

# Visibility and the policing of public space

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## **Abstract**

From studies of ‘panoptic’ CCTV surveillance to accounts of undercover police officers, it is often mooted that visibility and invisibility are central to the policing of public space. However, there has been no comprehensive and critical assessment of this axiom. Drawing on the practices of a variety of policing providers and regulators, and the work of geographers, criminologists and other social scientists, this paper examines how and why visibility underpins the policing of public space. We begin by considering the ways in which policing bodies and technologies seek to render themselves selectively visible and invisible in the landscape. The paper then moves on to explore the ways in which policing agents attempt to make ‘incongruous’ bodies, behaviours and signs variously visible and invisible in public space. We then offer a sympathetic critique of these accounts, arguing that more attention is needed in understanding: (i) how other senses such as touch, smell and sound are socially constructed as in and out-of-place and ‘policed’ accordingly; and (ii) how the policing of undesirable bodies and practices is not simply about quantitative crime reduction, but conducted through qualitative, embodied performance. The paper concludes by pinpointing key areas for future research.

## **Introduction**

In the lead up to the 2010 Commonwealth Games, ‘anti-begging squads’ were deployed across New Delhi to apprehend and prosecute those seen, or perceived to be, begging. Media footage on Al Jazeera television showed those targeted by the squad being ushered by plain-clothes officers into a white van marked ‘mobile court’.<sup>i</sup> Inside sat a magistrate who, under an extension to the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act 1959, had the power to issue a substantial fine, or a sentence of up to 3 years in a ‘begging home’. Between December

2009 and February 2010 alone, 124 of the 224 people arrested for begging were sentenced to at least 1 year's incarceration (Hodge 2010). A number of night shelters were also demolished to make way for Games-related development and bamboo-screens were erected to hide slums from Games visitors. '[T]he image of an outstretched hand does not sit easily with that of the "Incredible India" that the authorities wish to project' (Chamberlain 2009, 44), neither apparently do the slums and shelters. These punitive and cosmetic strategies, homeless activist Paramjeet Kaur argues, 'treat people like eyesores' (quoted in Buncombe 2010, 31), as they are removed from public view, hidden behind screens and imprisoned for what is seemingly nothing more than their visual poverty (see also Mishra *et al.* 2010).

This introductory vignette describes some of the exclusionary and often punitive ways in which public spaces are policed in contemporary cities, spaces that are subject to continual struggle over who and what belongs in public space (Iveson 2007; Mitchell 2003); which some argue has never been 'open and accessible to all' (Ruppert 2006, 277; cf. Davis 1992; Sorkin 1992). The use of plain-clothes officers, mobile cameras and roadside sentencing, as well as the seemingly aesthetic goals of the 'sweeps' all hint at the centrality of visibility to the policing of public space. In short, the way things look, and what the public are able or allowed to see is very important. Whilst geographers and others have often referred to the relations between visibility and the policing of public space, this work has yet to be synthesised and critically reviewed. This lacuna is the central goal of the paper. In order to focus the scope of the paper, public space will be limited to topological spaces of sociability such as streets, parks, plazas, shopping malls and so on, although we recognise *a la* Iveson (2007) that public space also incorporates a variety of 'venues of public address' such as newspapers and the Internet. We interpret policing, meanwhile, to be 'surveillance to discover actual or anticipated breaches [of social order], and the threat or mobilization

of sanctions to ensure the security of the social order' (Reiner 1994, 722). Here policing is not simply the work of the public police force but an increasing array of public, private and voluntary sector providers (Yarwood 2007), who seek to 'police' not only violations of law and legislature, but also violations of societal norms, and behaviours considered to be socially undesirable and threatening to the normative order of public space (Cresswell 1996; Herbert 1997; Sibley 1995). The paper begins by exploring the ways in which policing bodies and technologies seek to make themselves selectively visible and invisible, and then explores how and why they selectively attempt to make others variously visible and invisible in public space (Sibley 1995). It moves on to make the case that studies have tended to privilege visibility over other senses such as touch, smell and sound, and that a wider sensory understanding of policing performance and practice would further research in this area. The paper concludes by briefly highlighting areas for future research.

