

PUBLIC EVENTS: SAFETY AND SECURITY STRATEGIES

Neil Mellor¹ and
Art Venio
Centre for Police and Justice Studies
Monash University, Victoria

Paper presented at the conference Safer Communities: Strategic Directions in Urban Planning convened jointly by the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Victorian Community Council Against Violence, held in Melbourne, 10-11 September 1998

¹Neil Mellor is the Project Manager for the Preventing Violence and Crime at Public Events Project a Monash University and Turning Point Collaborative Project. Dr Art Venio is the project consultant and Director of the Centre for Police and Justice Studies, Monash University Caulfield Campus.

This presentation outlines some key characteristics of public events which have been identified in the relevant literature as salient factors in promoting peaceful events and subsequently field researched and analysed by the authors². These characteristics are explained according to theoretical bases derived from contemporary criminology and public health paradigms as well as from case studies and direct observations undertaken by the researchers. Problems associated with public events and good practice strategies are illustrated by examples from several different types of sporting, music and other recreational events.

Purpose of presentation

In brief this paper has as its aims to identify and discuss safety and security practices which facilitate peaceful and enjoyable public events.

Theoretical and conceptual bases

The authors have approached this topic drawing on a number of theoretical bases and concepts which are influential in crime prevention and public health realms. Briefly these are:

Environmental Crime Prevention

Environmental crime prevention approaches are used here to understand the dynamics of public events/gatherings and this includes ecological approaches to crime prevention (Goldstein, 1994) including situational crime prevention (Clarke, 1992) and routine activity approaches (Felson, 1987). The authors have discussed these notions elsewhere and have coined the term situational harm reduction approaches. (Mellor, 1995; Mellor & Veno, 1990; Veno, 1991).

Harm Minimisation

Although there are many definitions of harm reduction we generally agree with (Heather, Wodak, Nadelmann, & O'Hare, 1993) that harm minimisation “involves attempts to ameliorate the adverse health, social or economic consequences of mood altering substances without necessarily relying on a reduction of consumption of these substances.” [Heather, 1993, p.vi #98]

The Flashpoint Model

Another useful conceptual model of public event disorder is that devised and tested by Waddington (1992) and known as the ‘flashpoint model’, which allows for several levels of analyses of including Structural, Political, Cultural, Contextual, Situational, Interactional. Figure 1 represents the application of this model to the infamous Brixton riot.

² The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime and the National Anti Crime Strategy in funding their current research on the Preventing Violence and Crime at Public Events: Implementing Good Practice.

