discourse about the functions of surveillance and the discourse of practice about instances and perceptions of surveillance. This tension is representative of social instabilities engendered by neoliberal forces that run against the grain of the American dream of equal life chances for those in public housing and freedom with property for those in gated communities.

It is the space between popular discourse and discourse of practice where opportunities for awareness and critique may be effaced by the ambiguity and supposed neutrality of community rules, architectures, and technologies. It is

also a space where difference resides and is obscured, especially, so it seems, for the affluent. This is probably so because, in a sense, to acknowledge the particularistic uses of surveillance and fortification might also imply a recognition of particularism more generally or the dominance of ascribed over achieved status in society.

An interesting difference between the narratives of these two community types is that residents in public housing talk about having nothing to hide in their communities, while those in gated communities do not. Instead, gated-community residents mobilize the discourse of nothing to hide only when discussing surveillance in the world outside the walls—on streets, in banks, in shopping centers, and so on. One explanation for this difference could be that gated-community residents believe they have made a rational choice to live where they do and submit to the rules and enforcement practices of their neighborhoods. While HOAs do not adhere to the same democratic principles of cities (McCabe 2005), should residents feel as if they have nothing to hide but still resent the scrutiny, they could petition to minimize the stringent rules or mechanisms of enforcement.⁶

Residents in public housing, by contrast, have no such direct avenues for altering practices of social regulation where they live. Additionally, given the myriad ways that many of these individuals are investigated, evaluated, sorted, and controlled by state apparatuses and agents of public welfare and housing, they may have developed heightened sensitivity to the politics of electronic surveillance systems, as other research has shown (Gilliom 2001; Eubanks 2006). For public-housing residents, the discourse of nothing to hide serves a symbolic function of asserting innocence even in the face of individualized scrutiny by state agents with control over residents' ability to meet their basic human needs.

While the data presented here suggest a structural similarity in experiences of surveillance in public housing and gated communities, clearly, this isomorphism does not mean that the life chances, conditions, or concerns of these two groups are comparable. Nor does this similarity imply that the outcomes or emotional effects of surveillance-facilitated interventions can be equated. After all, the ultimate material risks faced by those in gated communities are the inconveniences of fines or of needing to move elsewhere. For those in public housing, as my interviewees confess, the ultimate risks are not risks at all, but are instead the dire dangers of living homeless on the street or the disturbing alternative of suicide.

If the hyperregulation of boundaries and borders is a response to social instabilities on local and global levels, then it is worthwhile questioning not only the regulation itself but the root causes of such instabilities. Rather

than being measured responses to threats of crime, social regulation in places such as Phoenix may be more about contending with the fallout from economic inequalities, which are compounded by the dismantling of social programs and rise in sociospatial segregation. As with security policies on the national level, it seems that the surveillance and security interventions intended to protect people from external threats require that people in turn subject themselves to greater unwarranted and uninvited scrutiny and control. Thus, it is not surprising that a tension would exist between what people say surveillance is for and how it is actually deployed, because it is, in some senses, a technological fix to a complex social problem that it cannot hope to solve.

Notes

1. It is highly likely, as Mawby (1977) claims, that many of Newman's ideas were borrowed from Jacobs (1961).

2. It also deserves mentioning that rather than security emanating in some unidirectional, deterministic fashion from defensible spatial designs, residents also actively appropriate, avoid, and move through spaces of public housing to create a sense of personal security (Gotham and Brumley 2002).

3. This position concerning the politics of technology is consistent with Henri Lefebvre's (1991) writings about the politics of space, in which both technological infrastructures and spatial designs shape social relations through their mediation of human action. See Hommels (2005) for an excellent review of the complementary overlaps between technology studies and urban studies.

4. Gieryn (2006) has introduced a provoking analysis of scientific claims as grounded in the production of cities as both field sites for and objects of urban research. Because cities do serve as unique truth spots, or as laboratories for the production of knowledge, attention to place is crucial for understanding how knowledge claims will be judged, circulated, and applied.

5. As a point of reference, in 2004, Phoenix reported 9,465 violent crimes and 94,406 property crimes; the corresponding crime rates adjusted for population are 6.62 per 1,000 and 66.07 per 1,000, respectively. The public-housing site written about in this article is located in Phoenix. The two gated communities are not in cities large enough to have separate listings in the FBI's annual report of crime statistics, but the closest city that is large enough to be listed reported 468 violent crimes and 8,998 property crimes during the same time period; the corresponding crime rates adjusted for population are 2.09 per 1,000 and 40.12 per 1,000, respectively (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2005). Of course, many crimes, such as domestic violence, go unreported and are therefore difficult to evaluate objectively (Durfee and Rosenberg 2004).

6. It deserves mentioning that the procedures for changing covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs) can be quite difficult because they are designed for stability. McCabe (2005) notes that some communities require two-thirds approval by voting members for changes to take place and that renters are effectively excluded from this process—only homeowners get a vote.

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