

THE BANALITY OF SECURITY

The Curious Case of Surveillance Cameras

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Why do certain security goods become banal (while others do not)? Under what conditions does banality occur and with what effects? In this paper, we answer these questions by examining the story of closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) in Britain. We consider the lessons to be learned from CCTV's rapid—but puzzling—transformation from novelty to ubiquity, and what the banal properties of CCTV tell us about the social meanings of surveillance and security. We begin by revisiting and reinterpreting the historical process through which camera surveillance has diffused across the British landscape, focusing on the key developments that encoded CCTV in certain dominant meanings (around its effectiveness, for example) and pulled the cultural rug out from under alternative or oppositional discourses. Drawing upon interviews with those who produce and consume CCTV, we tease out and discuss the family of meanings that can lead one justifiably to describe CCTV as a banal good. We then examine some frontiers of this process and consider whether novel forms of camera surveillance (such as domestic CCTV systems) may press up against the limits of banality in ways that risk unsettling security practices whose social value and utility have come to be taken for granted. In conclusion, we reflect on some wider implications of banal security and its limits.

Keywords: banality, camera surveillance, material culture, objects, security

Introduction: On Banal Goods

I think if you look at CCTV, it is so ubiquitous in this country, and especially where you are at the moment. I suspect you know, you will have been surveilled by 200, 300 cameras during the course of the day in London, almost without doubt. I don't think people worry about those at all, to be fair. They don't even notice. (Security manager of a major supermarket)

Why do certain security goods become banal (while others do not)? What does it mean to say something is banal? Under what conditions does banality occur and with what effects? What are banality's limits? Why, if at all, does banality matter? Our aim in this paper is to answer these questions. We do so by re-examining the story of closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) in Britain and considering what lessons are to be learned from its rapid transformation from novelty to ubiquity, and what the banal properties of CCTV can tell us about the social meanings of surveillance and security.

The paper is drawn from a larger study of the social meanings of security consumption, the fieldwork for which we conducted from 2007 to 2009. It is focused on the element of that study whose aim was to go beyond received understandings of security

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consumption as ostentatious and status-related and focus, instead, on trying to understand the social production of what we originally termed ‘commonplace’ goods (Goold *et al.* 2010). The wider project comprised a close reading of marketing materials produced by companies selling security goods. In addition, we conducted interviews with 19 stakeholders in the security industry (including six from companies manufacturing or selling CCTV) and 13 security managers responsible for buying (or not buying) CCTV systems, or acting as intermediaries between buyers and sellers. We also draw on material from four focus group discussions and 12 in-depth individual interviews in which respondents were invited to offer and discuss their views on and any experiences of CCTV.¹

To describe any good as banal is to highlight its taken-for-grantedness, to observe that it is rarely subject to attention or concern, to note that it exists largely beyond public discourse or contestation. A banal good is mundane, commonplace, scarcely worthy of comment. Recent work in the study of material culture has suggested that objects often matter in social life ‘precisely because we do not *see* them’ (Miller 2010: 50, emphasis in original; see also Preda 1999). In this context, Daniel Miller has deployed the notion of the ‘humility of things’ to capture the ways in which objects ‘work by being invisible and unremarked upon, a state they usually achieve by being familiar and taken for granted’ (Miller 2010: 50). Goods, Miller continues, ‘have the unexpected capacity to fade out of view and remain peripheral to our vision’ (Miller 2010: 51), while helping ‘you gently to learn how to act appropriately’ (Miller 2010: 53). The ‘lesson of material culture’, he concludes, ‘is that the more we fail to notice them, the more powerful and determinant of us they turn out to be’ (Miller 2010: 54). For these reasons, there is much to be gained from thinking hard about the virtues and vices of banality in the security domain.

In his successive efforts to build a sociology that makes room for ‘human’ and ‘non-human actors’, Bruno Latour similarly urges us to think about the ways in which objects act (Latour 1992a; 1996). Using Latour, we can highlight the ways in which the social analysis of security has historically tended to fixate on the state and its coercive human agents to the neglect of other security actors. This process of ‘purification’ (Latour 1992a) has given rise to relative silence concerning the manner in which things are implicated in the constitution of modern security, as well as to a certain neglect of the ‘hybrid’ linkages that exist between human and non-human security actors.² According to Latour, we need to pay closer attention to the ways in which objects operate as ‘delegates’ for their owners/users, ‘prescribing’ the conduct of others and thereby quietly playing a part in the assembly of subjectivities and social relations. Put simply, objects matter—in terms of the ways they both shape relationships and obscure the exercise of state authority. When objects—particularly security objects—cease to be noticed, these effects can be significantly heightened.

One of the examples that Latour famously uses to reinsert the ‘missing masses’ into the study of social life is, in fact, a security object: the door. Latour points out that the door has become so familiar to us that we no longer stop to think about the work that

¹ A fuller account of the theoretical orientations, substantive concerns and methodology of the overall study can be found in Goold *et al.* (2010).

² In recent years, the state- and human-centred focus of security analysis has begun to change. See, among many examples, Brown (2006) and Valverde (2011), not to mention the still burgeoning field of surveillance studies and its focus on ‘socio-technical’ security systems (Norris 2012: 24).

it performs (selectively permitting access to and exit from buildings); the alternatives it superseded (a hole in a wall); or the human labour that it competes with, outperforms and has for the most part replaced (guarding). As Latour puts it, a hinged door solves the problem of ‘how to discipline a youngster to reliably fulfil a boring and underpaid duty’ by ‘delegating’ the work, and its regulatory capacities, to a non-human actor (Latour 1992b: 156).³ But the door is not alone. Today, there are plentiful other examples of security objects that we (now) fail to notice or comment upon—several, such as keys and windows, are the door’s close cousins. We might also cite house alarms as a more recent example: their description by one of our respondents as a ‘fact of life’ nicely captures the dominant social meaning of banal goods. The access control systems that regulate entry into and movement through buildings or transportations systems also fall into this category. However, by no means have all security goods become commonplace or banal in this way. For example, modern airports have become an uneasy mix of the taken-for-granted (passport checks, luggage inspection systems) and the novel and contested (biometric passports, iris scanners, controls on liquids, full-body scanners).

The case of airports illustrates well the point that security goods—like other goods—have a ‘biography’, or social life (Appadurai 1986). Few protective devices start life as banal.⁴ They at first appear unusual, innovative, exciting or scary. They are open to challenge by the objects or human labour they seek to replace, and must fend off the charge that they are stoking social anxieties or will have negative implications for civil liberties. Not all such goods are destined to succeed; even fewer end up being banal. Some may simply fail.⁵ So security goods have to *become* banal. Or, perhaps more accurately, we should say that they have to be *made* banal—by different interests acting upon them, through their involvement in certain key events, or by initiating and/or benefiting from wider penal or social developments. Becoming banal is, in short, a process of meaning-formation, one that could have turned out differently and indeed will play out differently in specific local, regional or national settings.

