

INVESTIGATING CRIME PRECIPITATORS AND THE 'ENVIRONMENTAL BACKCLOTH' OF THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY: AN ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY PERSPECTIVE FROM AN AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL CITY.

Paul Cozens, Shane Greive
Curtin University, WA, Australia

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Abstract

In many Western, post-industrial cities of the 21st Century, entertainment districts play an increasingly significant place-making role and contribute much to their night-time economies. However, many of these cities are experiencing increased levels of crime and fear of crime within their alcohol-oriented entertainment districts.

This paper investigates crime and the night-time economy (NTE) associated with an entertainment district in an Australian capital city. It discusses the concept of the 'environmental backcloth' (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1993) to this area as important contextual background to some of the contemporary crime problems. The paper highlights examples of situational crime precipitators (Wortley, 2008) from observational research and detailed land-use and pedestrian surveys conducted in the entertainment district. Seen within the context of the 'environmental backcloth' these 'situations' and settings can create irritation, frustration and pressures and potentially prompt / trigger or provoke criminality in otherwise, law-abiding citizens.

The authors highlights the contribution that an environmental criminology perspective can provide to understanding the propensity for night-time entertainment districts to act as generators of and attractors for crime and anti-social behaviour. They set out a Scale Conscious Environmental Backcloth and Crime Precipitator Framework to assist in understanding crime and the NTE. The paper calls for more critical and detailed urban design studies and for 'criminogenic environments' to be taken more seriously within planning.

INTRODUCTION

Many cities have been promoting the night-time economy (NTE) and 'the 24 hour city' concept, in order to assist in revitalising their city centres (Hall, 2000; Castells, 2000; Chatterton, 2002; Hobbs *et al.*, 2000). However, as Schneider and Kitchen, observe (2002, p202) "so much night-time activity has been promoted that the police cannot cope with the sheer volume of lawlessness that is now happening in such areas".

In a paper presented at SOAC 2009, Cozens and Greive discussed crime and the governance of Perth's premier entertainment district of Northbridge. We introduced the concept of the 'environmental backcloth' (Brantingham and Brantingham (1993) as the wider social, cultural, legal, spatial and temporal dimensions of a place. This also includes the physical dimensions, as well as the populations located or transitory within that space. We also drew on the concept of 'crime precipitators' (Wortley, 2008) to focus on how the management and governance of the night time economy (NTE) could potentially foster or precipitate crime.

This approach has since been refined following peer review at the Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis Conference in Brisbane (Cozens, 2010) and the Deviancy Conference in York (Cozens, 2011). In this paper, we highlight a range of crime precipitators (Wortley, 2008) which exist at the macro, meso and micro, scales of analysis. The 'cone of resolution' is a geographical concept (Abler *et al.*, 1971, pp. 408-409; Bunge, 1966, pp.95-100) which recognises the need for the analysis of crime at different scales. Brantingham *et al.*, (1976, p264) observe how "this changes our perception of the where and what of the crime problem and noting the questions that can reasonably asked of the data at each level".

The costs of policing and servicing (e.g. transport, hospital and emergency) the NTE are undoubtedly significant and multi-agency approaches have been adopted in the UK since the early 2000s (e.g. Roberts, 2004; Roberts and Turner, 2005; Roberts and Eldridge, 2009; Newton and Hirschfield, 2009; Davies, 2010; Hadfield and Newton, 2010; Newton, 2011). However, such approaches have not yet reached Australia or WA and do not attempt to link with the concept of the 'environmental backcloth'.

Environmental criminology argues that the built environment, the placement of mass transit lines and the distribution and clustering of land-uses significantly shapes 'the pulse of human activity', including 'the pulse of crime' (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1993; 1998; Kinney *et al.*, 2008). It has been argued that planners have little knowledge of crime patterns and do not understand environmental criminology (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1998; Cozens, 2011). Accordingly, this analysis highlights the contribution that environmental criminology can provide in understanding crime and the NT. We argue that such perspectives need to be taken more seriously in the policy formulation, planning and urban design of Australian cities. The authors develop a Scale Conscious Environmental Backcloth and Crime Precipitator Framework to assist in this process.