Figure 1: A profile of the Brixton riot

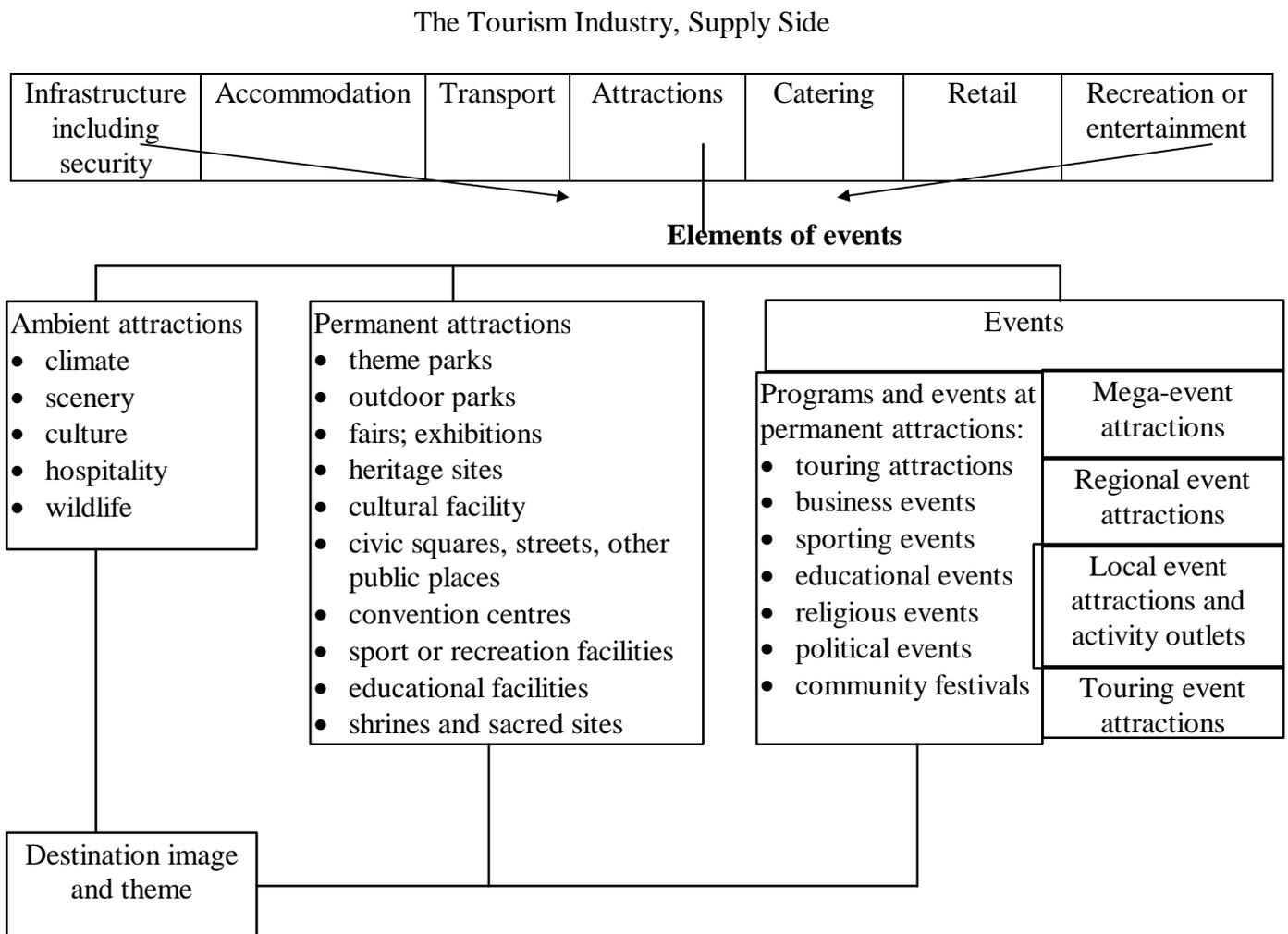
<i>Level of analysis</i>	Evidence of predisposing factor
<i>Structural</i>	
Material inequality / inferior life chances	Relative deprivation re whites; racial discrimination
Political powerlessness	Poor political representation
Relationship to state	State viewed as unresponsive / unsympathetic
<i>Political / ideological</i>	
Marginality / vilification	Moral panic re ‘muggings’ : public anxiety and police vigilance producing rise in reported street crime; black youths viewed as threatening; black youths increasingly alienated and disaffected
Police policy	Saturation policing influenced by moral panic
<i>Cultural</i>	
Contrasting notions of ‘rights’	Conflict between Afro-Caribbean youth subculture (Rastafaria and Rude Boy elements) and police law-enforcement orientati British-born blacks less tolerant of racism than parents (‘fully paid-up citizens)
Accommodation	Absence of accommodation since early 1970s
Norms of behaviour	Police / blacks share emphasis on machismo and solidarity
<i>Contextual</i>	
Police-community relations	Permanent state of police-community tension; high-profile policing culminating in Swamp ‘81
Rumour / expectation of conflict	Rumour that police had told hospitals to expect casualties; rumours of police atrocities re stabbed youth
<i>Situational</i>	
Critical mass	Popular meeting place: ‘front-line’ of Railton Road
Symbolic territory	Symbolic turf to be defended (by blacks) / seized (by police)
<i>Interactional</i>	
Flashpoint / intensifiers	Over-zealous search and arrest of taxi driver
Negotiation / escalation	Police refusal to negotiate withdrawal with co-operation of councilors; continuation of Swamp ‘81
Dominant activities	Selective purposive, limited attacks/arson/looting
Dominant emotions	Feelings of release, celebration and pride

(Source: Waddington, 1992, p.17)

