Invisible Security:
The impact of counter-terrorism on the built environment
By Rachel Briggs

1 Introduction

Since the dawn of urbanisation, cities have provided rich pickings for bandits, petty criminals, protesters and terrorists, feeding off the city's economic, social and political wealth. To safeguard these treasures, urban and national rulers have peppered the cityscape with defensive features aimed at keeping undesirables out and controlling the movement of citizens within. From the city walls of ancient Rome to the check-points of modern-day Jerusalem and Belfast's so-called 'ring of steel', cities have been protected over the years by a range of physical and normally highly visible interventions.

In the aftermath of September 11th 2001, many architects, planners, politicians and academics worried that the new scale of threat posed by Al Qaida and its associated networks would trigger an escalation of the 'militarisation' of our cities. Some argue they will become dominated by security, others that the threat of terrorism will leave our them deserted and baron. One commentator has gone so far as to argue that the city will become the battleground of the 21st Century, "for the first time since the height of the Cold War issues surrounding international, military and geopolitical security now penetrate utterly into practices surrounding the governance, design and planning of cities and urban regions."[1]

This paper tries to understand how the latest wave of counter-terrorism will impact on the built environment in the UK, with a special focus on British cities. The concerns that have been raised since September 11th have mostly come from across the Atlantic and feel familiar to built environment professionals who grappled with the challenge of Irish Republican terrorism on the mainland in the 1980s and 1990s. Britain's thirty-year struggle against domestic terrorism puts it a generation ahead of the United States, whose first encounter with modern-day terrorism didn't come until 1995, when Timothy McVeigh blew up the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people.

As Metropolitan Commissioners, Prime Ministers and the Secretary-General of the Security Service continue to warn us that it is a case of 'when, not if' Al Qaida manages to mount a successful terrorist attack in the UK, Britain is entering a new phase of counter-terrorism which will re-write the principles of urban defence that have remained untouched for hundreds, even thousands, of years. Technological developments and design imperatives are turning counter-terrorism from a largely physical and visible activity (even when 'covert') into something which is almost invisible to the human eye. Planners will no longer have to rely on bulky security systems that restrict access and cause disruption to urban dwellers and terrorists alike.

Instead, they will adopt light-touch security that, in the long-term, will negate the need for the types of defences that are such a familiar feature on the urban landscape today.

'Invisible Security' will change the relationship between counter-terrorism and the built environment. It will bring many benefits; it will make our cities look and feel better and could mark the beginning of the next urban renaissance. But invisible security also raises a number of challenges for urban governance; who makes decisions and how are they monitored, where does power lie, how will the use of these technologies differ between public and private spaces within cities, what is the balance between civil liberties and security within the context of the 'war on terror', and what role will built environment professionals find themselves playing.

Neither of these approaches – traditional urban defence and invisible security – grasps the 'human element' of counter-terrorism and the place of normal people in the governance and routines of our cities. In both, there is an assumption that security is something done 'to you' or 'for you', where the normal citizen is a passive spectator. Within the security world there is a growing recognition that truly effective security relies as much on getting widespread buy-in and active engagement, as on buying the right 'kit'. As clichéd as it might sound, normal people can become the 'eyes and ears' of the state, providing critical pieces of information for police and the security service by taking an active interest in their community. Security is delivered through small acts rather than grand gestures; normal people rather than clever scientists determine whether security systems work, depending on whether they stick to the rules or leave doors open and share passwords with colleagues. Ultimately, terrorism is a psychological game; terrorists feed not on the deaths of their victims, but on the fear and terror of those left behind. The resilience and resolve of ordinary citizens will dictate whether or not life in the city carries on as normal, and whether their perception of risk (rather than the reality of the risk of terrorism) will determine the nature of responses adopted in our cities.

The shift from traditional urban defence to invisible security offers exciting opportunities. But we must embrace the aesthetic possibilities without losing sight of the resulting challenges for effective urban governance. These debates must engage with a much wider range of individuals and organisations, and provide an interface between not just the people who design space and the people who secure space, but with those who use it, too. The long-term impact of counter-terrorism on the built environment will be measured in terms of the fabric of the city, but will be determined and framed by the nature of governance cultures and practices that exist at the city level. Getting the right answers to these questions will be key to preserving the vitality of our cities for generations to come.