SAME CRIME DATA – TWO DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

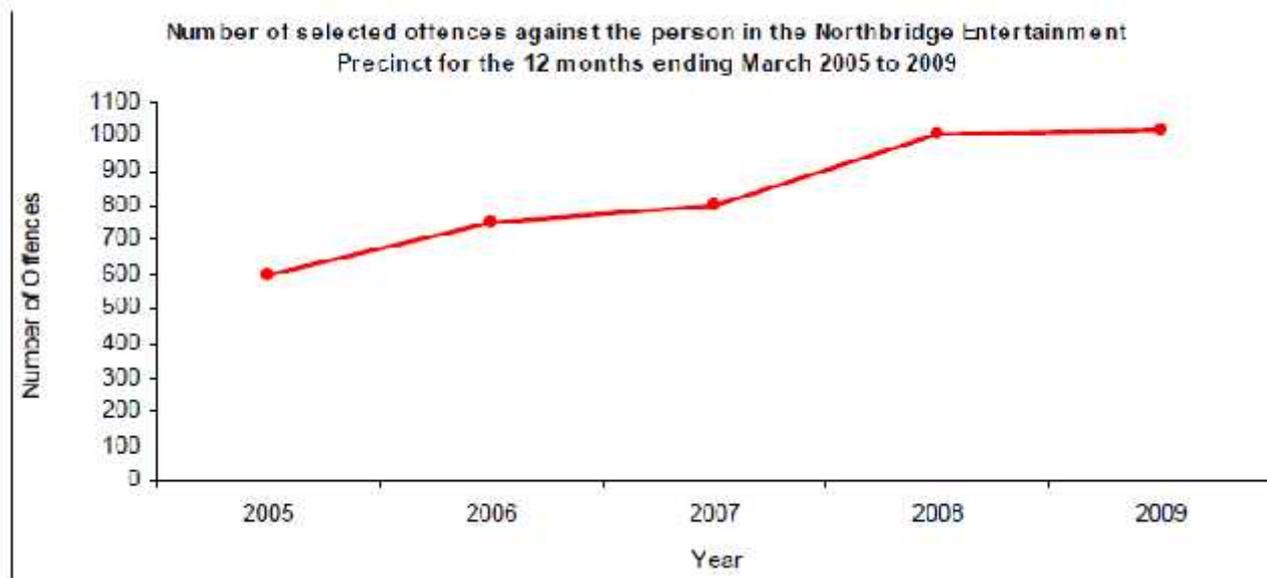
Northbridge is a small entertainment district (around 1km²) to the north of Perth's central business district. The resident population of Northbridge (6003) is currently 2,416 (ABS, 2006), but the population can increase to around 15,000 on a busy Friday or Saturday night. Northbridge is characterised by consecutive flushes of people arriving and exiting the area following specific activity patterns, including shopping (5-9pm), drinking and dining at restaurants (6-10pm) and drinking and dancing at hotel bars and nightclubs (12-6am).

Increasingly, Northbridge is portrayed and perceived as a violent place after dark (Busch, 2002; Spagnolo and Cox; 2007; Hughes and Thomson, 2009; Coakes Consulting, 2010) and the excessive consumption of alcohol (and drugs) is commonly cited as an explanatory factor. Intriguingly, two studies of the same data from the police's Alcohol Related Incident Forms¹ (ARIFs) arrive at different conclusions (see Hughes and Thomson, 2009; Coakes Consulting, 2010). The first report is by the WA Police. The second was commissioned by the Western Australian Night Clubs Association (WANA). As recent and local sources, these studies are briefly inspected in terms of what they analysed and the nature of their conclusions.

Recorded crime in Northbridge was examined over a 5 year period, from 2005 to 2009 (Hughes and Thomson, 2009) indicating a 71% increase in the number of selected offences against the person (see Figure 1). Their study highlighted a significant concentration of offences against the person (75%) between 08.00am Friday and 08.00am Sunday, with offences peaking between the hours of 10.00pm and 3.00am. What is not known, is how the crime rate per 1,000 users may have varied over the five-year period, since no baseline data on the number of people actually using Northbridge exists.

¹ The limitations associated with such data is recognised and place of last drink clearly ignores the issues of 'circuiting' and of 'pre-loading'.

Figure 1. Selected Offences against the Person in Northbridge



Source: Hughes and Thomson (2009, p14).

According to the Western Australian Police Report on crime in the Northbridge entertainment precinct the crime statistics for Northbridge are closely aligned with closing times of licensed venues (Hughes and Thomson, 2009). This is based on data collected from ARIFs. In this report, the crime, medical, and police resource statistics are presented in support of an argument for earlier closing times for licensed establishments.

