Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Newcastle University

Unit of Assessment: 16 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning

Title of case study: Cities, Infrastructure and Security: leading public discourse and policy debate

1. Summary of the impact

Two decades of research in the Global Urban Research Unit at Newcastle University has significantly shaped public awareness and political understanding of the links between technology, infrastructure and security within highly urbanised societies. Research into the role of cities as key sites of security and war and the spread of 'the surveillance society' are two interlocking foci that have generated impacts with global reach. Of particular significance are: a) research and scholarship to develop key concepts and a language that captures and communicates how urban landscapes are being infiltrated by military technologies. We specifically highlight the publication of *Cities Under Siege* as the culmination of this work and its impact on national and international public debate, and; b) specific studies into surveillance technologies in Britain that impact directly on public debate and the formation of specific national policy.

2. Underpinning research

The research that underpins the impacts described in section 4 emanates from work undertaken by staff at Newcastle University from the early 1990s to the present day. A key moment was the initiation of a research centre, the Centre for Urban Technology (CUT), in 1994, led by a small group of young researchers, in particular, Simon Guy (Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Professor to 2005); Simon Marvin (Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, to 2001) and Steve Graham (Lecturer, Reader, Professor to 2005; and Professor, 2010 -). CUT's work made a major contribution to shifting the study of urban infrastructure from an area dominated by very 'technical' research, often aligned with engineering and policy studies, to an exciting new focus for urban and social theory. This in part reflected societal processes such as the marketization of urban infrastructure, but also how CUT researchers were able to conceptualise infrastructure as 'Urban Technology' and apply a new set of socio-technical ideas with which to consider its significance to the politics of urban life. During the 1990s, CUT staff worked on a number of funded research projects, including a very significant ESRC e-society grant and a host of industry-funded projects with the likes of British Telecom and major energy and water companies. This work cohered into a substantial body of written scholarship including the seminal publication, *Splintering Urbanism* **(1)**, which placed a new set of influential terminologies in the public domain, including the phrase 'splintering urbanism' itself.

In 2001, Graham took over the Directorship of CUT and led a merger with two other centres to become the Global Urban Research Unit (GURU) at Newcastle University in 2002. In 2001 David Murakami-Wood joined GURU as Earl Grey Fellow on a project to examine *Algorithmic Surveillance* (then Lecturer, 2004-09; Reader, 2009) and GURU's urban technology research consolidated into a focus on cities and security, e.g. **(2, 3, 4)** which continues to the present day. Graham's British Academy funded readership (2002–2004) *The UK as a Software Sorted Society,* was a particular highlight demonstrating that the sites, spaces, structures, symbols and experiences of cities and urban life were now central to political struggles over security and surveillance. Graham and Murakami-Wood in particular reinforced Newcastle University's position as a lead organisation in cities and security research during this period, with both heavily involved in the founding of the academic Surveillance Studies Network (SSN) as well as being two of the five founding editors of the open-access academic journal *Surveillance and Society*. (Murakami-Wood as the Managing Editor).

GURU's work on urban security in the 2000s also included the €1m EU funded Social Polis platform on cities and social cohesion (2007-10, with Gilroy, Vigar from this UOA), wherein Murakami-Wood led a trans-disciplinary work programme on urban security that included a number

of stakeholders from civil society, policy and industry in co-designing a research programme. Murakami-Wood's ESRC Fellowship *Cultures of Urban Surveillance* further consolidated GURU's work in this field.

The key research output in this period in terms of policy impact was however the 2006 report **(5)** to the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) -- the UK Government's surveillance regulator -- on the surveillance society and a series of follow-up publications; Murakami-Wood led the four-person team of main authors drawing heavily on GURU's work of the previous ten years.