### **Being (in)visible**

Being visible, or rather being seen, is an important part of doing policing. Public and private policing personnel, their uniforms, vehicles, badges, signs, cameras and other paraphernalia are used, in part, as symbols to communicate particular messages and evoke particular emotions in onlookers. Here we will explore how the emotions of reassurance and, first, deterrence are understood to emanate from 'high visibility' policing.

In recent decades, policing has been argued to have taken a 'preventive turn' (Hughes 2007); and criminals have subsequently been framed by policymakers as being opportunistic, and capable of making rational choices as to whether 'the pains and losses associated with apprehension and punishment will overshadow the possibility of criminal gain or profit' (McLaughlin 2006, 125). Hence, the notion of deterrence as a strategy of

social control has become politically popular (Kennedy 2008). As part of this, a whole range of highly visible policing bodies, technologies and strategies – from patrolling officers to CCTV cameras, hot-spot policing to wire fences – are legitimised by, and praised for, their ‘preventive capabilities’. They are perceived to communicate messages about the lack of opportunities to misbehave and/or the harsh repercussions of committing crime. These messages are, in turn, understood to deter on-looking potential ‘troublemakers’ (Clarke 1995; Kennedy 2008; Newman 1973).

Moving away from the notion of the rational opportunist, a number of scholars have incorporated Foucault’s (1980) ideas on the Panoptic disciplinary gaze in their analysis of electronic surveillance and CCTV in particular. For Fyfe and Bannister (1996), the development of CCTV in Glasgow city centre bears a striking resemblance to Foucault’s reading of Jeremy Bentham’s 18th century plans for the Panopticon prison (see also Koskela 2000, 2003; Wood 2007):

Like the Panopticon, CCTV schemes meet Bentham’s principle that power should be ‘visible and unverifiable’. Visibility is ensured by the fact that just as the inmate of Bentham’s prison has constantly ‘before his [sic] eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon’ (Foucault 1977, 201) so too anybody in Glasgow city centre, for example, can see cameras on top of six metre poles or jutting out from the sides of buildings, whilst street signs proclaim ‘This area is patrolled by City Watch’. Unverifiability reflects the way in which, just as the inmate in Bentham’s scheme never knows ‘whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so’ (op. cit.), so too anybody in the city centre never knows that they might be. The pressure of surveillance is particularly effective because like Bentham’s Panopticon, CCTV is a mechanism which ‘automatizes and

disindividualizes power' (Foucault 1977, 201) ... inducing a 'state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Foucault 1977, 202). Fyfe and Bannister (1996, 39)

CCTV here is conveyed as a 'disciplinary mechanism' (Foucault 1977, 197) whose gaze is interiorised by those being watched 'to the point that he [sic] is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself [sic]' (Foucault 1980, 155). Nevertheless, as Fyfe, Bannister and many others recognise, the metaphor of the Panopticon only goes so far when understanding the practice of surveillance. Bentham's vision of all-seeing, omnipresent surveillance provides limited conceptual purchase on the situated and partial gaze of surveillance socio-technologies, overlooking the numerous 'blind-spots', technical glitches, and pays no attention to the highly selective and sometimes voyeuristic gaze of those doing the surveillance (Koskela 2002). Indeed, as many commentators have argued, Panoptic metaphors fail to shed light on the wider construction of 'suspicious' bodies and behaviours that inform who is being watched, where and when, whether this is by 'automated' or manual-controlled cameras (Coleman 2005; Coleman and McCahill 2010; Haggerty 2006; Norris and Armstrong 1999). Furthermore, as we will explore later, the visibility and unverifiability of surveillance assemblages do not automatically produce 'docile bodies' as Foucault puts it; agency is still important (Haggerty 2006). Toon (2000) illustrates this point in his study of the ways in which youths re-appropriate surveilled space in Tamworth, England. He reasons that they develop creative 'tactics of invisibility' (Toon 2000, 159), such as playing

... hide and seek with CCTV and police patrols ... [using] the unmonitored angles, vanishing points and fade-out points within the CCTV's horizons, cutting the totality of ordered space into a multiplicity of concealed spatial fragments and stitching

places of concealment together to establish their own mobile map of hidden transit points and temporary abodes beyond the regulatory gaze of social authority. Toon (2000, 154–155)

It is important therefore to always consider the role of (constrained) agency, and the potential for creativity and resistance when thinking about surveillance and surveillance spaces (Coleman and McCahill 2010; Hubbard and Sanders 2003).

