PART 2

Politics in Risk Research
CHAPTER 5

Finding the Right Balance: Interacting Security and Business Concerns at Geneva International Airport

Francisco R. Klauser1 & Jean Ruegg2

1Institut de Géographie, Université de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
2Institut de politiques territoriales et d’environnement humain, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

Introduction

‘Risks are man-made hybrids’, Ulrich Beck writes; ‘they include and combine politics, ethics, mathematics, mass media, technologies, cultural definitions and precepts’ (Beck, 1998: 11). In other words, risks are framed in specific ways, by specific people, needs and interests. Researching the causes, modalities and effects of particular risks, thus, always requires critical appreciation of how, why and by whom the problems at hand are defined and how these definitions then legitimise particular interventions. Yet whilst the socio-political constructions and exploitations of risk have been acknowledged on various conceptually and empirically informed grounds, there is to date a pressing need to better understand the precise ways in which the various interests in, and practices of, risk management merge (in consensus and conflict) within a particular milieu, and the ramifications this has. What is needed is a micro approach that allows an understanding of how exactly risk management, as the outcome of complex interactions and negotiations, permeates and shapes particular places and points in time.

Drawing upon the empirically based study of the securitisation of Geneva International Airport, our chapter sets out to address precisely this issue. More specifically, we seek to explore some of the concerns, interests and risk perceptions underpinning the policing of the public premises at Geneva Airport (i.e. the arrival and departure halls and the airport railway
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In this endeavour, particular emphasis will be placed on the complex relationships between the security concerns and the business interests associated with the public airport sections, and on how these relationships are shaping the everyday security operations of the airport police (Police de la Sécurité Internationale).

In what follows, thus, we have chosen to focus on a particular set of interacting concerns in airport security. However, we are well aware that the imperatives of airport security are in reality much more complex and cannot be explained comprehensively by such an intentionally limited approach. We are not implying here that airport security is shaped exclusively by its multiple connections and interactions with business interests. We merely aspire to provide a symptomatic, if necessarily limited, illustration of the alliances, tensions and dilemmas in contemporary security governance and hope thereby to show that the modalities and effects of risk management, and more specifically of security governance, are inevitably both ambivalent and ridden with contradictions. The values and effects of security governance are inherently complex and diverse, and depend on the everyday micro negotiations through which specific security measures are pursued and co-constructed. Finding the right balance in security governance is not so much a question of universal principles than of hazy everyday negotiations and micro adjustments between different actors, interests and issues. In this everyday balancing and recalibrating exercise of security governance, critical risk research can, and must, play an important role.

Methodology

Our investigation draws upon empirical insights provided by a two-year research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Ruegg et al., 2006). Based on several case studies, and bringing together social scientists and legal specialists, the project examined the multiple factors contributing to the way contemporary security governance functions and the impact it has.

As regards the case study of Geneva International Airport more specifically, 11 open-ended, qualitative interviews with the key stakeholders in the planning, installation, use and development of the airport security

2Amongst many other duties, the airport police, an entity of the cantonal police at Geneva, are commissioned with passport and border controls at the airport, as well as with the ‘the securitization of the airport installations, official buildings, tarmac, runways, airplanes on the ground and of the airport territory’ (Etat de Genève, 2001: Art 2).
system were conducted. Interviewees included the current and former heads of airport police, the head of the airport police control room and two police CCTV operators, as well as representatives from the airport’s technical and legal services, the CCTV system suppliers and local political authorities. In addition, everyday security practices at the airport were studied during one week of observational research in the airport police control room. This methodological approach will not be explored in this chapter, however.

In order to give a strong focus to this chapter, the analysis that follows will be limited to those parts of the interviews that are relevant to the issues associated with the interactions, coalitions and tensions unfolding between the public and private actors involved in the securitisation of the publicly accessible premises of Geneva International Airport.

**Positioning**

The research approach pursued here focuses on the micro level, locating the various security and business concerns in the airport in the context of a specific range of projects and decisions. Yet our aim is not only to provide isolated insights into the micro-politics of security and surveillance at Geneva International Airport, but also to re-institute this question as part of a broader set of issues: the complex relationships between security governance and business interests.