In this paper, we want to describe and make sense of the elements and limits of this process of becoming banal using the curious case of CCTV—specifically, CCTV in the English context. The case is ‘curious’ simply because it could have turned out differently: the banality of CCTV is puzzling and stands in need of explanation. The puzzle is not the one that features in the copious literature on camera surveillance, where one commonly encounters bafflement over why CCTV has diffused *despite* any clear evidence that it is effective in controlling crime (e.g. Norris 2012). This is only baffling if one makes the rationalist assumption that effective crime-control technologies will succeed and ineffective ones will fail—an assumption that is belied every day by the number and range of unproven or ineffective strategies to be found within the arena of contemporary crime control. Rather, our puzzle centres on the question of why CCTV has succeeded when it could just as easily have failed—not least because it arrived with its very own oppositional metaphor (‘Big Brother’), a metaphor that has been mobilized to defeat cognate technologies, notably identity cards in the case of the United

³ As a security industry campaigner we interviewed put it, ‘Electronic security doesn’t go on strike, and it doesn’t go off for a drink’.

⁴ Though some do—the bike lock, for example.

⁵ In a forthcoming paper drawn from this research, we examine a case of such failure—namely GPS trackers that enable parents to remotely supervise their children.

Kingdom. Our concern, moreover, is to explain not merely this ‘success’, but to ask why CCTV has managed to succeed in a very particular way—by becoming banal.

We begin by revisiting and reinterpreting the historical process through which camera surveillance has diffused across the British landscape, focusing on the signal moments and key developments that encoded CCTV in certain dominant meanings (around its effectiveness, for example) and pulled the cultural rug out from under alternative or oppositional discourses. Drawing upon our interviews, we then tease out and discuss the family of social meanings that can lead one justifiably to describe CCTV as a banal good. We then examine some frontiers of this process and consider whether novel forms of camera surveillance (such as domestic CCTV systems) may press up against the limits of banality in ways that risk unsettling security practices whose social value and utility have come to be taken for granted. In conclusion, we reflect on some wider implications of banal security and its limits.

The Path to Ubiquity: On the Diffusion of CCTV in the United Kingdom

I am old enough to remember, you know, when CCTV started and shadows of all of 1984, and we can't possibly have this, and there were real civil liberties issues about the idea of spy cameras. Now, I think in this country, to a greater extent than I am aware of anywhere else, they are accepted as simply a fact of life. (Member of the Royal Institute of Town Planning)

Over the last 20 years, a great deal has been written about the rise of CCTV in the United Kingdom (e.g. Norris and Armstrong 1999; Goold 2004; Webster 2009). Although the historical accounts often vary in terms of their emphasis—some focus on CCTV's sociological significance, while others instead look more narrowly at the impact of cameras on policing and civil liberties—virtually all of them acknowledge that the spread of cameras in Britain during the 1990s and early 2000s was rapid and largely uncontested. While human rights organizations such as Privacy International, Liberty and JUSTICE expressed grave concerns at the time about the speed with which camera systems were being established across the country—and the absence of appropriate legislation and safeguards—for the most part, their warnings had little effect on policy makers or the public at large. Instead, CCTV quickly came to be seen as a panacea for a range of problems, and eventually an accepted part of the urban landscape.

There are a number of reasons why CCTV cameras were able to go from being novel to ubiquitous in the space of less than 20 years. Perhaps first and foremost, the technology emerged during the mid- to late 1980s when the Conservative Government was searching for a new crime-prevention tool. In the move away from ‘fighting crime’ to policies more clearly focused on crime prevention and partnerships with local government, the government had already established a number of programmes aimed at combating the public's growing fear of crime. Both Crime Concern and the Safer Cities initiatives were early examples of the attempt to respond to a perception that cities and town centres were unsafe, and to improve consumer and business confidence (Crawford 1998: 37, 50–8). Similarly, schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch and Street Watch—as well as the expansion of the special constabulary—had been promoted as new ways to reduce crime and disorder, and to increase public safety.

By the early 1990s, however, it was clear that none of these initiatives had delivered on their initial promises, and there was a need for a new ‘magic bullet’. For many within the

government and the Home Office, CCTV appeared to fit the bill perfectly. It was a technology that the public already had some familiarity with—the famous ‘Ring of Steel’ around the City of London had been in place for years—and its cost had fallen to such an extent that it was now a viable option for communities outside of major metropolitan centres. Most importantly, however, it had already had a high-profile ‘public launch’ by virtue of its apparent role in the apprehension of the killers of two-year-old James Bulger. Despite the fact that the presence of CCTV did nothing to prevent the kidnapping (and eventual murder) of James Bulger, in the months that followed the case, the repeated publication of grainy CCTV images of a little boy being led away to his death only served to reinforce the public perception that cameras had played a role in bringing his killers to justice (Young 1995: Chapter 6). As Simon Davies (1998) observed:

[I]n 1993, hard on the heels of the murder of toddler James Bulger, the symbolism that fuelled CCTV was extraordinarily powerful Although the killers were not actually identified or apprehended as a result of this footage, the connection was irrevocably made between cameras and crime control. Put bluntly, an argument against CCTV was interpreted as an argument in favour of baby killers. (Davies 1998: 244)

It is telling, perhaps, that the Conservative Government was willing to fund an expansion of CCTV in Britain in the wake of James Bulger’s killing without needing to see evidence that it would actually reduce crime or improve public safety.⁶ Fuelled by what they perceived to be widespread public support and a belief that the technology would eventually be shown to ‘work’, the Conservative Government diverted funds away from other initiatives and established a series of ‘CCTV Challenge Competitions’, which encouraged ‘local coalitions of elites’ (Norris 2012: 34) to apply for funding to establish their own CCTV systems.⁷ For small towns and cities, there were few reasons not to think seriously about installing CCTV: the public demand was apparently there, and there was central government funding readily available. Indeed, by the mid-1990s, the question for local authorities was not ‘why should we have CCTV?’, but rather ‘why wouldn’t we have CCTV?’. The election of New Labour in 1997 did little to change the UK Government’s approach to CCTV. In addition to continuing the CCTV Challenge Competition, the new Home Secretary Jack Straw also adopted the same largely uncritical attitude—and some of the rhetoric—of his predecessor:

The evidence is clear. In the right context, CCTV can significantly reduce crime and disorder. It is like having permanently on the beat in particular streets or areas a number of police officers with eyes in the back of their heads and an incontrovertible record of what they have seen. When used properly, CCTV can deter criminals, greatly assist the police and others in bringing offenders to justice, and help to reduce people’s fear of crime.⁸

⁶ This attitude can be seen in government pronouncements from the time, perhaps the most striking of which was made by the Home Secretary Michael Howard in 1996: ‘CCTV is overwhelmingly popular. People want it in their town because it makes them feel safer, reduces the fear of crime and lets them use and enjoy their high streets again. The money we are putting into CCTV is partly a response to this public support, but it is also an indication of our confidence that it is worth it When the evaluations of the schemes helped by the Home Office become available I am sure they will show the same.’ See *New Scientist*, ‘Crime watch’ (1996), January 6(13), p. 47.