2 The impact of counter-terrorism on the built environment

The relationship between counter-terrorism and the built environment in the UK can be understood within the context of the Irish Republican terrorist campaign that has spanned the last three decades. Over this period, there has been a gradual 'militarisation' of British cities – notably London and Belfast – which has made barricades, barriers, stop and search points and physical surveillance systems common features of the urban landscape. Although physical defences have been stepped up somewhat since September 11th, there is no evidence to suggest this constitutes more than a gentle reinforcement of existing measures; an evolution rather than a revolution. While cities in the US – a country with little previous experience of domestic terrorism – consider radical proposals for security, British cities are merely consolidating what they already have in place.

The impact of counter-terrorism on the built environment relates as much to the psychological as the physical. As Ellin has argued, 'form follows fear' on the urban landscape.[2] In the wake of the anthrax attacks in the US in Autumn 2001 for example, companies in London reported installing beefed up security measures in their offices not because they believed there was a heightened threat, but to calm the fears of their employees.[3] This kind of response is understandable; in opinion polls on both sides of the Atlantic, the public consistently cites terrorism, foreign policy and defence as being among their most important concerns.[4]

In the so-called 'war on terror', cities are not just functional spaces that provide physical defence from attack. The cityscape is an important canvass for our hopes and fears. There is an intimate relationship between the look and feel of a city and the way people within the space feel about themselves and one another. The future shape of urban landscapes, therefore will help to determine whether we win the psychological battle in the war on terrorism. The point at which iconic buildings and ambitious designs seem dangerous decisions, is precisely the moment we need to embrace them more enthusiastically than ever before. Evidence from the street provides cause for optimism.

Broadly speaking, there are three main ways in which counter-terrorism impacts in a physical way on the built environment: the militarization of space through the use of physical security barriers; the demise of iconography in the urban landscape – in other words what we choose *not* to build; and a process of decentralisation as companies and ordinary people decide the risks of terrorism outweigh the benefits of city life.

A) The 'militarization' of urban space

Belfast is one of the best examples of the impact of counter-terrorism on the built environment. In his book on the subject, Jon Coaffee describes the use of 'fortress architecture' and 'defensible space' in the city, "…notably around the central shopping area in Belfast where access to the centre was barred, first by concrete blockers and

barbed wire, and then later by a series of high metal gates which became known as the 'ring of steel' – a term which was to gain new meaning in the 1990s in central London." He describes how these design principles had a profound impact on the look of the city, the way residents and visitors used the space, and how they felt about being there.[5]

When the Irish Republican terrorist campaign reached the mainland London drew heavily on this experience, though the outcome was less severe. There was no overarching strategy, but rather a number of measures were adopted in response to attacks or intelligence about intended or probable targets. For example, in 1989, wrought iron gates were erected at the end of Downing Street to restrict access to only authorised visitors; and in July 1993, London got its own 'ring of steel' which reduced from thirty to seven the number of entrances to the City, with each road-block manned by armed police. Around this time, closed circuit television (CCTV) was also being rolled out across the capital. In the intervening years, particularly since September 11th, London has up-dated its security measures, notably around the US embassy and the Houses of Parliament.

Although London and a handful of other cities adopted physical security measures to guard against the terrorist threat, smaller and medium-sized cities have done much less. On the one hand, this should not worry us because intelligence suggests that London remains by far the most important and likely target. On the other hand, the new Civil Contingencies Bill devolves responsibility for contingencies planning and response to the local level. Faced with this legislation and the fears of local residents and businesses, local authorities may be forced to pick up their pace.

The militarization of urban space is not always an effective tool in the fight against terrorism. Firstly, the costs of security must be balanced against the benefits. In the immediate aftermath of September 11th, hysteria raised public security spending in the United States to a level that no country could possibly sustain. The US Attorney General estimated that the Government's response to the 2001 anthrax attacks cost $5 billion dollars, and some federal offices remain closed more than three years later.