Alongside the idea of deterrence, the language of reassurance is increasingly drawn on by policymakers and policing providers as policing ‘stretches ... into newer, more impossible realms, namely the management of public and private anxieties’ (Crawford 2007, 144). Developments in this area have largely been structured by growing political concern about the fear of crime and the apprehensiveness of ‘law-abiding citizens’ to enter, work, live, relax, window-shop or simply spend longer than absolutely necessary in particular public spaces (see Cook 2010). In a number of countries, patrolling police officers or other such ancillary figures have been reinvented as ‘uniformed reassurance beacons’ come ‘mobile scarecrows’ in policy discourse (Paskell 2007). The very sight of them patrolling, liaising with the public or publicly tackling ‘nuisances, incivilities and inconveniences’ (Department for Communities and Local Government 2006, 16) is hoped to offer reassurance to the ‘well-behaved’, whilst deterring those thinking about, or actually, misbehaving and at the same time visibly demonstrating the value of the policing provided (Bahn 1974; Cook 2010; Crawford 2007; Innes 2004b; Millie 2010). In England and Wales, under the previous New Labour government there was an increased emphasis on bolstering the numbers of ‘bobbies on the beat’. As part of this, Police Officers would be accompanied by new civilian figures dedicated to patrolling public spaces, named Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) (Paskell 2007), themselves modelled on the City Wardens

(stadswachten) introduced in the Netherlands during the 1990s (Hofstra and Shapland 1997). Whilst such a reassurance approach seems commendable, we must remember that it is based on a broad-brushed dichotomised presumption about what people perceive the sight of a patrol figure to mean. People read 'signals' such as patrolling PCSOs differently, with positionality and context influencing the production, dissemination and consumption of the semiotic messages. Thus a much more variegated mixture of emotions and feelings, sometimes contradictory, are experienced, rather than simply reassurance or deterrence (Innes 2004a).

We must also be wary about suggesting that policing is solely about being as visible as possible. Quite simply, 'much of the police work performed is not observable by publics' (Innes 2004b, 156), as is the case with other public and private policing bodies (Berg 2010). The HBO television series *The Wire*, for instance, depicts how particular public spaces in Baltimore are monitored by covert means: officers hiding in parked cars, on rooftops, at overlooking windows, or sat in their office monitoring telephone wires and watching footage from visible and hidden surveillance cameras. What is more, *The Wire* also paints a picture of ad hoc undercover operations – being both covert and deceptive (Marx 1988) – where, for instance, plain clothes officers or informants liaise with or purchase drugs from unsuspecting suspects. Although a piece of fiction, many of these practices and techniques echo the actions of real police officers who also want to avoid being seen and recognised in certain circumstances. A small number of academic studies have demonstrated the growth and prevalence of undercover policing in the urban West where police would regularly use a variety of covert and deceptive methods, such as becoming a 'gang member', posing as a street sex worker or even as a prison inmate in order to gather information or 'evidence' or to entice others into committing an offence (Baker 2005; Jacobs 1992; Marx 1988). They stress the importance of looking, dressing and playing the part but also pose fundamental



questions about the morality of such operations as well as the potential for harm and harassment. A good example of this is the recent case of an undercover Metropolitan police officer who was alleged to have spent 7 years infiltrating various environmental protest groups in the UK and Europe. Media coverage suggested that whilst in this role, he had several sexual relationships with women in the same groups, throwing up a plethora of moral, ethical and legal issues (Taylor and Lewis 2011). Alongside the research, this example also highlights the strategic and selective performance of the self by policing bodies, an issue we will revisit more broadly later in the paper.