⁷ The extent of this shift can be seen by looking at crime-prevention spending figures for the period 1996–99. During that time, approximately £45 million—79 per cent of the total crime-prevention budget of £57.5 million—was spent on CCTV. Figures taken from the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit, quoted in Koch (1998: 50). See also Goold (2004: Chapter 1).

⁸ J. Straw, Secretary of State for the Home Department, House of Commons Debates, 16 March 1999.

While it is clear that events such as the death of Jamie Bulger and the enthusiastic support of successive governments helped to drive the rapid expansion—and eventual normalization—of CCTV in the United Kingdom, a number of other key factors were also responsible. The absence of a pre-existing legal framework for the regulation of surveillance technologies in public spaces surely played a part, as did a certain ambivalence—on the part of the government, the public and the courts—towards privacy rights more generally. It is noteworthy, for example, that, at the beginning of the 1990s, the only major restrictions on the establishment of CCTV systems in the United Kingdom were to be found in planning law.⁹ Although this is hardly surprising when one considers that—prior to introduction of the Human Rights Act in 1997—UK law had never seen fit to recognize a freestanding right to privacy, what is interesting is that none of the major political parties or the public at large saw the need to establish a system of privacy protections around CCTV. Instead, what emerged were informal, scheme-specific Codes of Practice that provided guidance for operators and managers but little in the way of substantive restrictions (and no legally enforceable rights or remedies for victims of unwarranted or excessive CCTV surveillance). While the strengthening of data protection laws and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights in the late 1990s led many CCTV schemes to re-examine their internal procedures around the collection, storage and sharing of personal information, local authorities and police services were still free to continue expanding their existing CCTV systems—and to build new ones.

To some extent, this apparent ambivalence towards privacy in the United Kingdom—on the part of the public as well as policy makers and the police—helps to explain why groups such as Privacy International, Liberty and JUSTICE were unable to generate any real national debate about CCTV. Repeated references to Orwell's *1984* and attempts to invoke the spectre of 'Big Brother' simply failed to capture the public imagination, while the counter-argument that those with 'nothing to hide' had nothing to fear was one that clearly resonated with large sections of the general public. There are many possible explanations as to why CCTV never evoked the same sort of resistance that emerged some years later in response to the proposed UK National ID Card scheme. On the one hand, cameras arrived on the scene at a time when there was a widespread belief that many cities and town centres in the United Kingdom were unruly and unsafe, and that something needed to be done to 'clean them up'. In addition, it is possible that the average person just had difficulty imagining that the state—and in particular the police—would ever engage in the sorts of surveillance about which civil libertarians were so concerned. Despite the fact that Orwell's *1984* was set in a futuristic Britain, for many, it was hard to imagine Big Brother becoming a reality in the United Kingdom. Unlike countries such as France and Germany—where there was, in contrast, little appetite for CCTV during the 1990s—Britain had no recent history of organized state repression or authoritarian policing. As a consequence, while the public may not have regarded the state as especially competent or efficient, few saw it—or the police—as potentially malign.

⁹ During the mid-1990s in Britain, the installation of CCTV cameras in public spaces was largely governed by two major pieces of planning legislation: The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, Part 33 (SI 1995 No. 418); and The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1996, Part 25 (SI 1996 No. 1266 (s. 124)).

It is also important not to overlook the fact that, in the early 1990s, public area CCTV was a relatively new technology, and many of the claims about its supposed effectiveness had yet to be tested. For a government in search of a new way of demonstrating it was serious about crime prevention, the question of whether CCTV ‘worked’ to reduce crime and disorder was a largely secondary one. What mattered was being seen to be doing something, and CCTV provided a very visible way for successive Home Secretaries to show that they were taking the public’s fears seriously. In contrast, for those opposed to CCTV, the lack of evidence was a hindrance rather than a help. Just as the government could not prove that CCTV was effective, civil libertarians could not prove it was ineffective. This fact—allied with the public’s apparent disinterest in arguments about privacy or the dangers of state surveillance—meant that it was extremely difficult to mount a clear case against CCTV. In the meantime, systems were being set up all over the country, and the presence of cameras on high streets was slowly becoming an accepted part of the landscape. In contrast, when the National ID Card scheme was first proposed, the shoe was on the other foot. The government’s initial failure to explain exactly what the scheme was for meant that opponents—such as No2ID—were able to capture the public debate and cast the scheme as an unnecessary waste of public money.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that CCTV has become the ‘beneficiary’ of the development and social diffusion of the technology of which it was a pioneering example. Part of this story has to do with the switch from analogue to digital and the impetus this gave to the surveillance industry in terms of upgrading existing systems and creating markets for new ones. But we can also note that, when CCTV was first launched, having one’s image ‘captured’ and stored was an unusual social practice, largely unknown outside the confines of personal photography. Image capturing has, however, mushroomed and become much more ‘social’ (and less ‘private’) in the intervening decades, in ways that have arguably impacted upon the public acceptability of CCTV. Put simply, in a world of camera-phones, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, one in which capturing and circulating images has become commonplace, CCTV no longer seems very remarkable or uniquely troubling. Indeed, in a cultural context in which—as Finn (2012) has recently argued—people more commonly ‘see like a camera’, it is harder for those uneasy about surveillance cameras to pinpoint exactly what would change if CCTV systems were scaled back or removed (see also Calvert (2004)). In recounting the story of CCTV in Britain, one must keep in mind that there are cultural, as well as political and crime-control, reasons why surveillance cameras have travelled a path from novelty to ubiquity.

Everywhere, but Nowhere: The Banality of CCTV

In our brief reconstruction of the history of CCTV in the United Kingdom, we identified some of the principal reasons why camera surveillance has spread pervasively across the urban landscape. But the diffusion of a good is a quantitative thing and is, as such, a necessary but insufficient condition for that good becoming banal. Banality, by contrast, is a qualitative matter and the product of a family of meanings that come to surround and ultimately constitute a good, conferring upon it the property of taken-for-granted ordinariness. So what social meanings have become attached to CCTV

such that we may plausibly interpret it as a banal good? Or, to put it another way, why did camera surveillance come to be everywhere, but noticed nowhere?