Secondly, security is not a risk free strategy. Following the bombing of its Consulate in Istanbul in 2003, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) undertook a review of security arrangements at its posts around the world to work out whether security needed to be increased. In his report to Parliament in June 2004, Jack Straw acknowledged that the FCO's buildings and staff are at risk in a number of key locations, especially where the UK is seen as being a 'softer' target than the US. But he rejected a 'fortress' response because of the detrimental effect it would have on both its operational effectiveness and its relationship with local communities on the ground. The FCO made a calculated assessment that in most parts of the world the risks of isolation outweigh the risks from terrorism.[6]

Thirdly, highly visible security not only sends the message 'we take security seriously'; it also says, 'we *need* to take security seriously', which can be less reassuring. The British government's handling of the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease provides a useful example of how such perceptions can have disastrous and unintended consequences. Keen to show his electorate he was taking the crisis seriously, Prime Minister Blair took efforts to show he was leading the response from the front. Part of this involved him visiting affected areas wearing the mandatory protective suit. While this played well at home, pictures of Tony Blair in a 'moon suit' gave the impression to those outside the country that Britain was closed for business, and wiped £2 billion off tourism revenues that year. As Alastair Campbell, Director of Communications at Downing Street at the time reflected, "…you get these dramatic pictures of the Prime Minister wearing yellow suits and walking around a farmyard, and in America they think 'Christ! He's got to wear a yellow suit! And he's the Prime Minister'."[7]

B) The end of urban iconography

Al Qaida is a terrorist network that is aware of the power of symbols and the symbols of power. On the morning of September 11th 2001, its lieutenants turned four aeroplanes – physical symbols of globalisation and progress – into weapons and flew them into the World Trade Center, the symbol of global trade and the Pentagon, home of US military might. It is thought the fourth plane was heading towards the White House.

As a result of this, many have argued that planners and architects – led by their clients – will turn their backs on iconography in favour of uniformity. Peter Marcuse has predicted that obtrusive skyscrapers will lose some of their appeal. He observes the impact of the September 11th attacks on the Empire State Building, "A consultant working on the 44th floor is quoted as saying he's considering buying a parachute and found one of the internet for $130. Five months after September 11th, a business newspaper headlines on its front page: 'Empire State emptying out as tenants flee. Anxiety lingers; vacant space triples'." Marcuse has a vision of more sober-looking cities, "…less high-rise, less representative, less 'signature' fashion" developments in the future. [8]

There is little evidence to suggest that our urban landscapes will shrink or become less interesting: the re-development of the site of the World Trade Center will contain a building even taller than the twin towers; and in London, the GLA continues to encourage tall buildings at the heart of London's two financial districts,[9] and a 2002 report from the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Select Committee of the House of Commons promotes the benefits of well-designed tall buildings.[10] There is also a plethora of high-rises currently in construction that will rival anything that has gone before them; Rem Koolhaas has designed an 80-storey tower in Beijing for China Central Television; the Shanghai World Financial Centre will dwarf Kuala

Lumpar's Twin Petronas Towers as the world's tallest building; and another eight of the world's tallest buildings are currently under construction in the Far East.[11]

This is partially explained by economics; real estate prices in global cities such as New York and London create a strong incentive to build up rather than out. The explanation is also cultural and psychological, though. The urban landscape has come to reflect and project how we feel about ourselves and what we want to become. Bold architecture has become a weapon for the competitive multi-national seeking to standout in a crowded marketplace; city planners understand the pulling power of creative architecture; and in the face of terrorism, urban growth and renewal help a society to face up to its fears and win the psychological battle of wills. Clausewitz, the famous Prussian military thinker and strategist, argued that you only win when your opponent backs down and modern day commentators such as James Woudhuysen have cautioned architects and planners about the danger of answering public fears with less ambitious and more cautious constructions.[12] The urban landscape provides a means through which ordinary people can communicate that the fight continues.

