

# *Review Essay*

*Reclaiming the Streets: Surveillance, Social Control and the City,*

**Roy Coleman, Willan Publishing, Cullompton, 2004, 278pp,**

**ISBN 1-84392-077-8 (hardback)**

*City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience,*

**Keith J Hayward, Glasshouse Press, London, 2004, 248pp,**

**ISBN 1-90438-503-6 (paperback)**

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Cities have long been linked with the idea and experience of criminality and deviance with one of the most significant contemporary aspects of this connection being the use and policing of public space and in particular, inner city commercial and entertainment precincts. This struggle over space is, in part, an outcome of the complex and dynamic relationship that has developed in recent years between the social, cultural and material economies of cities which now emphasise consumption and lifestyle (Lovatt & O'Connor 1995). Central here is the ever-expanding provision and spatial concentration of a range of collective activities and facilities, including those associated with shopping, drinking, eating and 'creative practice'. The use and redevelopment of inner city zones for leisure and consumption are sources of considerable dispute in media discussions, urban and cultural policy and planning, policing, and public administration. In these debates, two dominant but opposed views have emerged. On the one hand, designated inner city entertainment and leisure precincts are valued because of the role they are believed to play in the expression and expansion of urban lifestyles and city identities, and for the increased investment, employment and consumer spending they can generate. Indeed, the stimulation of a vibrant urban consumption economy is frequently viewed as a sure-fire way to revitalise towns and cities, particularly declining city centres and 'high streets'. This is a trend that has been particularly evident in many provincial cities that were once dependent on manufacturing and heavy industry but which now seek entrepreneurial solutions to substantial social and economic decline.

The 'stimulation' view has an obvious appeal to planners, local councils and business interests. But the ideal often diverges from the lived reality as the effects of the proliferation of licensed venues, alcohol consumption, and public disorder contrast sharply with notions of cosmopolitanism and sophisticated urban living. The result is a second view which puts questions of social order, policing and crime prevention to the fore and is often accompanied by increasingly urgent demands to combat 'anti-social behaviour' and violence (Chatterton & Hollands 2002). This second position dovetails with a wholly sceptical view that inner cities (particularly, after dark) foster a range of anti-social and criminal activities, such as public disorder, vandalism, physical assaults and alcohol-related injuries, illicit drug dealing and use, and sex work. It is such issues that concern local residents and divide the media, government officials and police whose place in maintaining

public order has partly been usurped by the expansion of surveillance and private police engaged in a range of 'bouncing' and security roles across the urban economy. The contradictory objectives of stimulating and policing urban space and urban lifestyles are amongst the most important issues facing officials in cities around the globe. At their core are issues of inclusion and exclusion, social justice, power and inequality. They are also issues of concern to criminologists. It is in this context that the books *Reclaiming the Streets: Surveillance, Social Control and the City* by Roy Coleman and *City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience* by Keith J Hayward have emerged as welcome contributions to the academic literature on the complex city/crime nexus. Both books in different ways consider the strategies being adopted to control those urban activities and trends perceived by the mainstream as 'deviant' and both provide useful theoretical frameworks for understanding their development.

Coleman's *Reclaiming the Streets* is focused on the pervasive use of surveillance strategies, in particular CCTV to maintain control and public order in UK cities. The book argues that the British are now the most 'watched, catalogued and categorised people in the advanced world' something which, he suggests, has occurred with 'little public debate or opposition' (p 3). The task he sets himself in this book, therefore, is to interrogate why this has happened. He argues that CCTV has fundamentally altered the relationship between people and the city and that some groups are targeted routinely for surveillance in order to make others (and their property) safe. The use of CCTV is rarely questioned either in the media or by public officials. Rather, it is positioned unequivocally as being a good thing and in the public interest. Coleman argues that the justification for installing CCTV in the UK has been to 'reclaim' cityspace not only for the consuming middle class but for the urban interests who own property and who benefit from this consumption. He further argues that the state is deeply implicated in protecting the material interests of the powerful. For Coleman, CCTV is a social process that is linked inextricably to the alliance that has emerged within urban governance between the local (neoliberal) state and powerful business interests. Thus the book moves beyond established crime prevention explanatory frameworks to more sociological ones. Coleman argues that an understanding of the state and the material interests that shape it is pivotal if one is adequately to explain urban social control strategies, such as CCTV. The core point being that the state, social control and social order need to be considered in terms of a series of relationships and interconnections. He argues that 'neoliberal rule is articulated in and through dominant social bodies and networks of state power' (p 33) and technologies, such as CCTV operate in the economic interests of this 'ruling social bloc'. In Coleman's view, the state seeks to maintain social order as a strategy (overt or otherwise) for maintaining *the* social order (and, yes, the Durkheimian and, indeed, Marxian roots of this position are acknowledged). In other words, CCTV is, as he says, far from being 'merely a crime prevention technology'.