Three organizing themes that emerge from our interviews demonstrate that CCTV has become banal. The first is an overwhelming assumption that CCTV has brought with it some obvious benefits. This view is not surprisingly promoted by those who are in the business of selling CCTV. As one security retailer put it:

Public space, anywhere where an individual can see you, you know that's where a camera should be. Because in reality, what the cameras provide the police and the criminal justice system with is the eyewitness to crime, when otherwise, if there's no one around who sees? This sense of security is what we're trying to create with cameras We're acutely conscious of the protection of privacy of the individual. However, as soon as you step outside of your home, wouldn't you like to be protected?

The belief that CCTV cameras offer such protection and are thus 'a good idea' (Male interviewee 1) was widely shared:

I think it is a very good idea. I support it 99.9 per cent. Because it has really helped people to secure areas They can have a quick understanding of what has happened and how to go about fishing the people involved out. (Male interviewee 2)

This view has relatively little to do with the ability of cameras to act as a deterrent (that idea was seldom expressed by our interviewees) or with any technological wizardry that cameras can perform—though one interviewee voiced her admiration for how 'extremely good' cameras 'can actually zoom in in the dark and see people' (member, Focus group 1). The undoubted value of the cameras lies instead in providing the police with 'extra back-up' (Female interviewee 1) and in supplying evidence to assist in 'catching a lot of theft and people being attacked or whatever' (Male interviewee 3). The clear and obvious benefit of camera surveillance lies, in short, in its ability to act as a permanent eyewitness to crime and related troubles. The obviousness of this benefit was such that it has, according to some of our respondents, given rise to a social expectation 'that everything that everybody does is recorded' (Security manager, major shopping centre). As the head teacher of one secondary school put it:

People now expect things to be on camera. If something happens or if there is a scrape in the car park, they'll say, 'Oh can you have a look on the CCTV to see what happened?' So it's quite a high expectation.

The promise of a constantly attentive, never-sleeping witness also underpins this woman's exasperation at the suggestion that some cameras might be removed:

I just think, God, how many, how much crime would go unnoticed? It's just silly little things like, if, joy riders and things like that or people smashing cars. You'd never find a perpetrator if you didn't have CCTV cameras. (Female interviewee 2)

The second motif apparent from our interviews can be summed up in a single phrase: 'CCTV doesn't bother me.' Part of what this phrase captures is the everyday remoteness of camera surveillance, the fact that it is experienced as a non-intrusive, discrete, part of the background, not as the foreground of social control. We return to this issue shortly. But what is also, more explicitly, being registered here is that CCTV *should not* bother anyone—unless that someone has a 'guilty conscience' (member, Focus group 3) or is engaging in activities that he or she would rather not be seen doing. As one of our interviewees put it: 'I would say unless you've got something to hide or worry about it's there for your

benefit and your protection' (Female interviewee 3). Another expressed the point thus: 'It doesn't worry me at all, being a law-abiding citizen' (Male interviewee 3). The same idea permeates this jovial exchange between two of our focus group participants:

A: It doesn't worry me personally that people are taking my photograph. Because really

B: ... If you are not doing anything wrong.

A: Exactly. I think, well, they must get bored if they see me walking down the street.

B: Just hope they get my best side. (members, Focus group 2)

The notion that, if you are doing nothing wrong, you have nothing to fear has long been commonplace of 'law-and-order' discourse; it is a sensibility that has been attached to a wide range of crime-control initiatives and technologies (Girling *et al.* 2000). But the application of this sensibility to CCTV is nonetheless significant. The charge it carries is that there really is nothing much to be concerned about with camera surveillance—no human rights at risk of being infringed, no competing values or interests to be weighed, no great regulatory challenges to be faced. The only people who press such issues must therefore (merely by dint of raising such objections) either be troublemakers or law-breakers. As one woman we interviewed put it: 'I know that some people hate them, but it doesn't bother me at all because I know that I am not up to anything.' What follows from this is that those who object are doing so without good cause and ought properly to desist. This widely held belief thus acts—in this setting as it has in others—as a silencing mechanism. It is a narrative device for stopping an argument. It insists that camera surveillance is a non-issue, infusing it with a public meaning that helps to make it so.

A third striking theme that emerged from our discussions of CCTV concerns the ways in which surveillance cameras simply fail to register in people's everyday routines and consciousness. Stephen Graham (1999) suggested over a decade ago that CCTV was developing into the 'fifth utility', by which he meant that it comprised a series of local surveillance networks that would eventually form into a national grid. However, another aspect of that analogy is apparent here: like electricity pylons, telephone poles and water and gas pipes, CCTV cameras have disappeared into the background of urban life and become socially invisible—out of sight and mind. In respect of the former, our interviewees frequently made remarks to the effect that 'I don't notice them [CCTV cameras]. You don't notice them at all' (Female interviewee 2). Another opined that: 'The ones in the streets, quite frankly, I don't think many, any people take any notice of them' (member, Focus group 4). In respect of the latter, one man we interviewed said this: 'I think probably the vast majority of people forget they are there to be quite honest. Once again, unless you're paranoid about that sort of thing, you wouldn't even realise there were cameras up there.' This was a common sentiment captured in phrases which suggest that cameras have simply slipped, as one of our interviewees put it, to 'the back of my mind': 'I don't think about it', 'Totally unaware of it, never think about it', 'They don't bother me, I don't know where they are'. It adds up to a disposition that is well expressed in the following extract:

I don't think it affects how I feel [about the city centre] because I am not really consciously thinking about it, you know, so, I mean, I know they're there and I don't particularly look for them. I don't particularly notice them, but I don't feel in the least bit threatened by them and I feel that they are probably doing more good than harm. (Female interviewee 4)