In 2010, Graham returned to Newcastle University and published his major book *Cities under Siege* **(6)**, a culmination of his previous eight year's research on cities and security. The book unites the normally separate academic discourses around the urbanisation of security on the one hand, and the politics of cities and urban life on the other, and is a major exposé of the tightening connections across the world between urban life, militarism and security politics. In this "the central role of cities within the new imperialism – the resurgence of aggressive, colonial militarism focusing on the violent appropriation of land and resources in the South" (p.xxviii) is emphasised. This is a scholarly publication, long in the making, which draws directly from much of the cited research undertaken during Graham's time at Newcastle and from research undertaken at Newcastle in the 2005-10 period by others. For example, the use of the term 'Cities under Siege' to capture Graham's agenda first appears in print in his 2006 article **(4)** written at Newcastle University and the article's content is particularly apparent in chapter 2 'Manichean Worlds'; a 2003 article Lessons in Urbicide (*New Left Review*) is reproduced, in modified form, in chapter 7 of the same name; and the paper in *Critical Social Policy* **(2)** heavily influences chapter 4 'Ubiquitous Borders'. The introduction of geopolitical thinking into his earlier urban studies approach is obvious in some of his writing in the early 2000s while at Newcastle, e.g. **(3, 4)** but his time at Durham University (2005-2009) contributed to the book inasmuch as it honed Graham's understanding of the critical geopolitical dimensions of his earlier research and writing.

3. References to the research

1. Graham,S., Marvin,S., (2001), '*Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition,* London: Routledge. [over 2000 Google citations as of 20/10/2013]. Available from HEI on request.
2. Graham S, Wood, D. (2003), 'Digitizing surveillance: categorization, space, inequality'. *Critical Social Policy 23*(2), 227-248. DOI: 10.1177/0261018303023002006
3. Graham, S. (2004), (Eds.). *Cities, War and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, Oxford: Blackwell. Available from HEI on request.
4. Graham, S. (2006) 'Cities and the ''war on terror'''. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30(2), 255–76. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00665.x
5. Surveillance Studies Network (2006), D. Murakami-Wood, and Ball, K (eds). *A Report on the Surveillance Society for the Information Commissioner.* Available from HEI on request.
6. Graham, S. (2010), *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism,* London: Verso. REF2 output: 154395.

4. Details of the impact

Academics at Newcastle have been successful in generating impact from their research on cities and security in the 2008-2013 period, both in their own rights and as lead partners in the Surveillance Studies Network (SSN). Two types of impact of their work – on public debate, and on policy formation – are described below.

Impacts on Public Debate, Awareness and Understanding

The cities and security research at Newcastle has impacted upon public understanding and awareness of such issues. The most significant element of this is the development of a research-informed lexicon, starting with 'splintering urbanism', and including research to support the idea of

the UK as a 'surveillance society', to capture and communicate some of the most fundamental processes underway in cities for consumption by public, policy and research audiences. In addition: the founding of the SSN; the founding, editing and contributions to its open access journal *Surveillance and Society;* and the co-creation of SSN's four major international conferences and a number of other networking events which have attracted hundreds of delegates from both academic and non-academic backgrounds, have all been contributions to the impact of Newcastle University's urban security research.

The most significant vehicle for shaping public debate has, however, been the publication of Graham's book, *Cities under Siege: the New Military Urbanism* in 2010. Although written by an academic and drawing heavily on his research, this book was produced and marketed for a much wider target audience. At 31 July 2013, 3,500 copies of the English edition had been sold, including 1,500 in the USA **(IMP1)**. Translations into many languages, including Mandarin, Arabic, German and French are in progress or completed. The French version 'Ville Sous Contrôlé' has now sold 1200 copies. The global reach of the research messages was enhanced by book reviews not only in the UK, but also in the press of many other countries – for example, *La Découverte* **(IMP2)** provides extracts from six prestigious French reviews; and a 4500 word article for the United Arab Emirates newspaper, *Alkhaleej* **(IMP3)**. It was further promoted when Nicholas Lezard chose it as book of the week in the *Guardian* **(IMP4)**.

The high profile of *Cities under Siege* and the linkage of the book's themes by many commentators to global events such as the Arab Spring and movements such as 'Occupy', which both had intensely urban roots and impacts, meant that Graham's research insights were high profile in the media. For example, he was the 'talking head' for a major documentary *The Fear has a Thousand Eyes* screened on the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the main terrestrial channels in Germany and Switzerland **(IMP5),** and was interviewed twice on the influential US global daily news show, *Democracy Now*, to discuss the Occupy 'protests'. The Editor of the programme commented that "his book Cities Under Siege exposes like no other how cities are being remade into security landscapes. His analysis in the first interview was so insightful, and resonated so well with so many people around the world involved in the protests, that we asked him back the next day for another interview. We have repeated segments of hi[s] interviews several times since they remain a remarkably incisive analysis of the current politics of cities around the world" **(IMP6)**.