In recent years, this research problem has sparked a sophisticated body of literature. In view of the analysis that follows, it is worth mentioning two fields of research in particular. On the one hand, a number of scholars have pointed towards the critical influence of surveillance and securitisation strategies with regard to the privatisation and commercialisation of particular places. Such places include city squares (Franzen, 2001; Coleman, 2004), parks and transport hubs (Töpfer, 2005), alongside shopping malls and other publicly used yet privately owned places of consumption and leisure (Sorkin, 1992). From this perspective, important insights have been gained into the wider socio-spatial effects of security governance on the urban ‘spheres of the everyday’ (Klauser, 2010) and, more specifically, into a range of related issues in terms of social inclusion and exclusion (Koskela, 2000).

On the other hand, a growing body of research has in recent years focused on the logics and effects of the ‘security business’ itself, hence exploring the critical role of private authority and expertise in contemporary security governance (Lyon, 2004; Stevens, 2004). Yet despite the important insights provided regarding the role of private interests and
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responsibilities in current security matters, there is to date little empirical evidence of how exactly the public-private alliances underpinning particular security systems are working on an everyday basis.

The analysis that follows aims to link these two bodies of literature. By doing so, our chapter also complements two earlier papers, in which some of the empirical materials explored here have been approached from other conceptual and thematic perspectives (Klauser, Rüegg and November, 2008; Klauser, 2009).

Content

Dealing with the interacting security and business concerns associated with the public premises at Geneva International Airport, our study shows that security practices result from processes involving a range of actors, guided by converging and diverging goals, acting from mutually enhanced yet also potentially conflicting positions, and driven by shared benefits, whilst also pursuing their own specific agendas and projects. This study is divided into three main parts.

Firstly, the chapter sets out to investigate the coalition of interests between the airport management and the airport police, which underpins the securitisation of Geneva International Airport. In this perspective, security operations will be studied as a means to serve two main airport functionalities: the airport’s position as a national entrance gate of critical symbolic and economic importance (1) and the airport’s meaning as a zone of increased commercial activities in its own right (2).

Secondly, the chapter looks in empirical detail into the delicate and constantly renegotiated balance between the security concerns of the airport police and the business interests of the airport management. Based on a discussion of a series of micro illustrations, this analysis indicates the tensions between the imperative of achieving risk-free places on the one hand and the need to serve business interests on the other.

Thirdly, based on interviews conducted with the company supplying the airport CCTV system, the chapter focuses on the role of private technology companies in the ‘making’ of airport security. Here the chapter moves beyond the study of the specific interactions between the airport police and the airport management, to look in more detail into the role played by external actors and interests in the securitisation of Geneva International Airport. Although it will not be possible here to give an exhaustive interpretation of all the actors and needs in airport security, this investigation identifies the need to approach the modalities and effects of contemporary security governance by studying not only the converging and diverging
concerns of locally anchored actors, but also the role of external forms of expertise, interests and authority.

Public-private coalitions of interests in airport security

Airport functionalities

The primary function and raison d’être of airports is mobility. Airports are to be understood as critical infrastructural and mobility hubs of increased national and economic importance, enabling and processing national and international flows of people and cargo. Consequently, most airport studies have tended to apprehend ‘the airport’ as a ‘space of flows’ (Castells, 1996) and ‘perpetual transit’ (Fuller, 2003). From a security perspective, a growing literature has sought to critically reflect upon the far-reaching implications of the extended and redesigned filtering and screening of international mobilities through airports (Lyon, 2003; Adey, 2004; Salter, 2008).

The Geneva case study confirms the ‘mobility aspect’ of airports. In 2009, Geneva International Airport was linked with over 130 destinations by around 50 scheduled airlines, transporting 11.3m arriving and departing passengers (Aéroport International de Genève, 2009: 18). As one of the police CCTV operators at the airport stated in our interview:

It’s true, we’re a portal here. Everybody coming from afar passes through the airport. The airport is a real platform (Airport CCTV operator, translated by the author).