C) Decentralisation

A number of urban commentators have argued that the threat from Al Qaida may challenge the future of our cities, as more and more people and organisations move out of urban areas. Three and a half years on from September 11th, there is no evidence to suggest that the lure of New York is any weaker. One-third of Class A real estate in downtown New York was lost as a result of the September 11th attacks, but within a matter of weeks, most companies had managed to find alternative spaces within the downtown area or were facing temporary displacements in the meantime.[13]

This echoes London's experience. The 'pull' of the city usually remains greater than the 'push' from terrorism. During the Irish Republican terror campaign in London in the 1980s and 90s, very few companies re-located out of the city. In a recent poll of business in London, while 40 per cent of respondents said terrorism was the most important risk facing the capital, only 3 per cent said it was a factor that would influence whether or not they would relocate out of London.[14] The most important factors were business rates and insurance. In fact, the threat of decentralisation only surfaced in London when insurance premiums against terrorism rose sharply in the early 1990s. The creation of the PoolRe insurance scheme around that time proved extremely successful and removed insurance as a factor affecting location.[15] This scheme has recently been up-dated to reflect changes in the nature of the threat post September 11th.

Perhaps the most striking example of the lure of urban proximity is Jerusalem, one of the cities most badly ravaged by terrorism and violence in recent years. In comparison with Tel Aviv, security risks are much higher in Jerusalem, but there is no evidence to suggest this had had a detrimental impact on the city's growth and development. In the fifty years since Israel became a state, Jerusalem's share of the total population of

Israel has grown and its average annual population growth has been a healthy 4.2 per cent, as opposed to 2.6 per cent in Tel Aviv. Jerusalem's physical beauty, its strong tourist economy and historical significance for both the country and the region as a whole outweigh the relative dangers of terrorism.[16]

The big unknown is the impact that a biological or chemical attack would have on the built environment. In the short-term, experts are largely agreed that it will be several years before there is a credible risk that Al Qaida or its associated networks will be capable of launching such an attack. Most of the substances they are developing are relatively easy to produce, but difficult to do so in an operational format that would bring death and destruction on anything but a very local scale. This was evident in the Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway by the terrorist cult group Aum Shinrikyo in 1995, which caused large-scale panic but killed only twelve people. The psychological impact of even a small-scale attack at a tube station or on a packed commuter train could be significant, and might be the trigger that prompts individuals to ask whether they really need to live and work in one of the world's most important terrorist targets.

3 The rise of 'Invisible Security'

While barricades and barriers defined the counter-terrorist urban landscape of the 1990s in the UK, in recent years there have been significant attempts to 'tone down' security in cities. This trend looks set to accelerate in the coming years, aided by developments in technology that negate the need for bulky and obtrusive security, and as planners and architects begin to think more creatively about how they can hide security behind design features. As a result, security is becoming 'invisible' to the naked eye. While this might make our cities look and feel nicer to spend time in, and reduce the inconveniences associated with security, it raises critical questions about the governance of cities, which architects, designers and planners need to engage with as a matter of priority.

A) Sensitive security

Over recent years, attempts to counter-balance security features with aesthetically pleasing design have coincided with an urban renaissance that has been transforming our cities for the last 5-10 years. In some cases, this might be limited to small touches that make a subtle, but important, difference to the way a building, road or area looks. For example, the concrete barriers erected outside the Houses of Parliament following the September 11th attacks have recently been painted black to make them less obtrusive; and other barriers have been replaced by sturdy but more attractive flowering plant pots.[17]

In other cases, security has been factored into the design process from the outset. For example, instead of using a conventional barrier, designers of a pedestrian path that will link the ferry terminal on the Hudson River to the site of the World Trade Center

designed a luminous glass bench. It will provide seating, subtly glowing illumination and aesthetic delight, while performing the important role of keeping vehicle threats at bay. It will be lower than a typical barrier because in front of the bench there will be compressible fill material that will support people but cause vehicles to sink down.[18] These types of clever designs are likely to become more common in the future.

B) Next generation counter-terrorism technologies

Developments in technology will make security less visible, but much more invasive in the future. In particular, as biometric technologies come of age they will radically alter the principles underpinning the governance of security at the street level, by changing the relationship between the observer and the observed, and making decision-making much less visible.

There are numerous examples of the development and implementation of such technologies. In Schipol airport in the Netherlands, an airport-wide system of iris recognition technology is being deployed for users of the airport. At the moment the scheme is voluntary – in fact, you have to pay $100 to take part – but if it proves successful it will become mandatory. Not only will it aid security at the airport, but it is hoped it will eventually do away with the need for credit cards in airport shops.[19] Security officials will be able to run checks against those using the airport and cross-reference with lists of known criminals or terrorists. A similar technology is already in use in many shops across the UK to tackle shoplifting.