Typologies of events

In order to describe problems and issues associated with public events it is necessary to have some form of classification of events. Although the literature containing the history of public disorder is littered with various typologies of events, most are not grounded in descriptive foundations of the nature of the event, but rather focus on perceived attributes of the crowd and their cognitive and affective states, of which many leading authors in the field have been critical (King & Brearley, 1996). Of the typologies found to be most descriptive and useful by the authors are those associated with the tourism industry and include those of (Hall, 1989) and (Getz, 1991). For example Getz (illustrated in figure 1) demonstrates a typology he has formulated to categorise events according to the nature of events and the supply and infrastructure requirements of these events.

Figure 1: A tourism event typology



(Source: Getz, 1991, p.45)

Identified problems with events

Whilst there are particular contextual and other issues associated with particular types of events such as a rock concert, political demonstration or a fun run, they all contain potential harms. These harms (illustrated in figure 2) indicate not only security and crime related problems but also other danger areas associated, health, economic, environmental and social disruption at public events.

Figure 2: Harms associated with public gatherings.

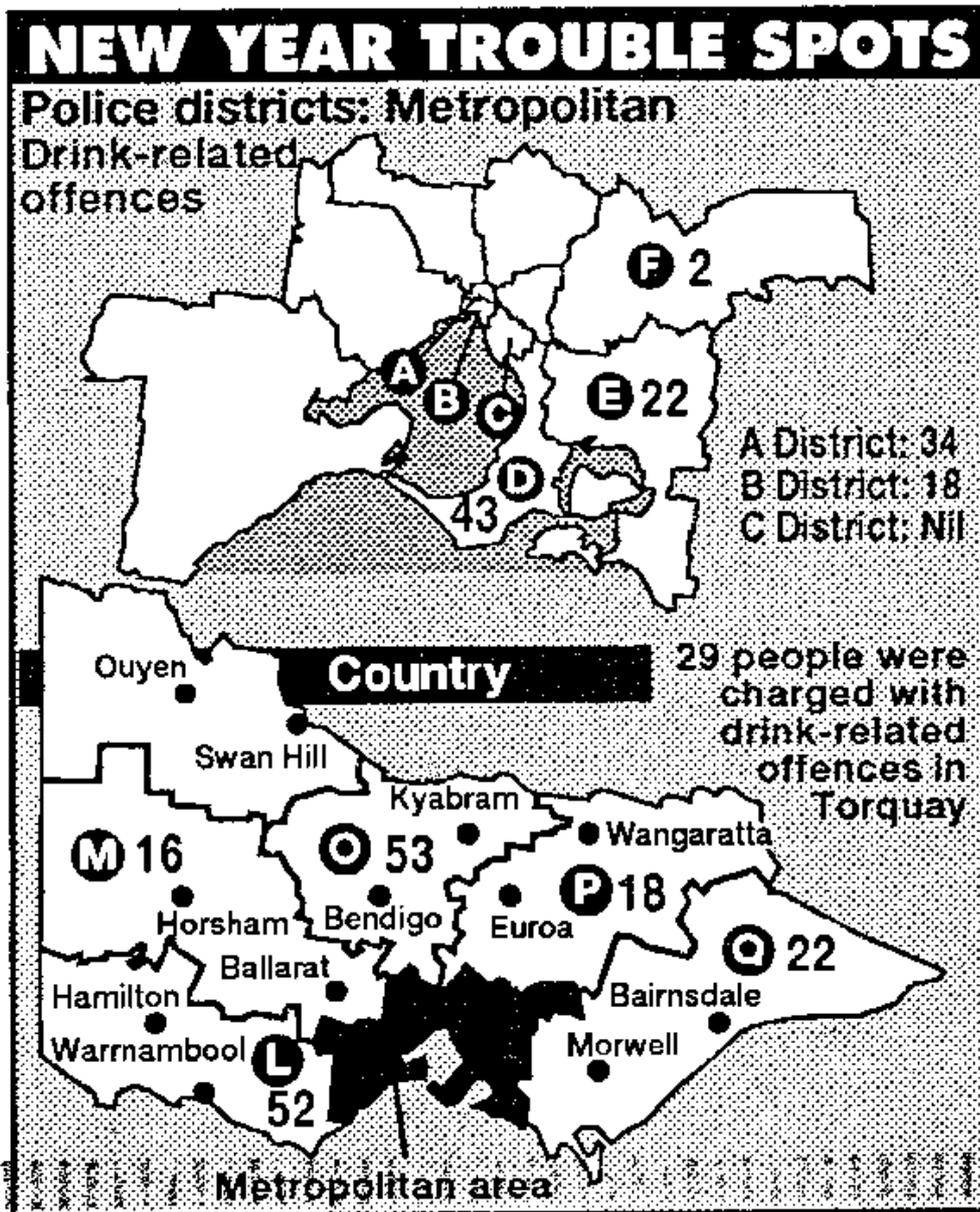
<i>Crimes and Misdemeanors</i>	<i>Health - Mortality and Morbidity</i>
<p>Assaults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minor • aggravated • sexual <p>Theft/burglary</p> <p>Property damage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • graffiti • defacing shops, monuments, public property • damage to trees bushes ground foliage, water source • littering • fires <p>Public order offences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disturbing the peace • resisting arrest • abusive language • indecent acts • drunk and disorderly 	<p>Deaths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcohol poisoning • overdose • motor vehicle accidents • drowning • falls • suicide • assaults <p>Injuries and diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a cuts abrasions, lacerations, fractures • hypothermia • road injuries • fall injuries • fire injuries • aspiration • assault • alcohol / drug psychosis • blood born viruses • STD's • bacteriological • asphyxiation
<i>Economic Costs</i>	<i>Environmental & Social Disruption</i>
<p>Expenditure on policing</p> <p>Clean up operations</p> <p>Emergency services</p> <p>Hospitalisation</p> <p>Tourist industry disruption</p>	<p>Damage to property</p> <p>Damage to environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • air • water • ground <p>Noise</p> <p>Traffic congestion</p> <p>Overcrowding</p> <p>Loss of recreational space</p> <p>Fear of crime</p> <p>Social group segregation</p>

