Security Culture on Campus:
Considerations for Urban Universities

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Abstract
This article examines the social meaning of security practices at urban university settings. The work first demonstrates the way in which physical fortification and surveillance technology have been implemented in urban institutional settings and considers the role these particular practices may play in shaping the socio-cultural identity of the university. Secondly, the work investigates alternate conceptions of security and considers the potential stability offered by the visionary ideals of the institutional mission statement.

In her book, *Dark Age Ahead*, the late urban planning scholar Jane Jacobs asks how great civilizations lose their way, and in doing so, she issues a warning to modern nations by questioning bold assumptions of sustainable power and influence. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, China and Mesopotamia were early leaders in civilization who lost their leading advantage (Jacobs 2004). Jacobs asks how it was possible for two such great civilizations to fall into stagnation, and she answers referencing Karen Armstrong's scholarship. From 1492 to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mesopotamia essentially closed its borders in an effort to keep Muslims, Jews and other outsiders at bay and to shield itself from dangers of infiltration and change. Mesopotamian leaders turned inward, protected their borders, and thus sealed their fate.

How, then, did China lose its lead, when even the colonization of America's West coast was within their imperial purview? Jacobs finds a clear explanation in the work of Jared Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (Diamond 1999). In fifteenth century China, according to Diamond, an internal battle for leadership ensued between two political factions. The losing faction had been the champion of exploration, and the winning faction retaliated against that priority and celebrated their own victory by dismantling the sea fleet, closing shipyards, and setting off a string of downturns that slowed the momentum of the earlier leadership. Thus, the borders of China were essentially closed such that there was little imported and little exported. China lost its technological lead, and succumbed to its own fortress mentality.

I reference these examples from Jacobs' work as a way to think about the problem of advancing scholarship in the face of a radically changed national and global security landscape. The American university system is a powerful leader in higher education, but its position is threatened by the new realities of urban America which, by many accounts, are realities to guard against; urban universities are constantly assessing

security threats and trying to mitigate and manage them. As in China and Mesopotamia, however, the urban university has a choice to make in responding to these new realities, and our world will be forever changed by those choices. For Jacobs, who imagines our descent into a new dark age, the political and social models of fifteenth century China and Mesopotamia are warnings to heed.

In the post-9/11 era, security has become a defining feature of daily life in urban spaces. Surveillance technologies punctuate the urban landscape with increasing prevalence, and fortifications have altered the geography of many cities nationwide. As key institutions in the urban landscape, universities are uniquely poised to shape the social and physical spaces of the city. They are centers of education, centers of employment and large landholders in the urban setting, and their policies with regard to security serve as models for the rest of the city. For this reason, universities must consider their responses to security concerns with care.

In this essay I explore the possible role of the university in responding to and constructing the secured city. A range of security strategies are available to universities, including closed-circuit surveillance and fortification, but it is unclear whether these are effective means for making university spaces more secure. It is clear, however, that limiting access to the urban university compromises one of the university's greatest strengths, that is, its position as a center for intellectual and cultural exchange. To preserve that strength, I argue, urban universities must position themselves clearly as institutions forged *with* rather than *against* their larger communities.

In considering defensive security strategies, universities are part of a large trend. David Harvey, a Professor of Geography at John's Hopkins University, has suggested that the fortress mentality is a common community practice. He writes, "Communities often exclude, define themselves against others, erect all sorts of keep-out signs (if not tangible walls), internalize surveillance, social controls, and repression" (Harvey 2000).

The question is how Harvey's supposition is made manifest in the community of urban institutions and in university settings in particular. In what follows, I offer some examples of this proclivity to defend in urban educational spaces and then discuss ways of thinking about alternatives to security in spatial form, in an attempt to understand how universities could approach the new realities of urban America differently.

In his book, *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey looks critically at the Maryland Science Center in Baltimore (Harvey 2000). In his case study, Harvey points to the role of the fortress mentality in configuring institutional space. In 1976, the Maryland Science Center, the state's oldest hall of science, inaugurated a contemporary facility on the southern end of Baltimore's Inner Harbor with a clear orientation toward fortification (Maryland Science Center 2007). In its mission statement, the Maryland Science Center touts itself as a "vital community resource," but the design of the building itself reveals that this resource is aimed not at the local community but rather to tourists who travel from afar to the Inner Harbor to park and access retail and restaurant chains in a waterside

setting. As Harvey notes, this intention is made evident in the Janus-faced profile of the Maryland Science Center. The building opens out onto the harbor, Baltimore's sea-oriented shopping arcade, with a spectacular and airy glass-encased lobby and turns an imposing windowless brick back to Federal Hill, the historic working-class neighborhood that borders the complex to the south. If one side of the Maryland Science Center is a vision of utopia, Harvey argues, the other side is its converse.

