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Between Security and Freedom: A Social Perspective of CCTV

How much freedom the society is ready to give back just to feel more safety? The paper presents the public perception of CCTV as a crime prevention measure, public opinion on building further (or rebuilding existing) systems of CCTV, and the social assessments of CCTV influence on a sense of security. The presentation is based on the public opinion study realized in 2015 among representative inhabitants of Cracow half a year after a local referendum, which concerned *inter alia* CCTV.

1. Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws 1997, No. 78, item. 483) in the art. 5 states that ‘The Republic of Poland (...) ensures (...) citizens’ security’. It is a program norm, and nobody is allowed to output specific claims of it. On the other hand the state is not allowed to ensure security those, who does not want it, unless they belong to the category of especially protected people.

The concept of security is so capacious, that it can be characterized as a process which leads to achieve the state of none risk, as a result of

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these efforts, or as a value protected by the law¹. The threads are differential – from the natural disasters, through a poverty, to the invasions of foreign armies. This is why it is necessary to narrow the issue.

According to the most universal definition, safety is a condition without any threats². Such understood safety may be considered from two perspectives: objective and subjective. The subjective one refers to the sense of security, which consists of two aspects: assessment of the risk of victimization (i.e. became a victim of crime), and consequently felt an emotion (i.e. felt fear of crime).

There are many measures to increase the sense of security. Undoubtedly one of them is a video surveillance, used in recent times more often, and on the larger scale. The number of the video surveillance cameras is still increasing, although their effectiveness in a field of crime prevention have not been proved yet at all³. Many national studies focused on this phenomenon, many of them, what is considered further below, found that the video surveillance met recognized, and an increasing number of the cameras, which covered larger areas of public space, was taken – in the name of security – with the approval by the society. Here appears the following question: How much freedom the society is ready to give back just to feel more safety?

The purpose of this paper is not a depth analysis of CCTV normative regulation in Poland, or consideration of the scope of different issues directly related to CCTV, such as personal data protection, or the right to the privacy. My purpose is to present a public perception of CCTV as a measure of crime prevention, public opinion on building new (or building existed) systems of CCTV, and public assessment of an influence on their sense of security. The presentation is based on the public opinion study realized among representative citizens of Cracow half a year after a local referendum, which concerned *inter alia* CCTV.

¹ J. Czapska, *Bezpieczeństwo obywateli. Studium z zakresu polityki prawa*, Kraków 2004, p. 14.

² *Ibidem*.

³ See e.g. B.C. Welsh, D.P. Farrington, *Crime Perception Effects of Closed Circuit Television: A Systematic Review*, London 2002; M. Gill, A. Spriggs, *Assessing the Impact of CCTV*, London 2005; C. Carli, *Assessing CCTV as an Effective Safety and Management Tool for Crime-solving, Prevention and Reduction*, Montreal 2009.

2. Video Surveillance

The video surveillance can be defined as a system, which let from a distance to follow the incidents registered by one or more cameras at the same time⁴. It consists of the cameras, which images are transmitted to a receiving center, which staff are able to observe registered incidents. The video surveillance can be also defined as a circuit television, and that what differs it from a usual TV is that an image is sent by a cable or by radio, and is received only to a receiving center, not to unlimited number of receivers (as usual TV)⁵.

A video surveillance origins became from the mid-XX century, and its usage has changed in time. In early 40's the Germans used it to follow the starts of V2 missiles, while the Americans used it in this time to observe the tests of nuclear weapon⁶. Together with the socio-economic transformation and technological development, the video surveillance in 70's was used increasingly. In the mid-90's the growing number of counties in the world used the video surveillance to observe urban areas in order to support the activities connected with criminality and crime prevention at local level. A little later it was even said that 'CCTV represents a new and valuable weapon in the fight against crime and public disorder (...) greater control over environment and information'⁷.

The CCTV systems can provide warning signs of potential criminals offences and act as a reactive tool. CCTV monitors crowds and individuals, responds to threats and thus notifies the operator of harmful behavior and actions before, during and after the occurrence of the event⁸. For example, video surveillance cameras have been extremely useful in identifying offender of the 1993 Bishopsgate bombing, and London bombing in 2005. In Barcelona, video surveillance cameras allowed authorities to find a young Spanish man, who aggressively attacked a Latino-America

⁴ P. Waszkiewicz, *Wielki Brat. Rok 2010. System monitoringu wizyjnego. Aspekty kryminalistyczne, kryminologiczne i prawne*, Warszawa 2011, p. 30.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ W. Dornberger, *V2*, New York, p. 14.