The theoretical framework on which Coleman's argument rests is introduced and developed in the early chapters of the book through discussions of such issues as state sovereignty, the neoliberal city, state control of space (territory), social control, and local power structures, particularly, as they relate to urban regeneration strategies. The remaining chapters apply these theoretical insights to an examination of the CCTV phenomenon in the UK port city of Liverpool. Here, the author deftly traces Liverpool's history as a place of work and production to its deindustrialisation and then transformation from a city seemingly at odds with the urban entrepreneurial ethos that emerged in the 1980s to a place that embraced this ethos and the urban governance imperatives that it demands. Coleman's might be an unfashionable position but I for one found it refreshing. He uses empirical material to achieve a fascinating exploration of a very significant urban policy and policing

trend and the rich empirical detail of the book adds depth to the broader theoretical arguments. The book is also an account of the politics of space and the importance of consumption capitalism in shaping contemporary urban life and, indeed, the perception and policing of urban crime. It is some of these themes that lie also at the heart of Keith J Hayward's concerns in his book *City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience*.

Hayward's aim is to bring both an understanding of the city and the urban experience to the analysis of urban crime. He starts from the premise that the routines, rhythms and spatial manifestations of everyday urban life and their intersections with the rampant culture of consumerism that pervades society, are implicated in the conduct, nature, extent and definition of crime. Such insights probably are not particularly novel but they certainly are not widely held within contemporary criminology, which as he argues has lost its links with critical disciplines, such as sociology. And where Hayward diverges from most attempts within criminology to explain the link between urban criminal activity and the contexts within which it occurs, is that his starting point is the city and urban and social theory and not the crime and criminology. Hayward argues that the study of urban crime would be both richer and more incisive if criminologists had a more robust understanding of the relationship between people and their cities, cultures and societies. At the core of this relationship, he suggests, is consumption, which he argues is not only reshaping urban space, including directing the location and nature of commercial, residential and leisure places and the ways in which these spaces are used (and, indeed, policed), but is also altering the emotions and desires which underpin contemporary life and, thus, much criminal activity. In Hayward's view, 'consumer culture and its associated practices are ... contributing to the *substantial spatial and situational reconfiguration of the post-industrial city*' (p 11, emphasis original). His point, not unlike Coleman's in some way, is that in order to understand criminal behaviour you need first to understand the social, spatial and cultural conditions that fostered it in the first place. But Hayward goes further to argue that it is also necessary to grasp the emotional and lived dimensions of urban crime and that these too are often embedded in urban consumer culture.

In the urban environment of consumption the contrast between wealth and poverty is highly visibly. For instance, the spectacular spaces of prosperity and affluence frequently are located alongside the abandoned spaces of poverty, deprivation and decline. Divisions are evident also in the emergence of vastly different (and highly segregated) residential environments, as well as in the widespread development of privately owned leisure, entertainment and retailing precincts, including the suburban shopping centres which are replacing the 'main street' as the principal shopping spaces of the middle and upper classes in many cities. There is overwhelming empirical evidence showing that rather than facilitating difference, contemporary cities are actually fostering, and giving visual expression to, greater social, cultural and economic inequality leading, in particular, to the development of enclaves of homogeneity. Mike Davis's (1990) devastating account of Los Angeles as a city of urban and social division is dealt with in detail in the book to illustrate the consequences of this segregation, as well as to highlight 'the importance of emotions and the link to consumerism and urban space' (p 15) in shaping both urban crime and policing. Hayward argues that desire and fear intersect to shape the contemporary criminal landscape, suggesting that the dominant urban culture of consumerism fosters in some individuals a desire for the goods and lifestyles from which they are (materially and often physically) excluded. He goes on to suggest that it is this longing that underpins many new forms of criminal behaviour at the same time as the fear of crime and the 'other' is leading to greater spatial segregation as well as prompting calls for increased surveillance and

policing. The distinction that was first developed by cultural theorist Michel de Certeau (1984) between the 'concept' or rational city of planning and theory and the lived city of experience serves as a theoretical touchstone for Hayward to develop this argument. He also draws on key works by both Jock Young (1999) and Jack Katz (1988) to develop a framework capable of explaining the criminal behaviour of individuals but which is not reducible to the micro or the psychobiological. This is an important accomplishment because, as Hayward points out, criminology has lost the concern it once had with issues of social justice. This view resonates with Coleman's lament that criminology has lost sight of the broader power relations at work in the construction of deviance.

In seeking to bring critical theoretical frameworks to the study of the city and crime, both these books have the potential to make important contributions to contemporary criminology. They provide original and fruitful ways of understanding urban crime by, in different ways, asserting the importance of the social, the cultural and the political. Both books have much to offer scholars and students not just within criminology but more broadly in disciplinary areas such as urban sociology and cultural geography.

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## References

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