If one 'grapple[s] with the subjective experience of camera surveillance' (Dawson 2012: 288) in the way we have tried to do in this paper, the dominant disposition one encounters

is that of semi-conscious awareness and quiescent acceptance. CCTV emerges as mundane, undramatic, lacking in emotional charge and strong cultural resonance. This orientation is markedly different from that of the ‘pro-surveillance public’ (Dawson 2012: 275) that typically emerges from opinion surveys. Indeed, on the basis of our research, we might question whether survey instruments that are used to register public attitudes to CCTV might ‘force’ respondents to form an opinion that they do not in fact have. Nor does it seem quite right to describe people as having been ‘seduced’ by CCTV and its crime-control capacities (Norris 2012: 34), since this suggests a degree of engagement with and enthusiasm for CCTV, both of which we found hard to detect. To be captivated by a display of sovereign authority, ‘the people’ have to be watching. Nor, conversely, have we found much evidence of public scepticism or hostility. Some among our respondents raised civil liberties objections, expressed a preference for more police officers rather than CCTV, or claimed that—like so much else in Britain—cameras were not ‘all they are cracked up to be’ (female member, Focus group 2). These more sceptical views, however, were rare. Given this, one may ask whether conventional social analysis of surveillance has mistakenly assumed two things: that there exists, on the one hand, widespread and active public support *for* CCTV and, on the other, an ongoing and lively struggle *against* camera surveillance. In persisting with these assumptions, the social analysis of surveillance risks committing its own version of what Pierre Bourdieu called the ‘scholastic fallacy’—projecting into the minds of those being studied the dispositions of those doing the studying. It simultaneously ‘projects’ too much support and too much opposition, casting the subjects of surveillance as either cultural dupes or heroic resisters.¹⁰

It may simply be, instead, that CCTV is now humdrum and commonplace and that people typically relate to it as such. The reason for this may lie in part in the fact that CCTV is routinely inserted into the kinds of anonymous, transient locations that Augé (1995) dubbed ‘non-places’—supermarkets, airports, hotel lobbies, motorways and other locations whose features barely register in people’s consciousness. But there may also be more specific reasons in play. On the one hand, CCTV is perceived as having become too pervasive in its coverage (so many cameras and so much data that surely the authorities can monitor no more than a fraction of it) and too remote in its operation (taking pictures from a distance of thousands and thousands of passers-by) to present any clear and identifiable danger to liberties about which people care.¹¹ On the other hand, it has become a taken-for-granted part of the security architecture that

¹⁰ We need to concede that our sample did not include members of those social groups—such as young people—who may routinely perceive themselves as targets of camera surveillance and who are thus less likely to treat CCTV with benign indifference. But, as we shall shortly argue, feeling that one is a target of camera surveillance alters the otherwise supportive dispositions towards CCTV we have reported here. Nor are we seeking to deny the presence of those individuals and groups who for political, moral or aesthetic reasons take exception to the United Kingdom having become—as Banksy graphically put it—‘One Nation under CCTV’ —www.informationliberation.com/?id=25129 (last accessed 16 July 2013). There are good reasons for seeking to understand the meanings and effects of this oppositional sensibility—one that consciously struggles against CCTV’s banality. But the attempt to do so must take care not to exaggerate its place on the map of public dispositions to CCTV. The mundane orientation towards camera surveillance is not of this kind.

¹¹ One partial exception to this point—indeed, to our overall argument—is the use of speed cameras to control road traffic. This form of camera surveillance has been embroiled in debate and controversy since its inception and remains so today. In part, this can be explained by the fact that speed cameras do not simply observe behaviour, but trigger interventions in the form of fines and points on a licence. This immediately sets them apart from the routine experience of public camera surveillance. Given the dominant social meanings of the car, speed cameras may also be perceived by drivers as an incursion into what they experience as *private* space over which they should exercise control. One should also not underestimate the visceral reactions that ‘law-abiding’ citizens feel when crime-control technologies that ought properly to be targeted at ‘them’ are directed at ‘us’ (see, generally, Wells (2012)).

helps produce and reproduce orderly relations in public—a component of an infrastructure that does not invade everyday routines and consciousness but can be trusted to monitor social life and step in to assist when the fabric of that life is ruptured. One of the product retailers we interviewed spoke, in this regard, of business customers who now ‘just assume they are going to be buying CCTV on a site, in the same way that they are going to be buying a fire alarm, or burglar alarm, of whatever. It is just part of their normal expectations of the package’. The security managers of supermarkets, shopping malls and transportation systems we interviewed similarly made reference to CCTV as an indispensable element of site or facilities management—something you would no more do without than a fire extinguisher and about as exciting or controversial. As the representative from Transport for London we interviewed put it: ‘It’s a good detection tool in some circumstances. It’s a great tool for managing people. It’s part of the package of things in the creation of a controlled environment.’

Camera surveillance has thus become an integral part of the infrastructure of public life and, in so doing, it may have helped to fashion a new morality of relations in public—one that expects and relies upon what a representative from Network Rail called the security ‘comfort blanket’ which CCTV is today widely perceived to provide—a blanket upon which people can depend while being freed from the burden of having to think too much about it. Another interviewee expressed the idea as follows: ‘It really gives me peace of mind, that at least if anything happens, police or the people in the authority, they will be able to know exactly what happened. Even if there’s no witnesses around’ (Male interviewee 2).

It may just be that such mundane, trusted, background things form at least part of what secures the feelings of security of many individuals and that banality, or something much like it, may be in part be constitutive of what it means to be and feel secure. However, it may also be that banal security creates the conditions—of quiet, unthinking acceptance, a kind of security complacency—under which surveillance can expand into sites and forms that chip away at the security guarantees that banality ordinarily provides. Let us now turn our attention towards this possibility.

The Frontiers of CCTV and the Limits of Banal Security

There can never be enough cameras. (CCTV retailer)

But it’s where are you going to stop isn’t it? Where are you going to stop putting cameras? (Female interviewee 4)

Banalities is a double-edged sword. As we have shown, not only has CCTV become an indispensable part of the United Kingdom’s crime-control arrangements, it has also become unnoticed and unremarkable in ways that are integral to its capacity to generate a sense of security. It is a technology that is there when needed, about which people do not (have to) think, and over which they do not (need to) fret. But these very properties also mean that camera surveillance has come to exist largely outside of the realms of public controversy and discussion about how best to respond to crime/disorder and live comfortably with risk. The fact that CCTV has come to be surrounded by unquestioned consensualism (it is plainly a good idea, so what is there to talk about?) means that it escapes social reflection and scrutiny. This is not to say that CCTV functions entirely without legal or cultural constraints. But questions are rarely posed today

about the interests camera surveillance serves, the appropriateness of its targets, the proportionately of its deployment and uses, the human rights issues it raises and the social effects of the routine visualization of crime, or about whether CCTV provides value for money, represents the best utilization of scarce resources and is adequately regulated. CCTV has become a socially invisible crime-control technology—one that has expanded and become entrenched within a climate of what one might call supportive indifference.

