

maps, and can be generated by users who ask their own questions of data sources. Instead of going to pre-existing maps for answers about nature, we can create our own maps to query nature. Rather than relying on reified versions of idealized natures, maps can allow us to explore changing versions of the real, messy natures we live in.

The Natures of Maps should be read and put to use by anyone who makes or uses maps, whether they are scientists, conservationists or landowners. The constructs of nature that Wood and Fels identify inform the way maps are interpreted. And the analytical techniques that they deploy can be used to make new maps

of science and nature that are better at helping us to ask important questions.

Maps are indeed arguments about our world, but the future also rides on maps. People use them to shape what we know and what becomes of the territory. As Wood and Fels argue so provocatively, “Pretending to be no more than scorekeepers, maps stand revealed as more like the ball, the very medium through which the game’s moves are made.” ■

Jon Christensen is associate director of the Spatial History Project at the Bill Lane Center for the American West, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305-4225, USA.
e-mail: jonchristensen@stanford.edu

ease with which the origin of any Internet communication can be traced. It is daunting to see how quickly we have become inured to surveillance as normal when we would once have viewed it as intrusive. My daily bus journey is now almost entirely recorded on video — a development that was inconceivable both technically and ethically only a few years ago.

Privacy, a slim but beautifully produced volume by sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky, is a manifesto in the classic sense. In a 148-page translation from the original German edition of 2007, he outlines his concerns over the depth of information that is now held, analysed and used from almost every aspect of our lives. Beginning with a review of the daily surveillance encountered by an average citizen, the author takes us on a personal journey that discusses the cultural roots of privacy, the origins of property and the pivotal nature of freedom of thought.

Sofsky covers an enormous amount of territory on his voyage, and digs deep into our core social values to discuss the origins of our behaviours, interactions and innate needs. Human territoriality, the concepts of personal space and the conventions regarding bodily functions all build together into a convincing justification of why privacy becomes such an emotive issue in a crowded, and perhaps threatening, environment. Private spaces are our refuges from society at large. Sofsky discusses the way we extend private space — into our cars, for example — but also shows us how vulnerable we become to these boundaries being breached.

Setting this against the development of an information-oriented world, Sofsky skilfully weaves his argument that we, as groups and individuals, have lost significant independence and freedom of action. We are, he argues, at the behest of “an unholy alliance of institutions” — both governmental and commercial — that ensure we never feel free from observation in any aspect of our lives. The technologies are available, they are being used and, as the tools become more sophisticated, so too will the use of the data they generate.

Reading Bennett’s book is like joining a conversation in a commuter train where the regular passengers know and respect each other. You are informed of the points being debated, then left to make your own judgement. The journey with Sofsky is similarly amicable but is more like being a passenger on a long taxi ride, where the driver shares his life-vision and philosophy. Both approaches work well — the time spent in the authors’ company passes both quickly and profitably. ■

John Gilbey is an honorary lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth SY23 3DB, UK.
e-mail: gilbey@bcs.org.uk

Who’s watching you?

The Privacy Advocates: Resisting the Spread of Surveillance

by Colin J. Bennett

MIT Press: 2008. 259 pp. £18.95

Privacy: A Manifesto

by Wolfgang Sofsky

(Translated by Steven Rendall)

Princeton University Press: 2008.

148 pp. £13.95

If you have ever caught a bus, you will be familiar with this experience: you wait ages for one to arrive, then two turn up together. As with transport, so with books. These two titles use different approaches to unpick the entwined concepts of surveillance, privacy and human rights.

In *The Privacy Advocates*, political scientist Colin J. Bennett reviews the privacy landscape from the perspective of those who seek to prevent society from sliding into an unthinking acceptance of surveillance culture. Advocates of surveillance cameras in public places cite the prevention of crime as a key motivation, yet the same technology could be subverted to intrusively monitor innocent people.

Bennett suggests that we should all be privacy advocates because there are elements of everyone’s life that are so personal that they should not become public or state property. Active himself in issues of privacy, Bennett could risk bias in covering such an emotive topic. Instead, he seeks to hold up a mirror to the network of privacy advocates. By allowing the network members he already knows to select secondary contacts for him, he develops an organic web of opinion and insight.

The strength of character of many privacy campaigners might set them as outliers of current social opinion. To his credit, Bennett



Banksy’s graffiti art criticizes surveillance culture.

takes great care to avoid depicting them as a naive fringe element. In describing the publicity-friendly techniques used by the privacy movement, such as performing Shakespearean drama in front of surveillance cameras, he acknowledges the serious intent of such activity as a wake-up call to society.

In a thoughtful and determined voice, Bennett provides an international perspective and comprehensive coverage. The material is current and the history of the topic is well presented. The development of the privacy lobby is tied in with the technological advances that, to a large extent, have driven it — such as the

C. GILLON/GETTY IMAGES