However, the Geneva case study also highlights the fact that airports are not only detached worlds of transit of their own logic, but can also – more banally – become common places for local residents, tourists and other passers-by (Klauser, Ruegg and November, 2008). As a relatively small and easily reachable airport near the city centre, Geneva International Airport houses many shops with attractive opening hours, aimed at the general public. There are also regular performances and events (such as flea markets, fashion shows, exhibitions etc.), taking place mostly (but not exclusively) in the airport’s integrated railway station, in order to enhance the ‘airport experience’ (Aéroport International de Genève, 2008: 30). This additionally attracts potential customers for the shops and restaurants in the airport’s public zones. Furthermore, given the airport’s location next to both a major exhibition centre and a music venue, some of its premises also accommodate flows of concert goers and other passers-by. Geneva Airport must hence be considered as a functionally diverse space, providing not only a range of services for passengers but also attracting people
without any travel intentions, from local residents to tourists and concert goers to exhibition visitors. The airport’s recent marketing initiative, ‘GVA+’, bears striking testimony to its multi-functional vocation:

More airy. More space. More time. More choice. More flavour: these were some of the communication campaign slogans accompanying the implementation of AIG’s [Aéroport International de Genève] masterplan. The GVA+ 2008-2010 programme’s philosophy is to put the passenger and visitor at the centre of the airport (Aéroport International de Genève, 2008: 30). In its first phase GVA+ involved: press adverts highlighting client benefits such as more space and choice; and a new website, www.gvaplus.ch, covering changes, shop openings and events. While aimed at passengers, these initiatives are also designed to expand the clientele of AIG’s commercial centre [by attracting travellers’ companions, local residents and personnel from the airport and from its environment3] (Aéroport International de Genève, 2008: 42).

In the following, we shall briefly investigate how the two main functionalities of Geneva International Airport – as a national entrance gate and as a commercialised destination in its own right – resonate with the security operations of the airport police.

Airport CCTV as a means to fight against petty criminality

From different perspectives, the interviews conducted underscore the coalition of interests between the airport police and the airport management, who between them require the airport to be both a safe national entrance gate and a commercially appealing space for shopping and consumption. The following account, relating to the original driving forces in the installation of the first 13 police cameras in the check-in and arrival halls of the airport in 1996, provides an exemplary illustration of this:

At the time we installed CCTV in the airport’s public premises, a series of petty crime issues were apparent. The police said that they neither had the means to increase human presence nor to install further technical equipment. Since the airport management was afraid that Geneva Airport would become a context for all sorts of petty theft, negotiations had to set in: ‘If we pay for the equipment, will you be ready to put somebody behind the video screens?’ Yet I’d think that this was much more a matter of dialogue than an application of strict rules. Eventually, it was done like this and everybody was happy (Senior member of technical services at Geneva Airport, translated by the author).

3 This part is missing in the official English translation of the Airport’s Annual Report. It has been translated by the authors from the French version of the report.
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The above account reveals that CCTV at Geneva International Airport was born from a locally-anchored coalition of interests, joining together the police and the airport management. Rather than being imposed externally, CCTV was developed, framed and ‘built up’ through a series of internal exchanges and bottom-up planning processes as a necessary policing measure in the fight against the rising problem of petty crime. This is important to note for the purpose of this chapter, as it provides a good starting point from which to consider the joint and interactive approach to airport security, bringing together different stakeholders, interests and needs.

The quote above further points out that the risks of, and intervention against, petty crime, were defined and tackled in informal dialogue, rather than through the application of strict rules. Eventually, we see that from this locally-anchored dialogue, a hybrid of shared competences and authority arose: the police would operate CCTV, whilst the airport would cover all relevant material and installation costs. This situation has remained unchanged throughout the many developments and adaptations of the system, despite the fact that the exact modalities of collaboration have never been the object of any detailed formalised agreement (Ruegg et al., 2006).

In sum, this initial discussion testifies to the merging concerns in airport security, and to the resulting mutually intertwined, informally negotiated positions held by the police and the airport management. For the police, in the fight against petty criminality, both the security of the airport and its reputation as a highly symbolic national entrance gate are at stake, whilst for the airport management, these issues also convey a business dimension. Both the police and the airport management converge in their endeavours to create a secure and attractive airport environment.

If we are to understand how exactly this coalition of interests in airport security permeates the everyday regulation of the airport, we must also investigate the actual policing measures and practices in the airport. At this point, however, a comprehensive overview of the whole panoply of airport security operations would be beyond the immediate scope of this chapter (for a larger discussion, see Ruegg et al., 2006). Thus here we simply propose to discuss three aspects of airport policing, which are of particular relevance regarding the airport’s position as both a safe national entrance gate and as a commercially attractive shopping zone.