In recent years, a growing literature on ‘securitization’ in international relations (e.g. Buzan *et al.* 1998; Pram Gad and Lund Petersen 2011) and on ‘populist-punitiveness’ within criminology (e.g. Pratt 2007; Loader 2009) has taught us that excesses of security are typically the outcome of emotive public discourse and governmental reaction. Analysts of the former argue that ‘security’ is best understood as a speech-act—a way of framing and naming the world in ways that point to mortal danger and demand that the rules of normal political life be suspended in order that the threat can be dealt with. For theorists of the latter, normal politics itself has come to be dominated by actors who feed off public anxieties about crime in ways that frequently enable security to ‘trump’ other considerations and values (Zedner 2009). In either case, security has become ‘a rather strange thing in the world, overwhelmingly myopic in its insistence that hardly anything else counts’ (Molotch 2012: 17). But the spread of CCTV suggests that the myopic and colonizing properties of security can also assert themselves when people *stop* talking about crime-control practices and technologies, when they cease to notice or pay attention. Banality may, in other words, be another way in which security slips beyond the boundaries of democratic politics—not through speech-acts, or claim-making, but in their absence. Camera surveillance has been able to extend its reach—and creep quietly into new spaces—because direct and indirect consumers of CCTV (and we are all for the most part *indirect* consumers—Goold *et al.* (2010)) have assumed an attitude of thoughtlessness towards it—one which takes its benefits as given, and effaces its risks and dangers.

But this does not mean that there are no limits to CCTV’s frontiers. Nor does it mean that camera surveillance cannot develop in ways which push against extant boundaries of acceptability and prompt social unease. In 2010, the installation of a public surveillance system as part of a counter-terrorism initiative in two predominantly Muslim suburbs of Birmingham prompted a public and media outcry: the scheme was taken down and a police apology and an enquiry followed.¹² In 2012, the new Surveillance Commissioner raised concerns about the spread of ‘high-definition cameras’ with facial recognition capabilities, warning that such cameras were being rolled out in the United Kingdom without public consultation.¹³ Public sensitivity to the proper limits of camera surveillance was also to be found in our research, expressed both in general terms and in respect of two specific and novel uses. As we have seen, very few qualms exist about camera surveillance in public space. As one of our interviewees put it: ‘I am happy having CCTV on every street. Even in open places, every open place’ (Male interviewee 2). But certain reservations about the further extension of public surveillance were expressed. One of these concerns had to do with the logic and ultimate

¹² See www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jun/18/muslim-cctv-scheme-police-row (last accessed 16 July 2013).

¹³ See www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/new-hd-cctv-puts-human-rights-at-risk-8194844.html (last accessed 16 July 2013).

end of a constantly expanding surveillance system. ‘Every street could have a CCTV at the end of it and the burglars wouldn’t come down’, a member of one of our focus groups remarked. ‘But then if you were visiting your boyfriend down the street, or you wanted to creep down and have a word with someone you shouldn’t be having a word with, you might not want to be on the television. You know it’s just. I think it’s just ...’ Other respondents named some specific public—and/or ‘mass private’ (Shearing and Stenning 1983)—locations in which they considered camera surveillance would be inappropriate, including ‘parks’, ‘churches’, ‘swimming pools’, ‘gyms’, ‘changing rooms’ and ‘toilets’. One young mother voiced a concrete concern of this sort having encountered CCTV in a baby-changing room at a major supermarket:

A: I noticed, it was in [the supermarket] yesterday, they had a camera in there. That made me feel very ... I didn’t like it. Again, I can see all the positive reasons, for if you were in there, you know you were planning to do something terrible, great you’ve been caught. But whilst there changing my little boy, having a camera sort of behind my back, I didn’t like it at all. And I think, I don’t think there’s any need for it really. I think that’s just taking things too far. ... Because you’re there with your child, and you know you’re undressing them and why should someone be able to watch that. So that was yesterday. Like I say, I wasn’t very comfortable at all.

Q: Did you feel like saying anything?

A: Erm, no.

Q: I was wondering how close you got to feeling like saying something?

A: Just an internal grumble. And again, just that feeling of, you know, who else is actually in this room with me?

This particular ‘internal grumble’ is provoked by a feeling of actively being watched, as an individual, over a sustained period of time—a feeling very different from the one generated by remote cameras that one fleetingly passes without a second glance or thought. A similar feeling—and reservation—attaches to a second general domain in which it was felt that CCTV is illegitimate—the workplace—where, according to one respondent, camera surveillance ‘smacks of distrust’ (Female interviewee 5). This concern is well expressed in the following account:

The workplace. I know people steal from their workplace and things, but I think it actually sends more of a message of distrust. And it makes you feel uneasy because you’re there, you’re there for a period of time and there’s a camera that’s ... it’s sort of then that you start to feel its presence. I’m sure perhaps there isn’t someone sat there on a TV screen watching you, but you do start to feel a sense of being watched. (Female interviewee 6)

Camera surveillance is, it seems, acceptable if it regulates conduct between strangers in public. It is much less ‘comforting’ once inserted into relations of power and authority at work.

The two specific extensions of CCTV about which we invited discussion in our research stem from the development of the IP (or internet-protocol) camera, which permits users to watch images in real time from any remote computer location.¹⁴ The technology, and one of its possible uses, is described by the director of one of small security company we interviewed:

¹⁴ This technology is now more commonly known as a ‘web-cam’.

We put a small IP system into someone's house, it goes to their computer. We give it an IP address, it means they can be anywhere in the world and can go onto the internet and they can see the imagery from their camera. They can look at their front door. We had an example of a gentleman in Reading who runs a number of pizza stalls. He likes to take holidays abroad, but he wants to keep an eye on and make sure his guys are doing what they're supposed to be doing, to make sure his guys are opening up at seven o'clock in the evening and doing the job properly. It's surveillance, it's not crime prevention.

In recent years, the IP camera has generated new markets in CCTV, two of which interested us. The first is the phenomenon of children's nurseries installing cameras that allow parents to watch their child (and nursery staff) from a computer—presumably at their workplace—and the related development of cameras that enable parents to keep watch over their child's nanny or childminder—so-called 'nanny-cams'.¹⁵ The second market is domestic CCTV systems, a piece of security kit that is now cheap and small enough to be installed as protection for one's home, and which is today marketed under 'DIY' by major 'high-street' retailers.¹⁶ How do those who are quiescently accepting of the growth of CCTV respond to these nascent developments?