### **Making (in)visible**

Not only is policing about making the bodies and technologies of policing selectively visible and invisible, it is also about making 'troubling' populations selectively invisible and visible in public space. The literature has gone to great lengths to illustrate the uneven and exclusionary nature of contemporary public space and the interdictory tactics and technologies drawn upon (Flusty 2001). The emphasis within this body of work is not just on disciplining bodies according to the socially constructed norms of the place they are inhabiting, it is also about displacing behaviours, bodies and signs of 'disorder'; removing or hiding them from view in particular places and at particular times (Atkinson 2003). Whilst emphasis and targets may vary across space and time, the 'strategies of hiding' (Catungal and McCann 2010, 79) used often include architectural practices that attempt to 'design out' behaviours, the use of security bodies and surveillance equipment, and the creation and enforcement of laws governing what behaviours, signs of disorder and, in some instances, which individuals and groups are (not) allowed in public space (cf. Beckett and Herbert 2010; Belina 2007; Davis 1992; England 2008; Mitchell 2003; Smith 1996).

Although in some instances these groups are purposefully redirected to, contained and perhaps even concealed in other public and private spaces – such as the red light district, homeless shelter, police station, prison or skate park (Hubbard and Whowell 2008; Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Rogers and Coaffee 2005) – the primary emphasis is arguably on removal and displacement. For many urban geographers, such public space policing strategies are repeatedly and unjustly targeting disadvantaged groups with the punitive policing rarely matching the seriousness of their ‘crimes’ or the ‘threat’ posed (Mitchell 1997, 2003). What is more, Swanson (2007, 723) and others reason that policing, particularly of marginalised groups, is less to do with the issues of crime and safety and more about ‘cover[ing]-up of unsightly visual blemishes’ and, in so doing, improving the aesthetics of public space (see also Belina and Helms 2003; Catungal and McCann 2010; Coleman 2005; Hubbard 2002, 2004; Katz 2001; Swanson 2007).

In Swanson’s (2007) study of ‘revanchist’ attempts to ‘cleans[e] the streets of informal workers, beggars, and street children’ (708) in the Ecuadorian cities of Quito and Guayaquil, she argues that such policies are legitimised by discourses of the ‘visual contamination caused by indigenous bodies’ (713). Such representations, she argues, are not neutral but imbued with a ‘hygienic racism ... that pathologizes indigenous bodies as sick, contaminated and dirty’ (710). Furthermore, they are constructed as being rural (and therefore ‘backward’ Indians), incongruous and dangerous to the desired image of Quito and Guayaquil as modern, urbane, white-mestizo<sup>ii</sup> and ‘tourist-friendly’. The construction of the informal workers, beggars and street children as ‘dirty’ and the ‘out-of-place’ is a social, cultural and political construct, representative of discursive understandings of what it is to be indigenous and living in poverty in the context of a developing society; with poverty constructed as ‘scary and dangerous’ as opposed to a being a deeply rooted social phenomena (see also Cresswell 1996).

Phil Hubbard's (2002, 2004) critical analysis of on-going attempts to remove visible forms of sex industry work from public space in London and Paris reasoned that such punitive measures were legitimised by appeals to family morality – not least the potential that children and monogamous families would be exposed to lewd and corrupting behaviours, bodies and acts (see also Catungal and McCann 2010) – but also that such sights may disrupt economic development plans. '[R]educing the visibility of sex work in the central city', Hubbard (2004, 1698) argues,

is an obvious way that policy-makers can send out a message that it is ripe for reinvestment. In this sense, the displacement of sex work can be viewed as an essential precursor to middle-class, family-oriented gentrification.

In order to regenerate localities and attract/reassure nervous, undecided and mobile investors, tourists and gentrifiers, it is often argued that public space must be '*seen to be safe*' (Raco 2003, 1870, original emphasis). To create such an image, the disciplining or removal of groups, behaviours and signs of disorder that unnerve these privileged social groups has become a key aim for city officials (Cook 2010). This for Don Mitchell (2003) is fetishising the aesthetic: 'restor[ing] the "pretty picture"' (185) and, in so doing,

redefining the public space of a city as a *landscape*, as a privatized view suitable only for the passive gaze of the privileged as they go about the work of convincing themselves that what they see is simply natural. (190, original emphasis)