**A crime-free airport**

The use of CCTV in the fight against petty criminality provides an initial framework within which to consider how everyday airport policing is shaped by converging goals and shared benefits. To investigate this further, we will first look into the influence of petty criminality on the planning
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and design of the CCTV system, before moving on to discuss the use of cameras for crime detection.

Regarding the planning and design of the airport CCTV system, our interviewees repeatedly emphasised the strong link between the spatial distribution of petty criminality and the location of the cameras. For example, no cameras were installed in the transit zone of the airport, given the low level of petty criminality in this area. In the publicly accessible zones of the airport, however, cameras were located strategically to cover exactly those places where luggage thefts and pickpockets were observed to occur most often.

Cameras were not just installed anywhere, anyhow, but depending on those locations known as crime sites, where, obviously, we had recurrently encountered bag-snatchings and pick-pocketing. Furthermore, to identify these sites, a study was conducted by the airport management and the police. On this basis, we were able to determine where cameras should be placed (Former head of airport police and initiator of airport CCTV, translated by the author).

Of course, the system’s focus on petty criminality also finds expression in the everyday real-time camera operations of the police (screening the airport in search of thieves or suspect behaviour). In interview, CCTV operators described real-time crime detection as the most challenging, yet also most gratifying, activity, since they could rely directly on their experience and gradually accumulated understanding of where, when and by whom thefts are committed.

Whenever we are behind a camera, we are searching for criminals. We’re hunters with cameras. That’s the aim (Airport CCTV operator I, translated by the author).

Furthermore, it appears from our interviews that, over time, the operators’ practical expertise in the fight against petty criminality not only shaped everyday camera operations, but also constituted one of the key factors in the various developments and adaptations of the system itself. Indeed, most of the gradual changes to the system (additional and repositioned cameras, or technical adaptations) were said to be driven by needs emerging directly from the everyday surveillance practices of the police.

This argument can be further developed by looking at the positioning of the cameras whilst unattended (at night, or when operators are engaged in other activities). Again, the system’s focus on petty criminality, and the operators’ experience in this field, appear to be of critical importance.

We know that there are strategic points where more luggage robberies will occur than elsewhere. In the evenings, I focus the cameras especially on these points.
Afterwards, if we have to visualize the images, I know that the cameras were already watching these points. We also try to have wide camera angles, in order to see the maximum possible (Airport CCTV operator II, translated by the author).

In sum, the meaning of CCTV in the fight against petty criminality has not only shaped the original design and gradual adaptations of the system, but has also channelled the everyday policing of the airport. Thus the history of airport CCTV, and hence the actual securitisation of the airport, must be understood as the outcome of constant negotiations and dialogue. Only by recognising the particular combination of concerns, goals and benefits perceived by both the police and the airport management can we understand the modalities and use of airport CCTV.

**A friendly airport**

Besides the role of CCTV in the fight against petty criminality, numerous other camera applications can be found. For the purpose of this chapter, it is particularly revealing to mention the use of CCTV as a means to provide various forms of assistance to the airport clientele. By way of example, consider the following account, relating to the police’s contribution in the search for lost luggage and lost children:

We can also help to find lost luggage. [To do our job], one needs to like responding to people’s needs. [...] If we’ve got time, we like to help, with our telephones, cameras, and even with our control room. In a way, these belong to the people. It’s their taxes as well. [...] It’s true that we have to deal mostly with thieves, but sometimes, there are people in need of some help. We will also use the cameras in cases of lost children. Whenever there are many people at the airport, we will have many cases of lost children. (Airport CCTV operator I, translated by the author).