Although the police report recognises the link between crime and poor transport options, it favours a reduction in licensing hours, rather than extending the operating hours of public transport. The authors acknowledge that transport option “have significant limitations for patrons when leaving a licensed venue, at the current extended closing time” (Hughes and Thompson, p34). The report concludes that winding back licensing hours to 2am would significantly reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and therefore reduce the drain on police and hospital resources. The report recommends the establishment of a formal precinct action plan, involving the City of Perth, East Perth Redevelopment Authority, WA Police, the Department of Racing Gaming and Liquor; and the Department of Health. This plan “should work towards a legislatively defined entertainment district” (Hughes and Thompson, 2009, p35). However, it is significant, that the Public Transport Authority are not mentioned. The area designated as the Northbridge Entertainment District, does not include the public transport hubs (see Figure 2).

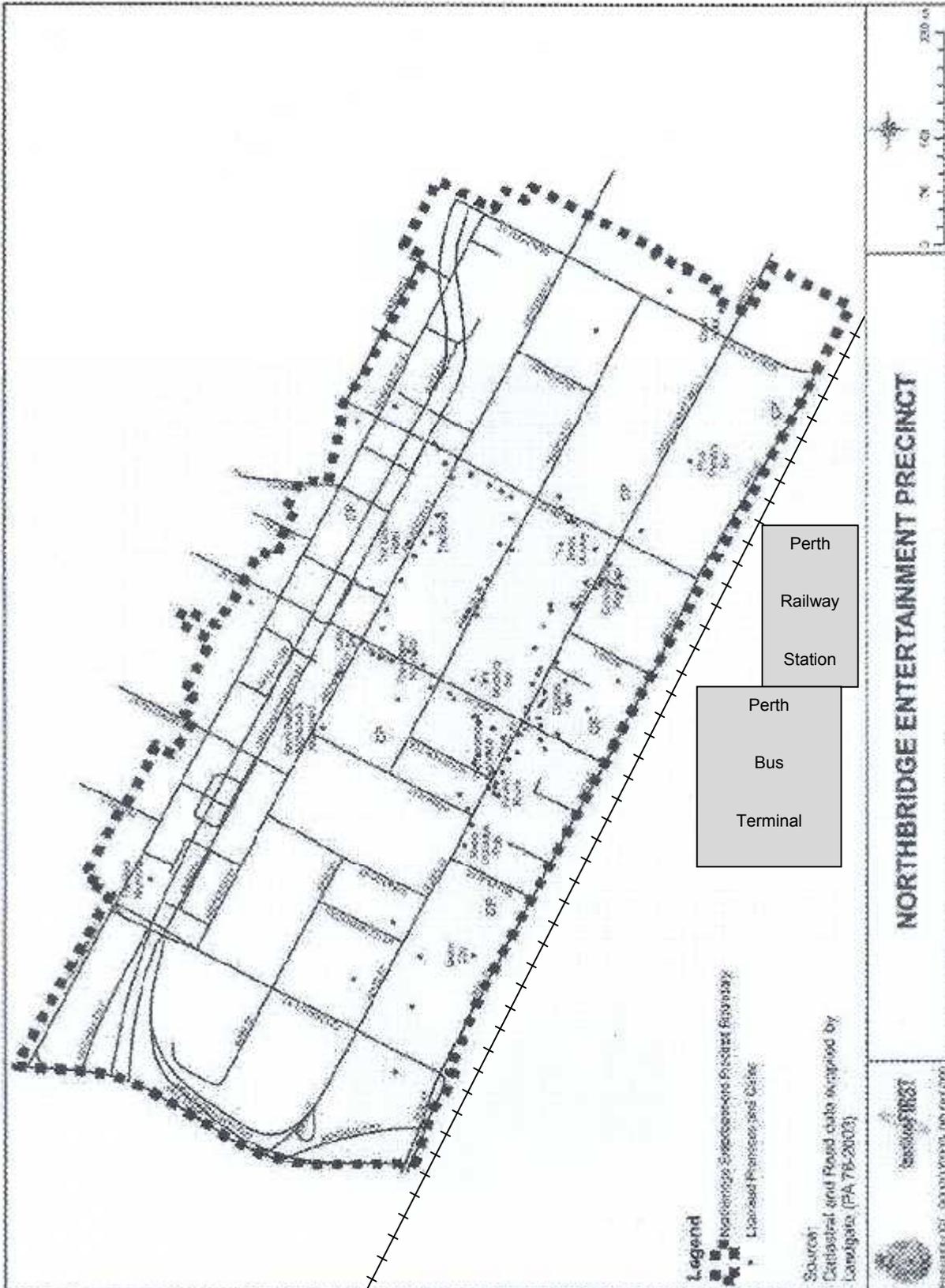
In contrast, the report for the Western Australian Nightclubs Association (WANA) analysed the same ARIF data and concluded that restricted licensing was not the answer. Their analysis highlighted how six venues were associated with 64% of alcohol-related crime. These six venues represent only 8.1% of all 79 licensed premises. WANA conclude “it may be more effective to work constructively with the venues that are associated with the majority of problems ... than to apply ‘across the board’ restrictions to entire categories of license” (Coakes Consulting, 2010, p5). The report notes that only 2.4% of incidents occurred between 5.00am and 6.00am. The WANA perspective recommends a targeted approach, which focuses on the six premises associated with the most incidents of crime. A brief comparison between the two reports is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. Contrasting Perspectives on Crime and the NTE