Some among our respondents—including this nursery employee—believed that cameras that enable parents to observe their children and their day-time carers could be 'reassuring' since they offer them the chance to 'see later in the day how that child's doing and see that they are actually happy'. Others felt that surveillance of nursery staff was a justified reaction to recently publicized cases of child abuse by those supposed to be caring for children, or else applied to 'nanny-cams' the generic injunction we described earlier:

If you're doing nothing wrong does it matter? You know, if you're going round doing your job as it should be done, it's only gonna catch people who deserve to be caught or are not doing what they're being paid for. (Female interviewee 7)

Some among the mothers of young children we interviewed worried that the remote watching of carers would be dangerously enticing, either because 'I'd be on it all day' (Female interviewee 1) or because, as a responsible parent, one would feel compelled to accept the technology and then make ample use of it:

If it was offered to me, I don't think I could help myself. But I don't want to get to that position because I know that I wouldn't be able to help myself, and I wouldn't get any work done because you just wouldn't be able to tear yourself away. And also you'd start ... you'd have issues with everything. As a mother you do.

The predominant response to 'nanny-cams' was, however, one of distinct unease. For some, this extension of camera surveillance prompted the kind of 'George Orwell moment' that has all but disappeared from discourse about CCTV in public spaces: 'I think it is rather intrusive. No, I do indeed. No I don't like that, no I don't. No, it's as if you are being spied upon. It's sort of *1984* I think. Yeah it is' (Male interviewee 4). Others returned here to the concerns expressed about workplace surveillance and the baleful impact of such surveillance upon relations which are best governed by trust.

¹⁵ See, for example, www.eyetek.co.uk/nanny-cam (last accessed 16 July 2013).

¹⁶ See, for example, www.tesco.com/direct/diy-car/security-cctv-cameras/cat3375753.cat (last accessed 16 July 2013).

As one respondent put it: ‘If you’re going to hire someone you should have a little bit of trust in them. And to actually install a camera to prevent or catch somebody doing something is I think a little bit wrong’ (Male interviewee 3). Another echoed these concerns:

Watching someone who’s looking after your children, that makes me feel slightly sick really, you know. One would hope that by the time you picked somebody to come into your home to look after your children that you had vetted them and decided they wouldn’t need to be watched. I don’t really like the idea of cameras in the home. (Female interviewee 2)

Others recoiled in some horror from the prospect of such an extension of camera surveillance into private space and relations:

A nanny-cam! I think it would be absolutely appalling. Surely, if you’ve got a nanny you’re dealing with personal relationships aren’t you? It’s like installing a camera in your home to check on your wife or husband. I think it is absolutely appalling. (Member, focus group 3)¹⁷

Some of the product manufacturers we interviewed saw the second novel deployment of the IP camera—to home security—as potentially the area of ‘greatest growth’ for the industry. This was echoed by a chief constable who noted the appeal of domestic CCTV, especially ‘if your CCTV is recording and if the alarm goes it will fire it to your mobile phone so that you can see what’s on the screen’. He continued: ‘In future, I think people are going to start using the internet to monitor things within their home when they’re away.’ At the time of writing, there is no clear evidence that (internet-enabled) home CCTV has ‘taken off’—although we were unable, not for want of trying, to obtain any sales figures.¹⁸ Many of the reasons for this have to do with thresholds of crime risk, which, for those we interviewed, were simply not high enough to warrant any novel and uncertain extension beyond the normal (which is to say, socially acceptable) repertoire of home protection—locks, alarms and lights. Hence, interviewees spoke of not living anywhere ‘dangerous enough’ nor having ‘possessions expensive enough’ to justify such a purchase (Female interviewee 5), or claimed that they would only consider it ‘if I thought the crime rate was going up and our street was gonna be personally targeted’ (Male interviewee 3). Others, for similar reasons, simply could not see the point: ‘We wouldn’t see anything. We’d only see ourselves wandering around’ (member, Focus group 1). On these grounds, home surveillance systems tended to be dismissed as ‘A bit OTT [Over-the-Top]’ (Male interviewee 5) or as not for the likes of us:

I suppose if you’re well off and had lots of money and lots of assets in your house, I could understand why you’d want CCTV around. For me personally, I don’t know whether I would want it in my house or not. (Female interviewee 2)

Others, however, were clear that they would not want such technology in their house, not merely because they felt safe without it, but because of what ‘home’ means to them

¹⁷ It is worth noting that these concerns were generally not extended to the use of cameras in residential homes for the elderly. So long as such cameras were ‘not clandestine’, the dominant view among our respondents was that CCTV was an appropriate tool for ‘protecting the vulnerable elderly’.

¹⁸ We can, however, offer one piece of indirect evidence. In 2011, one of us (Ian Loader) was interviewed about domestic CCTV systems for a BBC consumer affairs programme. There ensued a ten-month delay until the item was eventually broadcast—something apparently caused by the inability of the programme makers to find anyone who had purchased home CCTV and was willing to appear to discuss it. The journalist confirmed that they, too, had been unable to obtain any sales figures from either producers or retailers.

and the negative impact cameras would have on one's ability to be, and feel, effortlessly 'at home'. The same applies to the effect cameras would have on their enjoyment of hospitality at the homes of others: 'I wouldn't go to a friend's house if I thought they had cameras watching what I was doing. It's dreadful' (member, Focus group 2). It appears that the 'comfort' that camera surveillance offers in public space is simply not transferable to the domestic realm. Quite the reverse in fact:

I don't see the need. People that come into my house are my friends or my wife's friends or my children's friends, so no ... I think that's ... if people come into my house and they see CCTV cameras they wouldn't, they wouldn't feel comfortable, of that I'm sure, and I think they would find it rather intrusive to say the least. I think if you need to have CCTV cameras in your house ... I think that is pretty worrying to be honest. Quite frankly, when friends of mine come to my house I want them to treat it as, as much as possible, as their own and not, not to think, 'Oh that thing's looking at me'. (Male interviewee 5)

Conclusion: Making Things Public?

Two overarching purposes have informed the writing of this article. In the first place, the paper is intended as a contribution to the development of what, following Bruno Latour (1992a), we can call a symmetrical sociology of security. By attending fully to the role of things in determining 'our behavior and identity' (Miller 2010: 51), we hope to bring taken-for-granted aspects of security—notably the 'industrial market' for security technology (Brodeur 2010: 304)—more fully under the scholarly and public gaze.¹⁹ In so doing, we want to expand further the horizons of theoretical and empirical enquiry into private security, the bulk of which still addresses itself to and gets most animated by those elements of the industry—uniformed guards—who look and feel like police officers, a point made recently by Jean-Paul Brodeur (2010: 140). We have done so by focusing on one of the mundane objects that is mobilized in security practices and analysing the part this object plays in the ordering of everyday experience. Our wider point is that, if objects are 'congealed social relations' (Neyland 2010), we can learn a great deal about social life from the study of security objects or objects that have been securitized—in the present case (surveillance) cameras.