In the context of our chapter, this account is interesting because it places CCTV – and hence airport policing more generally – outside a strict risk and security problematic. The quote above implies a definition of airport policing not only as a response to issues of security and risk, but also as a contribution to the effective functioning of the airport. It is not only a crime-free, but also a friendly, airport that is at stake, and in this sense, the police also assumes the role of a watchman, or vigilante, in the service of the airport. As one of our interviewees put it,

Are they [the police] doing the work of a watchman for a private institution [the airport], or are they limited to public policing operations? I’d say it’s a bit of both… (Senior member of technical services at Geneva Airport, translated by the author).
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A ‘clean’ airport

To further explore the police’s contribution to the effective functioning of the airport, another aspect of airport policing, relating to the control and preservation of the airport’s house rules, must be emphasised. As the following quotes underscore, airport policing not only aims to reduce criminal behaviour and to assist the airport clientele, but also to control, to prevent and to exclude unwanted behaviour and individuals. Thus the police also contribute to the creation of a ‘clean’ airport.

Some time ago, not so much nowadays, young people with roller-skates used to use the airport as their training ground. In cases we will intervene. Often, it is via telephone [to private security agents], but sometimes we send our own patrol (Head of the airport police control room, translated by the author).

Sometimes, homeless people find themselves within the airport area. Again, we will ask them to leave the airport. Sometimes we will find them a place with specific associations where they might find accommodation (Airport CCTV operator I, translated by the author).

The two quotes tell us something about the qualities and meanings of the airport, and about how these are reflected in everyday airport policing. The airport is not to be understood as an open, shared space of public use – on the contrary, access to, and use of, Geneva International Airport is governed by specific house rules and regulations. In accordance with the airport’s combined vocation as a national entrance gate and as a commercialised shopping zone, there are some people – and some things – that are not welcome.

Airport policing must be situated within this context. Whilst our interviewees described neither skateboarding youngsters nor homeless people as a security threat, they nevertheless perceived them as disturbing elements to the airport’s vocation and reputation. Airport policing here is not only about risk management, but also about the enforcement of house rules and restrictions and, consequently, the exclusion of anything unwanted. As with the previous example, airport policing is here positioned outside a strict risk and security problematic.

To summarise, we can say that airport policing not only aims to create a safe and crime-free airport, but also a friendly and clean airport. From this broad, regulatory perspective, the distinction between the illegal and the unwanted is blurred, since both must be controlled and prevented. This is also the case in the initial dichotomy introduced in this chapter between the police’s security concerns and the airport management’s business interests. In reality, the relationship between the police and the airport management does not articulate two distinct positions, but two overlapping positions, whose common ground lies in the creation of an attractive and
safe ‘airport experience’ (Aéroport International de Genève, 2008: 30). For both parties, this endeavour takes a turn that goes beyond a strict risk and security problematic.

Only if we recognise these broad, blurring and overlapping objectives aiming at a safe and consumer-friendly airport, can we understand the precise modalities and effects of airport policing. Hence the importance of a micro approach that centres on the question of how exactly everyday security practices – and their underlying relationships – are responding to, and shaped by, specific interests and interacting concerns.

**Tensions in airport security**

Despite the intrinsic combination of interests in the creation of a safe, friendly and clean airport environment, the positions and efforts of the airport management and police can also give rise to tensions and dissonances. In the following, our task will be to provide a series of micro illustrations – some of which have been previously explored from other thematic angles (Klauser, Ruegg and November, 2008) – relating to the existing tensions between the commercialisation and the securitisation of the airport. More specifically, we will offer insights into the difficulties for the airport police in its quest for a safe, ordered and presentable national entrance gate; difficulties which arise from the organisation of special events and performances at the airport.

As mentioned previously, to enhance the ‘airport experience’ and to attract additional customers, various kinds of special events are organised by the airport management, ranging from displays of model cars to fashion shows, arts exhibitions and flea markets. Whilst some of these events affect the arrival and departure halls, the largest and most ‘chaotic’ events (such as flea markets and Christmas markets) are held in the airport’s railway station.

**Airport materialities**

The police agents interviewed did not openly disagree with efforts to increase the commercial appeal of the airport. However, special events and performances entail a range of difficulties and complications for the policing of the airport. Regarding airport CCTV operations, for example, a first series of difficulties linked to commercial events is caused by associated changes to the airport’s materiality, such as event-related arrangements of objects, placards and decorations.

Sometimes, we will ask to change the location or positioning of placards, because they limit the cameras’ view […]. Recently, the airport workers even put another placard in the middle of the hall, which was not really the best solution for us. We
also have to pay attention to Christmas decorations. It’s very simple; with all these Christmas decorations, we lose a big part of our vision [...] Recently, we also had to re-position and re-align three cameras because some constructions built by the airport were in our way. Hence we did adapt ourselves to this (Head of the airport police control room, translated by the author).