Organisation	Focus of analysis	Key recommendations
Western Australia Police (Hughes and Thompson, 2009)	Temporal concentration of incidents between 1.00 and 6.00am	Restrict opening times and trading of all licensed premises to 2.00am
Western Australian Nightclubs Association (Coakes Consulting, 2010)	Spatial concentration of incidents associated with 6 premises	Address venues on a case-by-case basis.

Source: Authors.

Figure 2. The Northbridge Entertainment Precinct (as Designated by WA Police).



Source: Adapted from Hughes and Thompson, 2009, p42.

Such perspectives, are largely predictable, but they are also arguable myopic. Tellingly, the area designated by the Police as within the ‘entertainment district boundary’ does not include the railway station or the bus terminal (see Figure 2), which effectively transports thousands of patrons into the area – but also, fails to remove them.

With little in the way of any integrated, multi-agency approach, responses to the problems of Northbridge have therefore commonly concentrated on specific crime issues and police strategies to combat them. However, it is argued that the problems of the NTE can be better understood by considering concepts from environmental criminology such as the ‘environmental backcloth’ (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1993) and crime precipitators (Wortley, 2008), and by investigating the issues at the macro, meso and micro scales of analysis.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY - CONCEPT DRIVEN RESEARCH

Environmental criminology is concerned with the temporal and spatial distribution of offences, offenders and victims – and how the behaviour of individuals are influenced by place-based factors. Specific types of land-uses are associated with more crime than others (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1998; Graham and Homel, 2008) and some can represent crime attractors, crime generators and crime detractors (see Cozens and Greive, 2009; Kinney *et al.*, 2008). Research into risky facilities also indicates that a small proportion (typically, 20%) of facilities are responsible for most (typically, 80%) of offences, including licensed premises (Sherman *et al.*, 1992; Eck *et al.*, 2007; Madensen and Eck, 2007).

A significant (though under-researched) concept to emerge from the field of environmental criminology is the ‘environmental backcloth’ (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993, p7), whereby, the environmental backcloth for studying criminal events “should have social, cultural, legal, spatial and temporal dimensions. This working backcloth would also explicitly include the physical infrastructure of buildings, roads, transit systems, land uses, design and architecture, as well as the people located within that physical infrastructure”. The concept is used within environmental criminology “to attach a label to the uncountable elements that surround and are part of an individual and that may be influenced by or influence his or her criminal behaviour” (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993, p7).

Brantingham and Brantingham (1993, p7) have argued that the “research using the idea of the backcloth has to be process-oriented, sensitive to decision processes and the ways in which people perceive the environment”. An exploratory paper on the ‘environmental backcloth’, crime and the NTE, was recently presented at the Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis Symposium in Brisbane, Australia (Cozens, 2010) and the Deviancy Conference in York, England (Cozens, 2011), which built upon previous work by Cozens and Greive (2009). The originators of the term commented that the ‘environmental backcloth’ concept had not been discussed in relation to the NTE and were highly supportive of the approach (Brantingham, 2010).

The strength of the environmental backcloth concept is that it offers a broad ‘catch all’ starting point for analysis of the spectrum of elements that may surround and influence or be influenced by an individual’s criminal behaviour. A weakness, however, is that the concept does not offer much in the way of direction in respect to where or how to look for these ‘unaccountable elements’ in the field. Wortley’s (2008) concept of crime precipitators is somewhat of an antidote in this regard. In his work, a range of situational precipitators for crime, are broken down into four categories of prompts, pressures, permissions and provocations associated with the immediate environment - which can potentially precipitate criminal behaviour, by ‘motivating’ the hitherto unmotivated. Identifying and understanding potential crime precipitators is the prime focus of this research.