⁷ B.J. Goold, *CCTV and Policing: Public Area and Surveillance and Police Practices in Britain*, New York 2004, p. 3.

⁸ M. McCahill, C. Norris, *Literature Review. Working Paper No. 2, On the Threshold to Urban Panopticon? Analyzing the Employment of CCTV in European Cities and Assessing its Social and Political Impact*, Berlin 2002, *passim*.

man in metro. Such and other more events have spread awareness on the effectiveness of the system as safety tool⁹.

Many studies which found that there is a casual link between CCTV use and reduction in crime were usually associated with property crimes or car park offences. The UK-based organization Nacro conducted a review of CCTV studies and found that property crimes reduced in areas covered by video surveillance. It is commonly found that the presence of cameras in public spaces has had a positive impact on the crimes outlines above. However, Nacro review revealed that public video surveillance had no impact on personal crimes, such as assault or drunkenness. The study conducted in Germany by Helten and Fischer reveals a similar point whereby CCTV had little or no effect on reducing, what they called 'crimes of passion', such as public drunkenness and acts of range¹⁰. This study presented ineffectiveness of CCTV as a crime reducing tool, and moreover suggest that either there is a general lack of awareness of video surveillance cameras or an overall indifference.

The main critiques surrounding video surveillance is that it is a quick-fix solution and fails to tackle the real problem. In this case, social structures are discriminating and uphold disparities which fuels crime. In Sutton and Wilson's study in Australia, their findings reveal that most individuals interviewed noted CCTV as irrelevant or unhelpful. The central critique was that CCTV does not deal with the root problems or the causes of crime. Specific issues referred to economic and social inequalities, such as welfare support and housing were the main causes, which CCTV cannot and does not address, recognize, or reduce.

In the event of reduced crime, increased feeling of security and safety can have positive impacts on the social cohesion of a community, region or even state. Sætnan et al. claim that CCTV system have been instrumental in reducing crime and thus building relation in a once volatile and unsafe area¹¹. Increased citizens safety encourages broad participation

⁹ Cf. P. Waszkiewicz, *Wielki Brat...*, pp. 36-42.

¹⁰ F. Helten, B. Fischer, *Reactive Attention: Video Surveillance in Berlin Shopping Malls*, *Surveillance and Society* 2004, No. 2, pp. 323-345.

¹¹ A.R. Sætnan, H.M. Lomell, C. Wiecek, *Controlling CCTV in Public Spaces: Is Privacy the (only) Issue? Reflections on Norwegian and Danish Observations*, *Surveillance and Society* 2004, No. 2, pp. 396-414.

and interaction in public spaces, which is effective in improving a community's profile and attracting investment¹².

According to the several researches, CCTV does not reduce feelings of insecurity, proving its ineffectiveness as a crime preventing, reducing and solving tool. J. Ditton claims that CCTV cameras do not make people feel safer, but create a false fear, which is enhanced by intense media activity. Further, the cameras target the (innocent) citizen rather than the criminal, imposing a constant fear in public spaces¹³. T. Honess and E. Charmans' study found that whether it was in car parks, shopping centers or on the street, the presences of video surveillance did not make the public feel safer. Their results reveal that feelings of discomfort and increased fear in the presence of video surveillance was significantly higher among woman, who are commonly labelled as the most vulnerable group to criminal events. In Sætnan et al.'s study, the operation of CCTV systems was found to be discriminatory, suggesting a ghettoization of spaces, which in fact hampers social interactions and economic investment and growth, breaks social cohesion and leads to more crime¹⁴.

Increasing number of cameras is accompanied by high assessment of their usefulness in public space. The society demand to expand the CCTV systems to the areas still does not covered by cameras. Hardly anyone does not pay attention to the cameras omnipresence, which a few years ago may have seemed to be an Orwellian 1984. The process of increasing cameras in a public life illustrated the juxtaposition made by W.M. Grossman, who compared increasing number of cameras to a boiling frog, which by slow heating water does not realized that anything changes: 'If we would ask people in early 90's, if they thought two million cameras in a public space is a good idea, they would likely said NO'¹⁵. Therefore in this context, a social attitude towards video surveillance becomes an important thing.

¹² *Ididem*.

¹³ See J. Ditton, *Do we expect too much from CCTV?*, CCTV Today 2000, No. 7, p. 20-24.

¹⁴ T. Honess, E. Charman, *Closed Circuit Television in Public Places: Its Acceptability and Perceived Effectiveness*, London 1993, *passim*.