The quote underscores the case by case arrangements, adjustments and re-positioning of placards, decorations and CCTV cameras, illustrating the continuous compromises being made between security and business. In this sense, airports are not to be understood simply as spaces of complete control and security, as the current security rhetoric suggests. On the contrary, airport policing results from constantly redefined and rearranged compromises between numerous private and public actors and interests. In these compromises, security does not always trump economy.

**Airport uses**

Put simply, the safest airport is an empty airport. In reality, however, this is not the police’s ambition. On the contrary, as we have seen, the police contribute in many ways to the creation of an attractive and friendly airport. The simplicity of this statement, however, hides a more profound issue, relating to the tensions existing between the commercialisation and the securitisation of Geneva International Airport. For the police, increased numbers of visitors and customers at the airport, attracted by special events and performances, indeed constitute an important challenge. There are at least three reasons for this, each of which deserves some discussion here.

Firstly, unlike normal passengers, event visitors are not passing swiftly through the airport, but remain inside the building for longer periods of time. They cannot be subjected to prescribed patterns of movement, or filtered and controlled through check-in, ticketing, security checks, etc. On the contrary, event visitors follow their own spatial logics, implying complex and opposing micro movements to the general flow of travellers, which heightens the challenge they pose for policing and surveillance operations.

Secondly, according to our interviewees, large numbers of people and distractions are not only more difficult to monitor, but also present ideal conditions for pickpockets and luggage thieves hidden in the crowd. From this perspective, commercially motivated efforts to increase the airport clientele do have a negative impact on the risk of petty criminality at the airport.

Every special event – I mean whenever there are many people here, bringing money to the airport – is a moment of risk. At such times, pick-pockets will be present (Airport CCTV operator I, translated by the author).
Thirdly, special events can be difficult to reconcile with increased security precautions against terrorist threats by abandoned luggage. On the one hand, unattended suitcases, boxes or parcels are routinely detected by the police and exploded by specialised security forces. On the other hand, many of the organised events (especially flea markets) are likely to lead to more objects of various dimensions lying around in the airport premises, which will complicate the police’s task considerably.

These difficulties reiterate the existing tensions arising from the combined efforts to both secure and commercialise the airport. On a micro level, we find here a powerful illustration of Mark Salter’s analysis of the airport as a ‘space of shared authority where sovereign and disciplinary powers are both mediated and disaggregated. Within the specific workings of preclearance and airport security, the airport is neither a smooth transit zone nor simply a gate into the nation, but a complex of private and public agencies wrestling with the impossible task of perfect security and perfect mobility’ (Salter, 2007: 62). For our investigation of how risk management permeates and shapes particular places and moments, these insights are of high relevance, as they exemplify the variety of factors and interests at work in everyday security and surveillance practices. At this level it becomes apparent just how necessary it is to critically investigate the interdependences, alliances and tensions in contemporary security governance if we are to understand the implications of security and risk for our everyday lives.

The role of external technology suppliers

So far, our study has explored the interactions between two key stakeholders in airport security: the airport police and the airport management. We have chosen this focus because it provides a symptomatic example of the interwoven security and business concerns in contemporary risk management. In reality, however, many other actors, needs and concerns are shaping the securitisation of Geneva International Airport, from the Swiss regulatory bodies in the aviation sector to the shopkeepers in the airport, and from the airport’s legal and technical departments to local politicians (Ruegg et al., 2006).

In this chapter, we do not seek to give an exhaustive interpretation of the roles played by all these stakeholders. We do, however, propose at this point to move beyond the issues explored so far, to scrutinise in more detail the position of another key player in the making of airport security: the private supply company of the airport CCTV system. With this extended focus, we hope to bring to the fore another critical issue in contemporary security governance: the increasingly important role played by companies specialising in security and surveillance technologies.
As shown elsewhere in more detail (Klauser, 2009), the use of high-tech surveillance systems considerably extends the role of technical expertise, and the authority of private business companies, in contemporary security governance. If we are to understand how different public and private actors connect in particular locales, special attention must be paid to the providers and designers of the surveillance systems in place.