Such exposure of Graham's research insights have led to lively public debate of his ideas. For example, more than 1,000 tweets are found in a Twitter search using 'Lockdown London Guardian', from the title of Graham's Guardian article on the London Olympics 2012. It is also clear that Graham's terminologies to describe his concepts such as 'splintering urbanism' and 'new military urbanism' have become part of the lexicon of public discourse. More than 500 tweets have used the 'new military urbanism' terminology **(IMP7)** to discuss issues of cities and security, particularly when framing their arguments in terms of dissent.

Impacts on Policy Formation and Debate

Researchers at Newcastle have influenced the development of a regulatory framework in the UK which addresses surveillance and information security. The primary conduit of influence was two reports of the Surveillance Studies Network (SSN).

The first report (2006) was co-ordinated by Murakami-Wood **(5)**; and Graham provided an 'expert report' for the publication. The report was the lead item on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme on 2 November 2006 and featured heavily in news coverage of the time. The report was translated into 5 languages, and sparked official inquiries by both the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee and the House of Lords Constitution Committee. Murakami Wood coordinated submissions from the Surveillance Studies Network for both and gave a seminar at the House of Lords introducing the range of surveillance technologies that they should consider. He also gave oral evidence to the Lords' Committee cementing a process whereby the term 'surveillance society' became used in policy debate throughout the World during the period to 2013.

The report was later submitted as evidence to the Home Affairs Committee's Inquiry into the Surveillance Society in 2008 by SSN, but had already had influence on that Inquiry: in Volume 1 of the Inquiry report it refers to the SSN work in the introduction, stating that "our aim was not to duplicate that work but rather to build on it in exploring the large strategic issues of concern to the general public" (p.8) **(IMP8)**. From this central position in the Inquiry process, the findings of the SSN report pervade the recommendations of the Home Affairs Committee, and where these were accepted by government, formed the basis of revisions to the regulatory process. According to the Information Commissioner, the report had "led to increased parliamentary, media and public interest in the increased surveillance of people's daily lives" (p.2) **(IMP9)**. The report contributed to the debate that fed into the UK elections in 2010 where surveillance became for the first time a national election issue.

The second, updated, SSN report in 2010 (Wood and Graham as two of the six authors) was included as Part B of the Information Commissioner's 2010 Annual report to the House of Commons **(IMP9)**, and described as "the centrepiece of this report" (p.4), demonstrating the continuing influence SSN research has had on the Information Commissioner's Office. The Information Commissioner's report was presented to the Home Affairs Committee on 11 November 2010 and received national media attention – for example, the Guardian **(IMP10)** - so furthering Parliamentary and public understanding of the surveillance research insights raised by Wood, Graham and SSN colleagues. It was incorporated into the ICO's annual report to the House of Commons in 2011 and remains highly influential in policy and public discourse.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

IMP1 Personal correspondence from Verso Publishers, 25 July 2013. Available on request.

IMP2 La Découverte, http://www.editionsladecouverte.fr/catalogue/index-Villes_sous_controle-9782707171276.html

IMP3 Personal correspondence from Editor in Foreign Affairs of Alkhaleej Newspaper, 21 November 2011. Available on request.

IMP4 Book of the Week in the Guardian. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/dec/13/cities-under-siege-stephen-graham

IMP5 Documentary *The Fear has a Thousand Eyes* (2011). Available at: http://www.german-documentaries.de/films/50143

IMP6 Personal Correspondence from Editor, Democracy Now. Available on request.

IMP7 Steve Graham research page. Available at: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/apl/staff/profile/steve.graham#tab_research

IMP8 House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, A Surveillance Society? Fifth Report of Session 2007-8, Volume 1, London: The Stationery Office. Available at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmhaff/58/58i.pdf.

IMP9 UK Information Commissioner's 2010 report (published 1.3.2011). Available at: http://www.ico.org.uk/about_us/research/reports_to_parliament.

IMP10 Guardian article available at: http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/11/surveillance-society-soon-reality