In July 2003, it was reported that the Pentagon was developing a digitalised surveillance network that is capable of tracking the movements of all vehicles in a city by identifying them by physical characteristic, colour or even the biometric features of the driver. This expansive 'tracking system' has already attracted the attention of the law enforcement agencies keen to mainstream this military technology for non-combat use.[20]

London's 'ring of steel' has been superseded in recent years by what might be termed a 'ring of glass'. It is estimated that drivers in London are caught on camera three times during an average journey through the city.[21] Not only do the hundreds of CCTV cameras in London catch drivers entering the congestion zone without paying, they also provide an invaluable surveillance network for the police and security service. In fact, MI5, Special Branch and the Metropolitan Police are reported to have helped to develop software installed on the cameras, which automatically identifies suspects or known criminals who enter the eight-square-mile zone. There are currently more than 30 cities across the UK that are watching London carefully, waiting to replicate the congestion scheme if it proves successful. The nationwide roll-out of the scheme would be relatively rapid because the UK has the most comprehensive CCTV network of any country, with 2.5 million CCTV cameras, or 10 per cent of the world's total.

These developments could bring enormous benefits. Firstly, if they deliver results, they could become a critical part of crime and terrorism prevention strategies across

the country. Those known to the authorities could be singled out, monitored and if necessary taken in for questioning. Secondly, because these technologies are less invasive it could remove many of the inconveniences we all face in the name of security – the check-point, the diversion, the no-entry sign, and so on. In short, they allow 'normal' life to go on, they create what planners call 'permeable' cities, but provide the means to eradicate certain types of behaviour. Thirdly, it might change the way our cities look and feel. Reducing the need for invasive and clunky security allows local authorities, planners and designers to concentrate on the aesthetics of the city, using design to create the types of spaces that are inclusive and welcoming.

We should caution against the unfettered adoption of such technologies, though. There are of course concerns about the impact on civil liberties. This debate is pretty well-rehearsed in its traditional form. But within this context it is particularly important to note that the erosion of civil liberties unpicks the democratic contract between citizens and politicians that is essential in the delivery of counter-terrorism. if normal citizens are to act as 'unlikely counter-terrorists', there must be a relationship of trust and mutual engagement on which to base this.[1]

Wherever there is technology, there is the perennial danger of 'function creep', which makes governance opaque. As Gareth Crossman of the campaign group Liberty has said, "There is an issue we are concerned about which is called 'function creep'. This is where we are told that a system is being set up and used for a certain purpose and then we find out it is being used for another totally different one. It is a dangerous precedent. We would be concerned that it would be just a 'fishing' exercise where large amounts of data are passed over to the police or the security services and they just sift through it." Who decides what type of behaviour is 'unacceptable' and in need of monitoring? Is there any power of veto over inappropriate uses of this technology in *private* space? How do we keep track of what this technology is being used for, especially function creep into other areas outside the agreed remit?

There is always a danger that policy makers put too much faith into technologies to deliver where non-technological means have failed. The rapid deployment of CCTV provides a good example. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the growing risk posed by frequent and severe terrorist attacks on the mainland by the IRA and the growing fear of crime among the public caught policy makers and politicians off guard. The growing visibility of persistent poverty and degradation in many inner city areas, an alcohol-fuelled 'yob culture', a drugs-induced crime wave and the rise of sensational media reporting of these and other issues such as child abduction, paedophilia, and violent crime left many people fearing Britain was in the middle of a crime epidemic.