**Technical expertise**

A closer look at the history of CCTV at Geneva International Airport reveals that the airport management and police have always had a marked preference not just to purchase CCTV material, but also to buy specialised services and strong client relationships, provided by a highly qualified designer of surveillance systems. As the following quote shows, from the first installation of CCTV equipment at Geneva International Airport, technicalities such as the positioning and location of the cameras have not only been discussed between police and airport representatives, but have also been influenced by the technical expertise of private CCTV suppliers.

> When we first meet with suppliers, we may speak about some specific issues of our project. This may then result in a second phase of negotiations. In this case, the supplier might tell us ‘I can do what you want but this will cost you four times as much as another solution, which still satisfies 80 percent of your needs’. This level of negotiation not only typically runs in collaboration with the supplier, whose expertise is greater than ours, but also includes the final user of the material. To rely on the supplier’s experience is very important for us (Member of technical services at the airport, translated by the author).

To this account, it is interesting to add the supply company’s perspective. As a part of our study, we interviewed the co-founder of *Alarme et Sécurité*, the supplier of additional CCTV cameras at Geneva Airport in 2003.

Good clients have confidence in us; they are correct in business matters. Bad clients only want to find the cheapest solution. In security matters, the cheapest solution is always too expensive if it doesn’t work well. […] Fortunately, I can do without these bad clients. But we had to manage our company in this sense (CCTV supplier at Geneva Airport, translated by the author).

The quote offers an additional viewpoint to our discussion so far, in that it reveals the supplier’s active quest for responsibility and autonomy in designing ‘his own’ CCTV system. The external designer and seller of the system is here portrayed as an important stakeholder, harbouring his own vision of the ‘right solution’, his own form of expertise and his own interests, which are shaping the making of airport security.
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Marketing as a source of information

The interests of private businesses in participating in current security matters can be further explored by looking into some of the marketing and selling strategies employed.

Suppliers generally know that we are the users of the system, which is exactly why they get in touch with us. However, some companies organize larger presentations which are destined for other services as well. In such cases, representatives from other services, including the border police department and the airport, will also join us. [...] Recently, somebody came here from a security specialist in Paris, representing several manufacturers of CCTV equipment, in order to present two new camera systems. He was selling a whole series of establishments from door to door. In the morning, he was at the airport; in the afternoon, he was meeting someone somewhere else. (Head of the airport police control room, translated by the author).

This quote is remarkable: not only does it reveal the intense marketing and promotional activities of private companies wishing to take part in the securitisation of Geneva International Airport, but also, more specifically, it portrays these companies as ambulant sellers, presenting and selling more or less standardised solutions for supposedly similar security threats in different places. Indeed, the police and airport representatives interviewed within this study not only associated technology supply companies with specifically commissioned projects, but also acknowledged them as a source of information regarding new solutions available on the market. Thus although such companies are in most cases not practically involved in the setting up and development of particular surveillance solutions at Geneva Airport, their marketing efforts implicitly shape potential future demand by promoting and publicising the latest, internationally established ‘security exemplars’.

I am sure that the technical means which are available to us also create our needs. It’s quite trivial really: if we don’t have the means, we won’t have the action either. From there, to know how tools and techniques evolve is mainly a question of marketing. As users [of surveillance technologies], we won’t personally develop anything new to meet our needs. We are much more likely to use and to apply something that’s already offered by the market (Member of technical services at the airport, translated by the author).

In light of the above, the impact of technology supply companies on airport security – and on contemporary security governance more generally – can be seen on at least two levels. Firstly, this example stresses the technical expertise required to manage and to install the airport’s CCTV
system, which is likely to give the authority of private specialists more weight. Secondly, marketing and promotional activities play an important role in creating demand, and hence in channelling future modalities of security governance. In sum, we see again that security governance is not about the application of universal principles, but a matter of everyday interactions between different actors, with different forms of authority and expertise, each with specific concerns and interests. In the case of ambulance technology suppliers, it is interesting to note that these interests are not anchored in the airport area itself. Rather, technology companies are following their own, de-territorialised business interests. As Holden and Iveson (2003: 66) put it, they are ‘wandering the planet in search of consultancy fees and places to save, ‘parachuting in’ to localities with plans and designs and then moving on to the next place.’ Nevertheless, such companies make an important and central contribution to airport security, which deserves therefore critical attention and investigation.