Yet, policing is not simply about removing 'transgressive [behaviours] ... from the public gaze' (Catungal and McCann 2010, 76) as there are a growing number of strategies, particularly in the urban West, which seek to publicly reveal and uncover illicit places, behaviours and groups. Here, the ideas of Jane Jacobs (1961) and Oscar Newman (1973), who call for urban space to be redesigned in order to make the spaces and potential

perpetrators of illicit activity more visible not only to security bodies but the wider citizenry, have proved influential in recent decades. In his oft-cited book, *Defensible Space*, Newman (1973, 82) argues that ‘visual barriers’ such as ill-lit areas, walls, shrubbery and under-paths ‘provide natural hiding places and vantage points for potential criminals’ and should therefore be removed. Echoing but not citing Bentham’s vision of the Panopticon, Newman reasons that in order to defend space, it must be physically opened up, made bright and visible, ‘facilitat[ing the] natural visual and auditory monitoring of activities taking place within them’ (Newman (1973, 79); see also Farrington and Welsh 2002; Madden 2010). For Jacobs (1961, 35, original emphasis), the emphasis should be on maximising the numbers of ‘eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the *natural* proprietors of the *street*’. Once again, the ideas of deterrence are at work here as making public space open and populated are seen as prerequisites for deterring criminals – who are perceived to operate in dark, secluded and ‘unaccountable’ spaces.

The practice of punishing individuals in public space is another important contradiction to the general moves towards displacing unwanted individuals from public space, and one that has not been acknowledged in the geographical literature. Whilst it may be the case that in the urban West, as Foucault (1977) and others have noted, capital punishment and torture moved away from public squares ‘towards the interior regions of corrective establishments’ during the 18th century (Basson 2006, 1155), studies in criminology have shown how public punishments are having noticeable revival in the West. Rather than relying on ‘the imagination to conjure up frightening images of the unseen’ (Wilf 1993, 54), it is argued that the public must once again be able to see penal justice in action. Community service has emerged during the second half of the 20th century, wherein offenders are required by the courts to conduct unpaid ‘community work’ – such as gardening, road sweeping, decorating – in a variety of public and private spaces for a

specified timeframe (McIvor *et al.* 2010). There was also a re-introduction of chain gangs in a handful of US states including Alabama and Arizona during the 1990s (Allen and Abril 1997). Whilst the rationales differ from place to place, these public space punishment schemes are often justified with claims that offenders will make reparation with the community through their forced labour; they will feel shame, humiliation and remorse; and, echoing public execution, they will act as a deterrent to others (McIvor 2007). The practice of ‘naming-and-shaming’ prostitutes and their clients, for example, in the media is also justified by similar claims (Sanders 2009). The recent requirements for adult offenders on community service in England and Wales to wear high-visibility jackets – and the accompanying claims that making offenders more visible would help restore public confidence in the criminal justice system (Pamment and Ellis 2010) – also shows the political capital involved in selectively revealing (and hiding) the unsavoury other.

### **Rethinking visibility**

Although we find these academic studies illuminating in many respects, we feel they are restrictive in two senses. The first restriction is the solitary focus on visibility. Visibility is important in the ways outlined above, but an appreciation of how other senses – such as touch, smell, taste and sound – influence the construction of acceptable and unacceptable bodies, signs and spaces is also necessary. Thinking about the policing of multi-sensory, out-of-place *presence* rather than out-of-place *visual signifiers* helps us to move away from ocularcentrism, that is the ‘tendency in Western modernity to ascribe particular primacy to vision above the other human senses’ (MacDonald 2009, 153).<sup>iii</sup> As Shantz *et al.* (2008, 39) highlight through their case study of lower Queen Street in downtown Auckland,

the regulation of social order in urban public space depends not only on concerns for the visual (e.g. the sight of homeless people or street youth), but also on notions of appropriate sound and touch.