Around this time, CCTV was already beginning to be used on private property, such as in shops. The hope was that it could also help to tackle problems in public spaces, too. There was no evidence of the effectiveness of CCTV in crime prevention, but a

[1] The concept of the 'unlikely counter-terrorists' was developed in a collection edited by Rachel Briggs in 2002: *The Unlikely Counter-Terrorists*, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002.

massive programme of CCTV development started regardless. Initiated by the last Conservative government, it was keenly continued by Labour when it came into office in 1997. John Major devoted more than three-quarters of the crime prevention budget to encourage local authorities to install CCTV and between 1996-98 CCTV became the single most heavily funded non criminal justice crime prevention measure. What started on a small scale in London to protect against terrorist attacks quickly spread out to the rest of the country. It is now estimated that the average Briton is photographed by more than 300 separate cameras from 30 separate CCTV networks in one day.[22]

This investment was made without any evidence about the effectiveness of CCTV in either preventing crime or increasing the level of detection and successful prosecution. It seemed sensible to assume that if people knew they were being watched they would be less likely to commit crime. However, a recent study commissioned by the Home Office has found that CCTV has not brought any measurable decrease in terrorism or crime, partly because criminals quickly learn to adapt their behaviour and partly because the success of technology is determined more by the social context within which it is used and the ability of its operatives than by the hardware itself.[23]

Research and polling continues to show that CCTV makes the public *feel* safer, and pressure mounts for further expansion of coverage. This reminds us of Ellin's warning that 'form follows fear' and begs the question of whether built environment professionals, policy makers and politicians should meet real or perceived risks.

As physical security retreats and becomes less visible there are likely to be psychological effects. People might begin to feel less safe as the symbols of security disappear, concerned that nothing seems to be happening. There is also a danger that as security retreats ordinary people lose the sense of their own role in the security matrix. Security is not something that can be done 'to you'; it requires individuals to adopt an active rather than a passive demeanour. It is important that technological developments do not leave individuals disempowered; not only would this break their spirit but would also result in less effective outcomes.

Also at stake is a fundamental question about how the development of invisible security will change the nature of the urban space. Peter Marcuse has argued, "security [has] become[s] the justification for measures that threaten the core of urban social and political life, from the physical barricading of space to the social barricading of democratic activity." He argues that rising levels of security in cities will reduce the public use of public space and the levels of popular participation in governmental planning and the decision-making process by making public protest more difficult and making individuals feel alienated in public places.[24] At a time when these security measures themselves make governance more rather than less important, this is an alarming prediction.

Cities have traditionally been anonymous places where creativity and eccentricity meet to produce works of art, music, thinking and writing. It remains to be seen whether this chemistry can be maintained alongside heightened monitoring and surveillance, although Orwell's *1984* – with his all-seeing telescreen – offers a disturbing vision of what this kind of future might look like. [25] The impact would not just be cultural and social; the death of bohemianism in our cities would have an economic impact, too. Richard Florida has argued that it is the cities that are able to capture a 'creative class' which prosper most, and has shown evidence from the US and Europe to sustain his thesis.[26]

4 Community-based counter-terrorism – the potential of sustainable communities

Both traditional urban defence and invisible security rely heavily on the idea that security is 'delivered' and fundamentally fail to recognise the role of individuals and communities in contributing towards counter-terrorism from the bottom up. At a time when Al Qaida is trying to establish a home-grown network in the UK, through secondary and sometimes even tertiary networks, it is more important than ever before that counter-terrorism is a locally-based, community level activity, as well as something which is driven by strategic policy priorities from the very top of government. It is only by working at this level that we will be able to starve the network's oxygen and prevent it from establishing a domestic base from which to launch attacks within the UK much more easily.[2]

The concept of 'sustainable communities' seems to offer an alternative approach to counter-terrorism which would focus on the interface between the built environment, people and security, based on an understanding of how people use space in practice. Inspired by 'crime prevention through environmental design' (CPTED), [3] sustainable communities are now at the heart of UK planning policy. They are described in a recent paper for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) as "…communities which succeed now, economically, socially and environmentally, and respect the needs of future generations. They are well designed places where people feel safe and secure; where crime and disorder, or the fear of crime, doesn't undermine quality of life or community cohesion."[27] This is reinforced by the new Planning Policy Statement 1, which has put crime prevention at the heart of the planning process: "Designing out crime and designing in community safety should be central to the planning and delivery of new development."