Conclusion: arising challenges for critical risk research

This chapter has provided a set of micro illustrations with regard to the multiple (congruent and conflicting) interests in the securitisation of Geneva International Airport. Airport policing has been positioned within a complex field of needs, driving forces and motivations, bringing together a range of internationally operating stakeholders as well as diverse local actors, predispositions and impulses. More specifically, given our focus on three key stakeholders in airport security – the airport police, the airport management and the company supplying the airport’s CCTV system – the chapter has highlighted some of the interdependences, alliances and tensions arising from the simultaneous efforts to create a safe and consumer-friendly airport environment. The examples given have underscored the overlapping security and business concerns in the fight against petty criminality, in the search for lost luggage and children, and in the control of disruptive behaviour. They have also, on the other hand, underlined the delicate balance between security and business needs, with respect to the material arrangements of the airport (for example in the positioning of placards, decorations and CCTV cameras) and in view of the problems arising from the staging of sales-stimulating events.

These insights are of exemplary value in answering the question of how exactly security governance permeates particular places and moments. We need to recognise not only the blurring and overlapping concerns in contemporary security governance, but also the multiple tensions and dilemmas arising from the ways in which specific problems are framed,
approached and exploited for particular needs. It becomes clear, therefore, that risk and security issues are not pre-given or value-free, but shaped by complex relationships and interactions bringing together various actors and interests.

**Challenges for critical risk research**

To conclude, it is worth pointing towards three basic challenges, or avenues for further critical investigation, that emerge here for future research on issues of risk and security.

Firstly, there is a pressing need for more detailed empirical research into the complex relationships between the various institutions and agents which shape the everyday micro-politics of risk and security. In this chapter, we do not claim to provide an exhaustive interpretation of all the factors at stake. This study has outlined some of the interacting concerns (and some of the resulting effects) in security governance, but much more detailed and comparative empirical investigations are needed in order to scrutinise the various interests, logics and impacts of contemporary security operations. Furthermore, it will be of major importance to seek more elaborate insight into the micro-scale implications of security practices on the everyday life of individuals and social groups. How are communities affected by security procedures, operations and strategies? And what types of interests and relationships lie behind these interventions?

Secondly, to be truly credible in this research ambition, critical risk research must also critically interrogate its own underlying values and objectives. Just as security governance is inherently complex and dependent on a wide range of interests, a study of risk is also mediated by specific norms, intentions, institutions and agents, which directly and indirectly shape the form, direction and content of the outputs produced. In this sense, the insights provided in this chapter with respect to the interacting concerns, forms of expertise and coalitions of authority in security governance also serve as a reminder of the variety of factors at work in the production of knowledge through academic research in risk and security matters. What is needed, therefore, is an attitude of suspicion, a kind of self-sceptical reflex, which leads to a constant questioning of the values, driving forces and power relationships underlying the study of risk and security. What aims, ambitions and socio-political and institutional environments characterise the study of risk and security? In what ways, and to what ends, are problems of risk and security framed and studied? For whom are insights provided and solutions produced?

Thirdly, and following directly from the above, critical risk research is not only situated within a complex grid of relationships of power. Instead, the field of critical risk research itself – by its practices and knowledge, and by the interventions it generates – also participates in the co-production of
‘risk’ as a series of problems to manage and to solve. Thus critical attention must also be paid to the impact of risk research on its very object of study. The different forms of expertise studied in this chapter – the airport police’s *practical expertise* in the fight against petty criminality, the CCTV supply company’s *technical expertise* in the design of surveillance systems and the airport management’s expertise in business matters – were each in turn shown to contribute to airport security. Likewise, the information and expertise produced by academic research also influences the socio-political processes and practices of managing risk. Paying close attention to the wider social, political and ethical implications of the study of risk and security is hence of critical importance.

In sum, the study of risk and security requires an appreciation of the multitude of contributory causes, interests and actors assembled around the problems at hand. It also raises a series of important questions with respect to the underlying values and hidden *a priori* in this field of study, and to the interventions produced by the insights provided. It is on this basis that the power of critical risk research, and its resulting responsibilities, become evident and questionable.

**References**


Finding the Right Balance