¹⁵ K. Larsen, *Orwellian state of security: CCTV*, Infosecurity 2008, No. 6, pp. 16-19.

3. Poles' Attitude towards Video Surveillance

The nationwide study on video surveillance among adult Poles found that their knowledge about CCTV is very low¹⁶. Despite they correctly pointed, what the CCTV can be used for, they were not able to define: who has got an access of the material became from the cameras placed in the public sphere, if they can apply for such access or use it on the court as an evidence, and also if collected materials could be used by mass media and who decides about it.

However Poles' ignorance in this field does not influenced negatively on their support for the cameras in public space, for increasing the number of cameras opted 56%. They also believed that installed equipment should be able to identificate precisely a person who appears in its range (76%). On Poles' opinion does not also influenced the failures connected with usage of the video surveillance. They were even inclined to justify it by an inappropriate use of the cameras, or by their poor quality (not enough precise, or not enough modern). Such attitude towards the video surveillance was not accidental at all.

The key-value in favor of installing cameras was safety. This word was recalled the most frequently, and it is because the Poles believed that cameras play an important role in a field of security. More than half of them though that the presence of the cameras contribute to crime decreasing in the areas, where they are installed (64%). Additionally they pointed out that it is the reason, why the criminality moved to the areas, where there is no cameras, thus contributing there to increase the criminality (29%).

The support for expanding the video surveillance systems significantly corresponded with a belief that installing further cameras in public sphere effects on crime reduction. The Poles with an ambivalent attitude towards the video surveillance as well the opponents, more often than the supporters, opted to limited a number of the cameras. Negative opinion were partly based on the expirees of others countries, including Ireland,

¹⁶ Fundacja Panoptykon, Fundacja Projekt Polska, *Monitoring wizyjny w życiu społecznym. Raport z badań*, Warszawa 2013, below will be presented the important result of this study.

which invested a sizeable amount of money to extend the CCTV systems, and eventually they did not influence on crime reduction in this country.

A positive attitude towards the video surveillance was connected by the Poles with a belief that CCTV does not interfere with a privacy. They pointed out that law-abiding citizens, who has not anything to hide, should not feel threatened by a presence of the cameras. They also pointed out that they did not mind a presence of the cameras in public space, they ignored them, and have never reflected if the area they stay in is monitored.

Nearly half of the Poles criticized a statement according to one of CCTV advantages is that there is no need to react yourself, when nearby something bad happens (45%). However, only slightly smaller percentage admitted that there is no need to do anything when something bad happens, because the area is monitored, and it is clear signal that 'somebody here cares for a safety' (34%). The opinion in this field differentiated the socio-demographic features. A belief that there is no need to react, where the cameras are installed grows with the age. As long as 26% Poles in age at 18-24 admitted that did not agree with mentioned statement, almost half people older than 60 years old declared they believed in this advantage of CCTV (48%). The Poles opinion differentiated also a place of residence. A positive attitude towards the statement outlined above declared 42% villagers, while only 23% residents of cities with more than 500 inhabitants declared the same convictions. Education was also significant. Half Poles with elementary education agreed that there is no need to do anything, when something bad happens nearby, while the same opinion have only 12% Poles with high education.

The Poles' attitude towards the video surveillance can be assumed as a positive. The study on video surveillance in Cracow presented in this paper gives an opportunity to diagnose, if and how much this general (in Poland) attitudes differs from the attitude at the local level (in Cracow).

4. CCTV in Cracow residents' opinion

The study presented in this paper was realized in conjunction with the work of the Cracow Team of Video Surveillance¹⁷, established by the President of Cracow, and directed by Prof. dr. Janina Czapska (the Department of the Sociology of Law of the Jagiellonian University)¹⁸. A background of this presentation are statistical data collected by the Department of Crime Prevention of the Police Headquarters in Cracow, and a telephone survey on security in Cracow realized with the framework of the Team's works.

The data collection of the study on security took place in September and October of 2011, and the sample consisted of 1770 adult Cracow inhabitants¹⁹. The study on attitude towards the video surveillance was conducted between January and February on 2015 among 1812 adult inhabitants of Cracow. Both studies were realized with the usage of a computer assisted telephone interview method (CATI)²⁰.

4.1. Criminality in Cracow

In 2014 among all of sixteen provincial cities in Poland, Cracow took 12th place from the perspective of a security, which was measured by a number of committed crimes divided by one thousand city inhabitants²¹.