(Source: Mellor,1996, p.6)

Trouble spots

Problems associated with public events may be real or perceived or both. For instance many New Years Eve events (until relatively recently) have presented in a number of locations simultaneously and have been labeled trouble or hot spots by the media. Figure 3 indicates this for New Years Eve in 1992.

Figure 3: A Map of New Year's Eve 'trouble spots' in Victoria.



(Source: Herald - Sun 2/1/1993, p.5)

A content analysis of New Year's Eve print news reports by the authors indicates the press and to some extent law enforcement agencies set the agenda for perception of the public for the features of an event such as New Years Eve. Some of the conclusion that can be inferred from the content analysis of the Age and Sun-Herald Newspaper reports on New Years despite decreasing arrests over the last twenty years, that:

- Reports feature sensational activities that may not represent accurately the behaviour of the crowds generally.
- Confrontation between police and young people features from the 1960's into the early 1990's.
- Young people and underage drinking are issues that feature prominently in press coverage.
- Violence and alcohol abuse are a regularly associated issue with New Year's Eve celebrations.

Safety and security indicators

The authors have found that media reports are limited in their scope as to describing what takes place at public event partly because of their need to sensationalise and apportion blame for problems associated these events to sell news. Better indicators of the reality of events are found using a range of data sources as follows:

- Observations
- Photos/Video
- Interviews
- Arrests/Bylaw violation
- Injury Data
- Property Damage
- Safety Audits
- Litter Data

For instance it has been identified that although events may appear relatively trouble free in terms of violence and crime, there may still experience high injury rates (The Ombudsman Victoria, 1993) and conversely high arrest rates are not necessarily indicative of high injury rates (Mellor & Veno, 1998). Of course it is possible to have high injury and high arrest rates (Cunneen, Findlay, Lynch, & Tupper, 1989).