Interviewing users of lower Queen Street, Shantz *et al.* show how some people were disturbed by the noise of skateboarders but also experienced discomfort from watching the 'Birdman' who

... made daily visits to QEII Square, where he covered himself in bread, which pigeons would proceed to eat ... Although the activity is quiet, unobtrusive and relatively brief (lasting 10–20 minutes), many participants noted that his presence made them feel uneasy, and might discourage tourists from using the Square. Here the boundary crossed is not one of sound, but of touch. His actions are unacceptable to many because he is inviting the dirt of the city (via the birds) to cross the invisible impermeable bubble of physical safety and cleanliness one expects to surround them whilst in public places. Shantz *et al.* (2008, 49)

This case echoes Swanson's (2007) example of Ecuadorian street people, where hygienic discourses play a considerable part in othering. For Shantz *et al.* the 'repulsed sense' is touch – the bodily contact of the 'Birdman' with the pigeons, or 'vermin', who eat bread from his body. Viewed in another way, it is sight: the sight of man and bird touching. More accurately, however, it is both, with touch and sight interacting in complex ways.

The example of the 'Birdman' echoes research on public sex and prostitution, which, often implicitly, shows how multiple senses can 'violate' particular ambiances of place. Often it is a complex and contingent combination of sensory signifiers – such as the sight of sexualised bodies, sexual acts, kerb crawlers or sex litter (e.g. discarded condoms), or the aural discomfort of grunts, groans and soliciting, or out-of-place touching and intimacies –

which influence the use and policing of particular places (Pitcher *et al.* 2006; Sanders *et al.* 2010). Touch is particularly important here. The transgression of behaviours which would normally be conducted in private (having sex, being nude) when enacted in the public domain – where you are more likely to be seen, and possibly heard – challenge the heteronormative, monogamous sociality of public space, and also traditional socio-spatial constructions of femininity and masculinity. Thus when bodies touch or are touched in public in such a way which destabilises socio-sexual norms, they are constructed as an abject and destabilising ‘other’, which must be discouraged or even removed (Sanders *et al.* 2010). Like the example of the ‘Birdman’, prostitution shows how focusing on the visual at the expense of other senses limits our understandings of the production of deviance, discomfort and public space itself.

The second restriction is the perhaps unwitting impression that the management of crime and othered social groups is conducted primarily through making bodies, technologies and signs more or less visible in certain spatial and temporal contexts. In other words, it is a quantitative exercise. However, we would argue that it is more productive to think about the *qualitative* performance of (multi-sensory) policing. The often-unexplored aspects of performance, from the (in part) anticipated and ‘staged’ performances (Goffman 1959, 1963) to the more spontaneous and unexpected performances (Dewsbury 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000) of policing bodies and ‘targets’ are worthy of consideration in this context. Whether it is a drug dealer operating along the Akerselva River in Oslo or a Business Improvement District warden patrolling the streets of Coventry city centre, we can think of their performances, following Judith Butler (1990, 1993), as never fully *performed* but always *performed*. In so doing, we recognise that identity does not pre-exist its performance, and that it is through embodied action that identity comes into being. Performance is, therefore, a productive lens for conceptualising the qualitative nature of policing practice; understood

here as involving 'routinised iterative performances of sedimented forms of social practice' (Cloke *et al.* 2008, 246). Fundamentally, these are shaped by 'citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performance' (Gregson and Rose 2000, 434). Here we can see discourse and power are vitally important, but also that policing is an embodied and multi-sensorial practice, performed qualitatively.

Linked to this, Goffman's work is particularly important when thinking about policing. His ideas around impression management and 'staging' are central, for instance, to the ways in which undercover police officers engage with potential informants. In Jacobs (1992) research on the undercover policing of narcotics in the United States, impression management was key to 'playing the part' of the undercover drug buyer. Not only was looking the part through dress and movement important but sounding the part through verbal techniques was also central in this dramaturgical performance. These ideas open up a broader discussion of how police officers, other agents and technologies of policing actually perform 'deterrence' or 'reassurance'. What actions, words and touches do they enact, to whom, where and when? When, where and how are these identities taught, prescribed and enforced and by who? And how does the spatial, temporal and cultural context influence their performance? Such questions have yet to be answered in any depth. Gregson and Rose's (2000) focus on the notion of slippage within Butler's work on performativity offers more possibilities, both conceptually and quite literally in the real world. As Gregson and Rose's (2000, 439) argue, 'performances are not necessarily replicative events' and neither are the spaces in which they are performed, and as such there is always the possibility for subtle and contextualised forms of change, adaption, disruption, subversion and transgression. Thinking about reassurance or deterrence policing in this way, therefore,



makes us alert to the sedimentation of routines and performances but also the shifting and slippery nature of performance and the possibilities of slippage in practice.