Sustainable communities are organised around seven attributes, some of which are relevant to counter-terrorism:

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[2] This is a point made by Sir David Veness, outgoing Assisstant Commissioner for Specialist Operations at the Metropolitan Police at a recent lecture for Demos, *The Unlikely Counter-Terrorists*, 22nd February 2005. For more information, see www.demos.co.uk

[3] CPTED is based on the assumption that crime can be designed out of a space if it is a consideration from the outset of development.

- Access and movement: places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security. This makes it easier to spot unusual behaviour within these spaces.
- Structure: places that are structured so that different users do not cause conflict.
- Surveillance: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked. This is a human alternative to CCTV coverage and puts people rather than machines at the centre of surveillance efforts.
- Ownership: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community and therefore encourage people to be proactive rather than passive in the security of their spaces.
- Physical protection: places that include necessary, well-designed security features, but which allow normal life to continue.
- Activity: places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times.
- Management and maintenance: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future

The concept of sustainable communities is currently focused on the potential for built form and design features to tackle crime, and the results seem to be encouraging. There is as yet no precedent within the 'war on terror' to adopt a similar approach to counter-terrorism, but it is an interesting idea and the built environment community should explore further whether this type of approach to urban planning and design would make terrorism more difficult while maintaining many of the positive attributes of the city.

Just as CPTED and sustainable communities sprang partly from a frustration with the negative impacts resulting from more traditional approaches to crime prevention, so we could well find ourselves on the cusp of a new sense of dissatisfaction with the way we are handling terrorism, which promises to unpick all the good work we did in the 1990s. As David Dixon, principle in charge of planning and urban design at Goody, Clancy and Associates in Boston, puts it, "It is perhaps the greatest irony that in recent decades much of our urban environment was rescued from fear – and cities and societies were made far safer – by the conscious creation of more open buildings, the blurring of the separation of public and private space, the promotion of community, and the drawing of people back to our streets and squares. A single-minded focus on defending against terrorism threatens all of these hard-won gains."[28]

5 Conclusion

Cities have been the site of war, crime, disorder, riots and terrorism since the dawn of urbanisation. City walls may have made way for 'rings of steel', but the principles of urban defence have largely remained the same for centuries.

These principles are beginning to be challenged by the rise of 'invisible security', which is seeing security shift from being a physical and visible function to something which is largely unseen by the human eye. Invisible security is facilitated by new technological developments, such as biometrics, and has been encouraged by fans of good urban design who argue that obtrusive security robs a city of its soul. Indeed, invisible security offers exciting opportunities for urban development.

It also raises many important questions about the way our cities are managed and governed: who makes decisions, where power lies, and how technology is being used behind the scenes. This is not necessarily an impossible course to navigate, but given the pace of technological change and the climate of fear present across the UK at the moment, it is important that we grapple with this and explore ways in which we can use invisible security to further the process of opening up cities, making them more permeable and more inclusive for a wider range of people, while at the same time asking difficult questions about urban governance.

This paper has argued strongly that security is not delivered 'to you' or 'for you', but relies on the active engagement of normal people, too. Security is delivered through small acts as well as grand gestures and the choices we make as a society about risk and response can ultimately be traced back to a set of personal and social psychological processes. This human factor is strikingly absent from the two security models set out, traditional urban defence and invisible security, where the individual plays a largely passive role.

Achieving a positive relationship between counter-terrorism and the built environment will rest on our ability to find ways of bringing together those who design spaces with those who secure it and those who use it to explore new urban forms which can deliver people-centred counter-terrorism, perhaps using the sustainable communities model as a starting point. But securing our cities is more than a technical process. We also need to create new cultures of engagement that spawn the types of urban governance needed for people-centred counter-terrorism to work in practice. Sustainable communities provide a good example of how the built environment can – by design – *enable* individuals to play an active role. It could be said that the design itself helps to facilitate the creation and re-creation of new types of urban governance.

Our cities have come to hold a special role, acting as everything from centres of creativity and economic might to the canvas for the national psyche. At a time when there is a growing understanding of the role to be played in counter-terrorism by individuals and communities, we must ensure we move beyond just technical and mechanical responses to terrorism. Securing the future of cities will require us to reinvigorate a much wider debate about the types of democratic cultures that can keep our cities vibrant and safe for generations to come.

Rachel Briggs, February 2005

Appendix: Other useful references

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