According to the data collected by the Department of Crime Prevention of the Police Headquarters in Cracow, in 2014 in Cracow there were committed 5214 crimes. Half of them was burglary. The crimes against

¹⁷ Cf. detailed information about Team's works can be found at the website of the Department of Sociology of Law JU, www.ksp.wpia.uj.edu.pl, accessed: 17.08.2015.

¹⁸ Detailed information on the Cracow Team of Video Surveillance can be found at the website: https://www.bip.krakow.pl/?dok_id=63405, accessed: 17.08.2015.

¹⁹ The sample consisted of 55% woman; 35% respondents were at age of 18-34 years old, 31% at age of 35-55 years old, and 34% at age of 56 and more years old; most of them lived in low (38%) or high (27%) building, a large percentage were respondents who lived in a single house (23%), the rest of respondents lived in an apartment house or in terraced houses.

²⁰ Cf. both studies' holistic reports: BBS Obserwator, *Raport z badań ilościowych „Bezpieczeństwo w Krakowie”*, Kraków 2014; BBS Obserwator, *Raport z badań ilościowych „Monitoring w Krakowie”*, Kraków 2014.

²¹ The data was collected by the Police Headquarters, cf. <http://statystyka.policja.pl/>, accessed: 17.08.2015.

property were committed most frequently, and beside burglary, the Police in Cracow reported also stolen cars by breaking into them (3%), and robbery (7%). Significant percentage were also drug-related crimes (33%). Much less there were committed crimes against life and health, including fight and assault (4%), sexual crimes (0,3%), and murder (0,2%).

4.2. Security in Cracow

In the study on security in Cracow, more than half inhabitants assessed their city as safety (58%). Much better they assessed their sense of security in the place they live in (98%), however sense of security in the same places at night was two times lower (46%). The inhabitants of Cracow admitted there were some incidents of vandalism in their area, and offenders destroyed utilities such as park benches, bus stops, greens, and placed also some inscriptions on the building walls (47%). The Cracovians relatively often experienced victimization, almost half of them was a crime victim (47%), mostly against property (59%). Asked about the risk of victimization, they mostly pointed out they are afraid of possibility to be deducted by the car (44%), or vulgar taunts (42%). In case of crime against property, they admitted that they are afraid of possibility of car, wallet or other things theft. To protect themselves against victimization, the Cracovians mostly warned others about potential dangers (84%), or asked their neighborhoods for paying attention to their house (flat) during their absence (82%). The inhabitants of Cracow had better opinion on Police's work than the Municipal Guard's. More than half of them admitted, that they can count on the Police, only if something wrong happens, much less of them say these same about the Municipal Guard's (35%).

4.3. Attitude towards Video Surveillance in the Cracovians' Opinion

The inhabitants of Cracow's sense of security stay at moderate level, meanwhile on 25 May, 2014 during local referendum for expending the CCTV system in Cracow, which main goal would be improving safety

in the city, opted the vast of majority (85%). Such enthusiastic declarations were not confirmed at all in the study of the Cracovians' opinion, when only 53% pointed out, that in Cracow should be installed more cameras. Every six inhabitant expressed a belief that Cracow has got enough number of the cameras (15%), and a significant percentage had a difficulty to present unequivocal opinion in this field (29%).

It turned out that in the eyes of the Cracovians improving safety in Cracow should be carried out with usage of other measures than video surveillance. Among fourteen crime prevention measures, inhabitants chose firstly increasing the number of the Police foot patrols, than providing kids and teenagers an attractive form of spending spare time, and caring for better street lighting. CCTV was chosen just as a fourth measure. Others possible measures to choose were following: increasing the number of the Municipal Guards' foot patrols, employing a private security services to guard the district, organizing citizens' foot patrol, expanding powers of the Police, harsher penalties for the offenders, expanding powers of the Municipal Wardens, installing speed bumps on the roads, and cleaning the street often. All of measure outlined above more likely chosen woman than man, and older aged categories (35 years old and more) than younger (18-24 years old), but there was one exception. The private security services, and harsher penalties for the offenders were chosen more often by the young Cracovians, at the age of 18-34.

No matter, if video surveillance played for the Cracovians a leading role in crime prevention or not, the vast majority believed that it influences on citizens' sense of security (81,3%). Similar percentage also pointed out, that video surveillance is used to detected a greater number of crimes, and minor crimes (80,1%), as well as to supply the evidences in legal proceedings (80,8%). These opinion are consistent with the Cracovians' belief that authorities in city by expanding the CCTV systems should first of all take into account to install such number of cameras, which let the security services to observe an incident (61%).