Although we agree with Gregson and Rose's (2000) assessment that (unlike Butler) Goffman incorrectly views space or the 'stage', as pre-given, we would concur with Cloke *et al.* (2008) and Lawler (2007) that Butler and Goffman's work can be brought into productive dialogue and built upon. Both approaches see performance as continually evolving and relational (Lawler 2007) which Butler notes, of course, involves slippage and slipperiness. Both also demonstrate that performance is interpreted, communicated and shaped through situated, partial and subjective senses (see also Innes 2004a), and it is 'improvisation within a scene of constraint' (Butler 2004, 1, quoted in Lawler 2007, 121). Bringing Butler and Goffman into dialogue in an attempt to offer a more qualitative reading of how policing is performed has the potential to open new spaces of discussion around policing practice, and could offer readings that are sensitive to the multi-sensory and embodied aspects of policing, which as described above, are under-researched areas of the field.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear, then, that visibility and invisibility are central to the policing and social control of public space. There has been much written in geography, criminology and other social science disciplines about the marginalisation of certain social groups from public space: sex workers, drug users, the homeless and travellers provide some examples of such liminal communities. The literature has pointed to the inequity and injustice wrapped up in policing practice, and the (sometimes dubious) concerns over 'fixing', 'sanitising' and 'maintaining' public space by councils, businesses and growth coalitions (for a counter argument, see DeVerteuil *et al.* 2009). These strategies of control have either purposefully or implicitly

created a moral topography through banishing or changing the behaviours of ‘unnerving’ and, often, non-consuming others. The example given at the start of the paper of rounding up the poor, homeless and impoverished people begging in New Delhi is illustrative of this.

However, as this paper has demonstrated, banishing and hiding are not the only means of ‘visual manipulation’ that are attempted by city authorities internationally. As well as these attempts to hide or remove, research has pointed to an uneven patchwork of attempts to reveal ‘troubling’ others by either creating more open, accountable and surveyed public spaces or by publicly punishing convicted offenders. The relationship between hiding and revealing is complex and little understood, further academic research in this area would be welcome, especially on the tensions between these ‘removing’ and ‘revealing’ strategies. Further work in this area could also explore the struggles over where and when it might be appropriate for public punishments to be performed and spaces to be opened up; how these strategies are performed and to what effect; and the moral geographies wrapped up in these.

Visibility, therefore, shapes the policing of public space in complex and contingent ways. Nonetheless, it is imperative that we understand how other senses, such as sound, taste, touch and smell, are infused in the production and consumption of ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ bodies, signs and spaces. In order to do this, we must open ourselves up ontologically beyond an a priori fixation with out-of-place *visual signifiers* to consider the possibility of multi-sensory, out-of-place *presence* where different senses are socially and selectively constructed, sometimes alongside each other, as being in or out-of-place. Relatedly, future research in this area would benefit also from exploring the practice of policing from a more qualitative (multi-sensorial) perspective. Through this not only will we garner a deeper understand of the day-to-day lives of those policing and being policed, we

will also see how identities – for instance of ‘reassurance’ and ‘deterrence’– evolve, slip, adapt, are negotiated, and how they are influenced by their spatial-temporal contexts. This will require critical analysis, refinement and debate within and beyond geography.

Nevertheless, we feel that these humble suggestions will help build a better understanding of how public space is policed and help us make informed contributions to the wider political debates of *how* public space should be used and policed.

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<sup>i</sup> Retrieved on 26 February 2011 from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crFQHBfxrpM>.

<sup>ii</sup> Mestizo is defined here as a person of mixed European (especially Spanish or Portuguese) and non-European parentage.

<sup>iii</sup> See also Simpson (2009) and Dixon and Straughan (2010) for insightful accounts of how senses beyond the visual are being approached more widely in geography.