The Federal Hill community that lies adjacent to the Maryland Science Center was, for many decades, a working immigrant population and the location gave these laborers easy access to jobs on the docks of the Baltimore harbor. As industry shifted in mid-century and low-skilled employment opportunities were diminished while a stable service economy developed beyond the urban core, working-class neighborhoods were on shaky ground. The Federal Hill community fell to the pressures of disinvestment, and as the economic infrastructure collapsed, the crime rates rose. In 1968, following the assassination of Martin Luther King, race riots nearby made for incendiary social conditions, and inner city Baltimore and the Federal Hill area began to be perceived as a threat to guard against from the outside. The city initially responded with a plan to raze the neighborhood and eliminate the problematic community to make room for an interstate highway which would channel commerce between the city and its suburbs. When residents protested heavily, however, local officials consented to a reinvestment plan that focused on an urban outdoor mall, anchored by the Maryland Science Center, which would become known as the Inner Harbor (Live Baltimore 2007).

When construction began at the Maryland Science Center, however, its steering committee was not building on a blank slate, and the memory of discord was prominently etched into the design. Fearing potential threats from the working-class community next door, the Maryland Science Center adopted a fortress mentality with a plan to keep diversity at a distance. City leaders imagined the Inner Harbor as an "economic development engine now and in the future," and they protected that future with an intentionally fortified design. Harvey explains that the Maryland Science Center was phase one of the city's seaside gentrification project and claims that its design "was meant to repel social unrest and function as a strategic (bunker-style) outpost at the south end of the inner harbor to protect the investments yet to come." As Harvey notes, though, this "pursuit of consumerism" did nothing to touch "the roots of Baltimore's problems" (Harvey 2000). This investment was directed toward gaining tourism dollars on the backs of the new members of the labor force who worked the counters of national chains and took home minimum wage without benefits. Meanwhile, profit was channeled outward to company headquarters located beyond the inner city. Under this investment plan, the economic structure continued to separate social classes under the guise of community service, and the strategy was protected behind a solid wall that cordons off the Inner Harbor, creating what Harvey describes as an urban "gated community."

As a gated community—an outdoor mall and museum—the Baltimore Inner Harbor is packaged as a destination experience with consumerist appeal, reputedly even more popular with tourists than Disneyland and, perhaps, just as disconnected from the

realities of its environment (Harvey 2000). The approach to the Inner Harbor is designed primarily for automobile traffic exiting from four interstate highways, and there are over thirty-one parking lots within four blocks north of the Inner Harbor to accommodate this traffic. The Maryland Science Center is, however, virtually inaccessible by foot from its adjacent Federal Hill neighborhood. To approach this "bourgeois utopia" from Federal Hill, one must cross a four-lane highway and then circumnavigate the complex to gain entry on the harbor side (Harvey 2000). The view of the structure from this angle is of a monolithic and impenetrable brick façade, and visually it promises very little beyond the fortress aesthetic. There is no sense from the cumbersome Federal Hill approach that this structure would open from its opposite side onto a world of scientific wonder, nor any indication that community members who traveled from this direction would be welcome, and this raises the question of whether the fortified border of the Maryland Science Center compromises the institutional mission to provide a vital community resource.

In *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis similarly uncovers heavy fortifications in public spaces that are intended to provide resources to a large urban community. At Frank Gehry's Goldwyn Library in Los Angeles, where one might expect designs inducing the freedom of movement and the exchange of ideas, one is physically affronted by hard materials and cold gates. Davis claims quite starkly that the Goldwyn Library "is undoubtedly the most menacing library ever built" (Davis 1992). While some critics touted the style of the library as "generous" and "inviting," Davis critiques the library's "bellicose barricades" (Davis 1992). Davis writes, "The Goldwyn Library relentlessly interpolates a demonic Other (arsonist, graffitist, invader) whom it reflects back on the surrounding streets and street people" (Davis 1992). In essence, Davis suggests that the library imposes a delinquent identity on the surrounding social scene, creating a culture of urban antagonism in a space more suited to intellectualism. The community is not only confronted with the steely resolve of the library, but its identity is reconstructed in the library's aggressive image.

