

Unpacking video-based surveillance in New Delhi



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Overview

- Introduction
 - Increasingly sophisticated surveillance systems in the global South cities
 - Political economy of CCTV for female safety in Delhi
- Methods
 - Feminist qualitative approach
 - 50 interviews: women occupying public spaces, DMRC/CISF, government officials, law enforcement, resident welfare associations, market welfare associations, commercial establishments

Background

- Neoliberal imagination
 - Private ownership of surveillance systems
- Data justice
 - Social embedding of 'datafication'
 - Heeks and Shekhar framework
- Feminist surveillance studies
 - Exposition of historical continuities and power relations
 - Suspicious gaze v. Protectionist gaze
- Reasonable expectation of privacy

Findings: Procedural justice

- Fragmentation and function creep
 - Multiplicity and hyper-localisation of actors
 - Unclear and sometimes conflicting objectives
- Lack of regulation
- Integration of newer technologies
- Access to information
 - Information asymmetry

Findings: Instrumental Justice

- Security for whom?
 - Within gated communities
 - Within slum camps
 - Within commercial establishments
- Subjective experience of surveillance
 - Women across classes viewed other marginalised people such as lower class men, immigrants and sex workers as threats in public spaces
 - Fault lines in a system aimed at both control and care

Findings: Rights-based surveillance

- Privacy
 - Right to representation vis-a-vis right to privacy
 - Discursive encroachments on privacy
 - The privilege of active disengagement with technology
- Targetted surveillance
 - Aimed at curbing freedoms of expression, protest etc.
 - Actuarial justice over structural solutions

Findings: Structural justice

- “At least then they will believe us”
 - History of unresponsive interactions with law enforcement
 - De facto assumption of guilt
- Turning the gaze inwards
 - Installation of cameras within police stations and government offices
 - Fulfilling objectives : (a) protection against false complaints of police brutality/harassment, (b) increasingly accountability to the public, and (c) managerial surveillance

Concluding remarks

- Moving away from a techno-deterministic framing of research on CCTV that is fixated on its operational efficiency
- Shifting gender ideologies
- Internalisation of bargains with the state for security
- Complicating of the panoptic gaze