Public event - identified areas of attention

There are a number of dimensions to public events that are the subject to good and bad practice in our experience. Photographs will be used to illustrate these but the include the following areas:

- Ingress & egress
- Restrictions on parking and camping
- Different groups attending venues for different purpose
- Different groups for same purposes
- Multiple-rule signage
- Drinking in public places
- Specific signage
- Entertainment
- Densely crowded area
- Liquor outlets
- Underage drinking
- Bridges and walkways
- Pedestrian - traffic flow
- Staging
- Seating
- Proactive Emergency services
- Adequate public amenities

- Incident Reporting
- Control of glass and missiles
- Queuing
- Control of animals
- Post event activities

Good practices identified

In general a number of good practices can be identified which are associated with organisation of safe and secure events. These practices are detailed below and generally reflect sound planning, implementation and review processes (Au, Ryan, & Carey, 1993; Crowd Management Strategies, 1997) .

- Site(s) location and development
- Multi-agency involvement, co-ordination and communication
- Respond to community concerns
- Effective planning & management
- Good police/security - patron relations
- Perceptions of fun and safety
- Community support
- Identifying problems and developing solutions
- Balance between commercial interests and community/cultural values

Conclusion

Within the constraints of this presentation it is not possible for the authors to do justice to all the issues associated with the provision of safe and secure public events. Many of these issues are discussed in other publications by the authors and in the forthcoming reports about this topic from the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime (Preventing Violence and Crime at Public Events: Implementing Good Practice). However, we can say that issues of urban and rural design of architecture and other environmental and situation contexts of events have a significant influence on the outcome of the event along sound management and organisation practices.

References

- Au, S. Y. Z., Ryan, M. C., & Carey, M. S. (1993). Key principles in ensuring crowd safety in public venues. In R. A. Smith & J. F. Dickie (Eds.), *Engineering for crowd safety* (pp. 133-143): Elsevier Science Publishers.
- Clarke, R. V. (Ed.). (1992). *Situational crime prevention: successful case studies*. New York: Harrow and Heston.
- Crowd Management Strategies. (1997). *About 'The Who concert tragedy task force report'* (Internet).
- Cunneen, C., Findlay, M., Lynch, R., & Tupper, V. (1989). *Dynamics of collective conflict: riots at the Bathurst 'bike races*. Sydney, Australia: The Law Book Company.
- Felson, M. (1987). Routine activities and crime prevention in the developing metropolis. *Criminology*, 25(4), 911-931.
- Getz, D. (1991). *Festivals, special events and tourism*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Goldstein, A. P. (1994). *The ecology of aggression*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Hall, C. M. (1989). Hallmark events and the planning process. In G. J. Syme, B. J. Shaw, D. M. Fenton, & W. S. Mueller (Eds.), *The planning and evaluation of hallmark events* (pp. 20-39). Aldershot, UK: Avebury.
- Heather, N., Wodak, A., Nadelmann, E. A., & O'Hare, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Psychoactive drugs and harm reduction: From faith to science*. London: Whurr.
- King, M., & Brearley, N. (1996). *Public order policing: Contemporary perspectives on strategy and tactics*. (Vol. 2). Leicester, England: Perpetuity Press.
- Mellor, N. (1995). Measures to reduce violence at major public events in Australia. in *Violence Contemporary Perspectives II*, Chappell, D. & Eggers, S. Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Mellor, N., & Veno, A. (1990). Strategies to minimise harm associated with drug taking and unsafe sex at the 1989 Australian motorcycle grand prix. *Drug Education Journal of Australia*, 4(3), 251-257.
- Mellor, N., & Veno, A. (1998). A study of management of 1997 New Year's Eve celebrations at Cowes and Inverloch. *Unpublished*.
- The Ombudsman Victoria. (1993). *The Ombudsman Victoria Report into alleged failure of state and local authorities to ensure adequate provision of public transport and environmental health standards at the "Guns N' Roses" concert at Calder Park raceway I February 1993* . Melbourne: The Ombudsman Victoria.
- Veno, A. (1991). *Crime prevention of New Year's Eve public disorder in Victoria: A preliminary study and strategy* (final draft report). Melbourne, Australia.

Guidance on managing health and safety issues when organising public events. After the event it is important that you review the manner in which health and safety was managed and take forward any lessons that have been learnt. Examples of issues that should be addressed include: who attended the event?