I consider the examples of the Maryland Science Center and the Goldwyn library as a way to get at the stakes of heavy security in urban educational sites. What does it mean to draw physical borders and limit access to sites of learning, and what, if anything, is sacrificed? A starting point for these inquiries is the recognition that these examples represent the expanding fortification of national urban territories. Public spaces of consumerism, culture and learning are increasingly protected and supervised. Furthermore, their physical fortifications are commonly coupled with a surveillance network that monitors individual behavior, and the Maryland Science Center and the Goldwyn Library are no exception.

In New York, the Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) has charted the exponential growth of urban surveillance. Since 1998, the organization has mapped surveillance camera locations throughout the borough of Manhattan (Siegel, Perry, and Gram 2006). Below 14th Street in 1998, the NYCLU mapped 769 closed circuit cameras, each presented by a dot on their map, which can be found at their Web site. By 2005, the NYCLU surveillance cameras numbered 4,176, marking a greater than 500 percent increase.

The expansion of surveillance networks in New York has been spatially uneven. On 125th Street in Harlem, the NYCLU claims that the surveillance is so heavy that an individual's every step is likely to be captured and monitored (Siegel, Perry, and Gram 2006). The density of surveillance technologies on 125th Street points to the intense monitoring of the black urban underclass, a population that is strongly represented in this neighborhood. Lyon argues that "the more marginal or nonconforming we are, the stronger the web of constraint-by-surveillance becomes" (Lyon 1994). In naming surveillance as a form of constraint, Lyon points to its role in targeting diversity, policing the non-conforming "other," and limiting opportunity. Lyon and other surveillance scholars have suggested that control functions through the mechanisms of a surveillance network much as it would have functioned in the spaces of the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's famous prison design. Like the supervisory idea for inmates of the Panopticon, individuals who are surveilled tend to modify their behavior to conform to certain norms based on the possibility of being seen by an authority. Smith writes that "the panoptic argument suggests that most rationally-thinking individuals entering an area with CCTV cameras, will modify their actions and follow and comply with socially accepted behavioral norms, as it is difficult for them to ascertain whether they are being observed or not (rather like Bentham's prisoners)" (Smith 2004).

It is because surveillance puts pressure on the non-conformists to conform, that diverse parties, from the academy of higher education to the American Civil Liberties Union, are pursuing the matter as one of privacy and liberty. The bind of surveillance is that it does little to deter crime, while it does much to deter the freedom of movement and the freedom of expression. These are concerns for democracy and for the central institutions in our democracy, including our national universities where freedom of thought and expression are paramount.

Several surveillance mapping projects have determined the degree to which some university campuses are surveilled (New York City Surveillance Camera Project 2004). In the immediate vicinity of Pace University, which is located in lower Manhattan near the financial district, the NYCLU found thirty private cameras in 2004. These were cameras not placed by the New York police department or other public agencies. In my own survey of the Pace University campus proper, I counted seven closed-circuit cameras. In an informal interview, a Pace University security guard informed me that there were 121 more cameras inside the buildings (October 3, 2004, personal interview). According to the New York Surveillance Camera Players, a small New York-based counter-surveillance organization, New York University had, by 2004, "five hundred and ten cameras installed in public spaces" (Surveillance Camera Players 2007). Their report locates each of these and explains that "five hundred of them are on privately owned buildings (including those owned by NYU and other universities); and 10 on city-owned poles." They also recorded that, in the eighteen months preceding the report, the total number of surveillance cameras had more than doubled in the urban campus area, making it, according to their maps, "the most heavily surveilled area in Manhattan." The irony of this situation is, according to the Surveillance Camera Players, that "there is virtually no crime in the area, and no locations that might be

tempting targets for terrorists." The surveillance of the NYU campus is, they suggest, a control strategy that is motivated by forces other than crime itself.

I do not reference the surveillance statistics to propose that a new dark age is delivered necessarily by the architecture of security, nor am I simply presenting an argument against technology. I am arguing, however, that university decisions about security, including decisions about fortressing and surveillance, have ramifications for the culture of the university community as well as the outside community. Furthermore, universities need not follow the trend set by New York University or other highly surveilled campuses. It is worth noting that Harvard University is under very little surveillance. The New York City Surveillance Camera Players mapped twenty-nine cameras in and around Harvard Square, and at Yale University, the Surveillance Camera Players found no surveillance cameras at all. Yale University is, however, surrounded by a large bulwark that separates the campus from the New Haven community.

Both micro and macro social meanings are embedded in spatial form. As this is the case, the urban university, in considering security options, must first consider its long-term mission and the degree to which its security decisions are in keeping with that mission or in conflict with it. If the larger perspective is overlooked, the decisions made about securing university space may threaten the greater institutional ideals. In other words, if the university is to write its sociocultural identity in its material foundations, it should write an apt identity.