Second, and more importantly, we have used the case of CCTV to introduce and illustrate the idea of banal security. Today, any mobilization of the concept of banality inescapably takes place in the long shadow cast by Hannah Arendt's (1963) analysis of the 'banality of evil', the phrase she controversially coined to describe the unthinking, rule-following, normality of the acts committed by Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. The idea of banality has also made sporadic appearances in the critical theory of consumerist society, where it is typically deployed to depict the 'meaninglessness and insignificance' of modern consumer culture (Seigworth 2000: 231). Guy Debord, for example, used the term 'banalisation' to describe 'the accumulation of commodities produced in mass for the abstract space of the market'—a process which he thought had

¹⁹ We are, of course, by no means the first to do this (see, *inter alia*, Aas *et al.* (2010)). The entire field of surveillance studies has, arguably, been a prolonged collective effort to remind us of the social significance of security technologies and sustain a public debate about their trajectory and effects. Much of this is to be applauded and we share a concern to 'stare' at CCTV cameras 'as something incomprehensible' (Miller 2012: 91).

‘destroy[ed] the autonomy and quality of places’ (Debord 1967: Chapter 7, s. 165). In *America*, Baudrillard wrote in similar terms about the ‘desert-like banality of a metropolis’ (Baudrillard 1988: 102). What these analyses share in common is the deployment of what we might call a pejorative concept of banality, one that expressly or implicitly intimates a critical relation to and judgment upon the process, acts or objects being described as banal (cf. Hilton 2008).

Our use of the term ‘banality’ is not pejorative in this sense. Rather, we have shown that the banality of security is a double-edged notion, and that analysis of it has to attend closely to both its virtues and vices.²⁰ If security ‘means being able to assume that day-to-day, moment-by-moment human planning can go forward’ (Molotch 2012: 3), then part of what it means to be and feel secure is a taken-for-granted confidence in the human and non-human infrastructure that makes our personal and collective projects feasible. If part of what it means to be and feel secure is about not having to fret over or routinely monitor the arrangements that secure one’s security (Loader and Walker 2007: Chapter 6), then something akin to banality may be a constitutive feature of what security is as a basic social good. Yet, making the things that secure us banal is also to create the conditions for undermining that security. Goods that have become banal find it easier to expand in ways that can trump other societal values, not in an active and noisy political way, but through a barely detectable process of creep. By making goods banal, we fail to notice the ordering work that they do and hence neglect to ask whose interests such work serves and what alternative modes of ordering the ubiquitous, taken-for-granted good has elbowed or crowded out. If the objects that constitute a society’s security arrangements become banal, they are placed beyond inspection, reflection, contestation and debate in ways that are inimical not only to security, but also to the quality and reach of democratic governance. Camera surveillance is an apt illustration of this. By becoming banal, CCTV cameras have come to govern us, while largely effacing the question of how we might (best) govern them.

Against this backdrop, it is hard, right now, to determine what impact, if any, the reservations about novel forms of CCTV we described in the preceding section may have on the future trajectory of camera surveillance. Two broad sets of possibilities suggest themselves, however. The first is that these concerns serve as but a small stumbling block on the forward march of a security good that has long since become mundane and uncontested. We need to recall here that not dissimilar objections were raised at earlier points in CCTV’s path to ubiquity, only to be overcome or brushed aside. We might infer from this history that, as people grow accustomed to what are currently experienced as unsettling extensions of camera surveillance, it is likely that these concerns will over time dissipate, or else be banished to the margins of public debate. On this scenario, CCTV is simply too entrenched as a good with obvious benefits and non-obvious dangers for the worries raised about its latest usages to be little other than minor teething troubles. To this we might add a point we made earlier in our reconstruction of CCTV’s diffusion: namely that these extensions of surveillance are taking place within, and are of a piece with, a wider cultural context in which the capture and circulation of people’s images are becoming commonplace and unremarkable.

²⁰ In this regard, we approach the banality of security rather in the spirit that Michael Billig (1995) sought to extend the social analysis of nationalism by ‘flagging up’ its place and re-enactment in the habits and symbols of everyday life.

Camera surveillance has, in short, acquired a set of social meanings that are so pervasive and stable that novel—if currently controversial extensions—of it can all too easily be brought under the umbrella of its banality.

But an alternative scenario may also be prefigured in these accounts. The possibility here is that the anxieties provoked by, and the values revealed to be at stake in, novel extensions of CCTV may represent, or be made to represent, a critical juncture in the social life of surveillance cameras. At the very least, one can point to the existence of a reservoir of cultural concerns which can be drawn upon in an effort to unsettle the stable meanings that have become attached to camera surveillance; to reopen the range of questions that CCTV's banality has foreclosed, and to reinsert matters pertaining to the scope, uses and effects of surveillance technology into public and political discourse about crime and its regulation. One might, in this vein, treat the worries we have reported either as resources for regulation, or as raw materials for politicization.²¹ In respect of the former, these concerns allude to a set of values (notably privacy and trust) that need to be more fully incorporated within any discussion of how best to govern future uses of camera surveillance. In respect of the latter, these issues might be folded into a larger effort to create a deliberative politics of security that extends beyond the state to encompass both private security actors and the array of security technologies that govern the conduct of everyday life today—of which CCTV is a prominent case in point.²² This may or may not lead to a 'politics of retraction' of which Gavin Smith (2012) claims to have glimpsed the first sightings. That would be a matter *for* such a deliberative politics, not a guaranteed outcome *of* it. What is rather more urgent and important is to foster and sustain an intelligent and reflective public conversation about camera surveillance of the kind that has been lost sight of in the course of CCTV's three-decade-long journey to banality.

In the absence of such a conversation, British society has tended to forget in the case of CCTV the general point that Daniel Miller makes in, and about, *Stuff*. 'Commodities', Miller writes, 'are not inherently good or bad, but you can't have the benefits without entailing the risk that they will oppress you' (Miller 2010: 63). One good reason for wanting to cultivate a public dialogue about CCTV, in the face of extant political inertia and commercial interests who have little or no interest in doing so, is the following one, also supplied by Miller: 'The good news is that awareness of this gives one an opportunity to address this contradiction ... with some potential for moderation' (Miller 2010: 63). This, we suggest, is a lesson it would be wise, in respect of surveillance cameras, to relearn.

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²¹ To politicize CCTV is 'to do two things: to claim that this is of significance for the society in question and to make it the subject of debate and contestation' (Hansen 2012: 528).

²² Latour's (2004) powerful exploration of a 'parliament of things' offers one resource for thinking harder about these questions, as does recent work applying deliberative democracy to technological development (e.g. Hamlett 2003). Some authors in surveillance studies have begun to explore how citizens can be involved 'upstream' in discussions about the development and deployment of surveillance technology (e.g. Monahan 2010) but the surface of this important issue has only thus far been scratched within the security literature.

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