The vast of majority admitted that using video surveillance is necessary to protect, and improve citizens' security nowadays (76,9%), many of them believed also that the CCTV cameras beside an image, should either record a sound (48%). Most of the Cracovian thought that people, who comply the law, do not have to be afraid of interfere in their privacy

by the cameras (73%), and more than half respondents did agree with a statement that video surveillance interferes in privacy of an average person (57%). In this context it should be noted that the Cracovians thought that expanding the video surveillance should cover all of the Cracow districts, not only city center, and districts or its places, which are considered as dangerous. The inhabitants admitted, they are ready to accept the presence of the cameras on the railway and bus stations, in stadiums, and public transport, a little less wanted the cameras to install in the rooms, halls, and other areas, where takes place different cultural events.

Despite the inhabitants of Cracow welcomes the video surveillance, they also used a common sense. They were asked to define their attitude towards a following statement: “(...) one of the CCTV advantage is that, you do not have to care for some things. For example, if I see theft or robbery, I know I do not have to intervene, because the people, who see that through the cameras, they will deal with it”. More than half of the Cracovians did not agree with this statement (60,9%), including 36%, who definitely did not agree with it. Such opinion was mostly expressed by younger (18-34 years old), and inhabitants in middle aged (56 years old and more).

The inhabitants of Cracow quite inconsequently express themselves about their fillings, when they are surrounded by the cameras of CCTV. Most of them though, that today video surveillance is necessary to provide citizens' security, and it influenced on their sense of security. Asked, how do they feel when they are observed by the cameras, most of them admitted that this fact did not matter, and it did not influenced on their sense of feeling (62%), only some of them pointed out they feel more safety (27%). These proportions turned around, when the Cracovians were asked directly, if they feel more safety, when they are observed by the cameras. Then most of them declared, that they feel more safety (60%), and only 28% said that the cameras in any way influenced on their sense of security. It should be also mentioned, that a little bit higher sense of security declared women than man (62% to 58%), while man pointed out that the cameras did not influenced on their sense of security (33% to 24%).

5. Concluding Remarks

The study on the Cracovians attitude towards the video surveillance presented in this paper, showed that they believed that the best way of ensuring citizens' security is to expand a number of the Police foot patrols, provide the kids and youth the attractive form of spending free time, and provide better street lighting. The video surveillance was chosen as a fourth measure. Weather, the vast majority of Cracovians believed that using CCTV today is necessary to ensure citizens' security. Similar results were obtained in the nationwide study, where most of Poles associated CCTV with the only one value – security.

The inhabitants of Cracow do not differ to the Poles by opinion on expanding a number of the CCTV cameras. In both studies more than half pointed out that there should be installed more cameras in public space. Both the Cracovians and Poles did not mind the presence of cameras, and both of them in majority thought that the cameras do not interfere in a privacy. In Cracow more than half even expected expanding the CCTV systems in each district of Cracow, not only in dangerous areas. It because the Cracovians as well as the Poles feel more safety when they are observed by the cameras.

In fact, the main difference between general (Poles) and local (Cracovians) level attitudes towards CCTV concerned the statement according to the one of video surveillance advantage is that there is no necessity to do anything, when something bad happens, because the area is monitored, and it is clear signal that somebody here cares for a safety. In this field, almost two times more Cracovians than Poles did not agreed with this statement (34% to 61%).

Going back to the question posted at the beginning, 'how much freedom the society is ready to give back to feel more safety?', it should be noted that citizens are ready to give back a significant part of their freedom just to feel more safety, and it can be seen not only through general positive attitudes towards CCTV, but also through the specifics aspect of CCTV, which were considered in both studies. One of the reason of such phenomenon is fear of crime. This is why the authorities should consider how to reduce it, and increase the citizens' sense of security. Different studies show, how it can be achieved.

Increasing citizens' sense of security can be done by strengthening local communities, and improving their conditions: economy, good public transport, education, good housing conditions, effective work of security services. These are trifles but that, what people notice in their community is important, because it is a signal, if anybody controls the situation.

The second important element is a reduction of antisocial behavior, which in fact do not have to be a direct source of danger, but certainly influence on the citizens' sense of security, these are: drunken people, youth knocking around, or graffiti. In this context an important role play security services, which should not only work effectively, but also in a partnership with the local authorities.

An important mission to complete has mass media, which should inform only about real risks, show how to protect against them, and promote the models of positive behavior, such as reacting on differed incidents nearby.

The last thing are periodic studies on citizens' security, which should be realized according to standards of empirical research. Without solid diagnosis we will base on intuitions, which in analyzed field will lead us astray.