In surveying the mission statements of several urban universities, it is clear that these are institutions committed to education, diversity, and opportunity. The mission of Pace University in New York speaks of opportunity even in "an uncertain world" (Pace University 2003). CUNY's mission includes the commitment to an affordable education and a "focus on the urban community of New York City" (City University of New York 2004). Harvard was founded as a site for "free expression" and "discovery," while New York University was founded as a "center of higher learning that would be open to all, regardless of national origin, religious beliefs, or social background" (Harvard College 2007, New York University, 2007). These institutional identities are in line with Foucault's notion of heterotopia, in which, as Harvey represents it, "difference, alterity, and 'the other' might flourish or…actually be constructed" (Harvey 2000). Of course, it is necessary to recognize the possibilities for Foucault's heterotopia within the context of the dominant social order, but even so, there is possibility for agency and diversity amid these dynamics if there can be common ground (Harvey 2000; Foucault 1979, 1984, 1994). Otherwise, Harvey claims that, "authoritarianism, discursive violence, and hegemonic practices become the basis for decisions and this," he claims, "is unlikely to create space for alternative possibilities" (Harvey 2000).

One of the key rationales for building heavy fortification and employing dense surveillance in the urban sphere is marketing. Bannister has argued that surveillance technology is used to put a "feel-good" factor in the urban experience by producing a perception of safety and suggesting adequate protection from the "unruly" sectors of

urban society (Bannister, Fyfe, and Kearns 1998; Bannister and Fyfe 2001; Smith 2004). The idea is that fortification and surveillance can market the city and its institutions as safe and, therefore, allow the urban experience and its consumerist capacities to proceed uninterrupted. Or is the opposite true? Ellin reveals the double bind of security strategies when she writes, "…certainly, the gates, policing and other surveillance systems, defensive architecture, and neo-traditional urbanism do contribute to giving people a greater sense of security. But such settings no doubt also contribute to accentuating fear by increasing paranoia and distrust among people" (Ellin 1996).

In relying on technological networks rather than human networks to shape and manage our society, we may, as Ellin suggests, be taking a big risk. We may be increasing paranoia and distrust by, in fact, producing the kinds of dysfunctions we purport to be preventing (Noguera 1995).

The task for the urban university is to begin to think about how the space for trust and diverse participation can be achieved. The university is not in a position to neutralize uneven power relations that are extant in our society and consistently mediate institutional practices. On the other hand, the university can use its power as an institution in the community to set a course for change that is in keeping with its larger mission of increasing opportunity and advancing scholarship. Jane Jacobs, in fact, points to higher education as a pillar of hope in an uncertain world (Jacobs 2004). This position of hopeful power is upheld, as Joseph Nye, Dean of the Kennedy School, suggests, when leaders establish models of prosperity by employing strategies of openness and engagement that encourage emulation (Nye 2004). Nye explains that this kind of leadership is based on "soft power," which is a legitimate form of power that ultimately costs less and has the benefit of allowing space for human potential.

But what does it look like to lead with a softer form of power? In practice, it allows for institutions to engage diverse parties, build alliances in urban networks, seize opportunities for growth and change—which all culminate in a vision of the future that is true to the mission of the urban university. The university can employ strategies of soft power by including community voices in strategic planning; by bringing underrepresented groups to the work of academic scholarship; by building school-community partnerships for improving urban public services, including public schools, public health care and public housing. This practice can also include support for new research, even research that pushes the university away from long-standing theories and toward new investments.

The university can be a setting where diverse people can congregate and differing ideologies can be examined. This was prominently demonstrated in the first university-staged presidential debates at Miami University in election year 2004. Significantly, though, this gesture of open and outward community participation was undercut by the urban security policy in place at Miami University which sponsored the construction of a chain link fence that surrounded the entire campus on this occasion of national conversation (Stevenson 2004). In this case, the fear of new urban realities superceded

the national mission of democratic participation, even as those of us watching on television believed we were witnessing democracy in action. News reports revealing that the entire campus was fortified for this event served to remind us that even our democracy is susceptible to spin, in that it appears more egalitarian than it is.

At the university level, there is a push to confront the new urban realities and security concerns. As we consider our position with regard to those issues, we have the opportunity to reassert the broader visions of our institutions, principles which include the free flow of ideas, diversity and opportunity and which are, truly, the principles on which the fate of the urban university depends.

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