In Cozens and Greive (2009) we discussed Wortley’s (2008) framework in some detail. The sixteen sub-categories of prompts, pressures, permissions and provocations are set out in Table 2. Wortley’s conceptual framework focused on the micro scale (e.g. the management and interiors of venues), while our empirical research highlighted meso scale crime precipitators associated with urban design and management issues linked with ineffective NTE governance.

Table 2. Situational Precipitators for Crime

Prompts	Pressures	Permissions	Provocations
Triggers	Conformity	Minimising the rule	Frustration
Signals	Obedience	Minimising responsibility	Crowding
Imitation	Compliance / defiance	Minimising consequences	Territoriality
Expectations	Anonymity	Minimising the victim	Environmental irritants

Source: Wortley (2008).

The refinement added here involves a more systematic and scale-conscious interrogation of the data, through the 'cone of resolution' (Abler *et al.*, 1971, pp. 408-409; Bunge, 1966, pp.95-100). This recognises that analysing crime at different scales alters the understanding as to how and why the crime problem exists. Accordingly, this research investigates crime in Northbridge by analysing aspects of the 'environmental backcloth' and highlighting how urban governance has created a range of crime precipitators at the macro, meso and micro scales of analysis.

We draw upon over a decade of observational research and detailed empirical land-use and pedestrian surveys relating to Northbridge entertainment district (e.g. Greive *et al.*, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2005; Gleeson, 2005; Holling *et al.*, 2006; Northbridge Land Use Surveys, 2002-2007; Taxi Rank Surveys 2005-8). In combination these reports, as well as the experience of actually collecting the data from the field, provide the foundation for this focus on the 'environmental backcloth' and crime precipitators in Northbridge. As will become clear, understanding the chronology of key events and regulatory overlays, and recognising their interrelated impacts also proved to be a critically important aspect of the analysis.

These empirical insights contribute to a developing appreciation of an 'environmental backcloth' for Northbridge. As Brantingham and Brantingham (1993, p22) have suggested "events transpire in an immediate site and situation that rests on or in a backcloth composed of uncountable relations between the physical, social, legal, cultural, economic and temporal environments functioning conjointly and holistically". Towards this end, we identify elements of the 'environmental backcloth' in Northbridge derived from the field work and observations outlined above and insights from key sources of research. This is presented from an environmental criminology perspective to consider a range of crime precipitators, which may have been facilitated by ineffective urban governance.

RESULTS

Tables 3, 4 and 5 describe key elements of the 'environmental backcloth'. The situational crime precipitators are identified at three different scales of analysis, and we compliment this with insights from the literature.

Table 3. The 'Environmental Backcloth – Macro-level Crime Precipitators

Description
<p>The large scale anonymous drinking venues in Perth that Landry (2007) described as 'drinking sheds', are characterised by mass crowds at peak times (10pm-3am). These higher crime risk venues are a legacy of past licensing practises. There are few other 'activities' or sources of entertainment on offer. They implicitly permit and prompt patrons into excessive drinking. Crowding acts to minimise the consequences and responsibility of those engaging in anti-social behaviour.</p>
<p>The number of licensed hotels in the Perth's suburbs has decreased over the past 30 years, with a corresponding increase in the concentration of licensed night entertainment venues in Northbridge (Ravi 2010). Compared with the past, patrons are pressured into higher travel times and financial costs to access the NTE. Options are limited to the concentration of high-risk venues in the entertainments districts. Similar problems have been identified in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne (Burke, 2010).</p>
<p>Prior to the 1987 drink driving legislation, citizens routinely drove into Northbridge and subsequently drove home inebriated. Random breathalysing and the introduction of the police 'Booze Buses', in the early 1990s, had a major impact. The focus of this new enforcement was often the entertainment districts, such as Northbridge (Prately, 1995) and many people lost their driving licenses and developed a criminal record.</p>
<p>The public transport system very effectively brings thousands of patrons into Northbridge but it also frustrates and deprives thousands of patrons of a safe journey home. The bus service curtails between 11:45pm-12:30am. Attempts to provide a night bus service failed but 41% of passengers used the service to avoid drink-driving (Gleeson, 2005). Years after the drink driving legislation was introduced, the trains extended their operating times from 12 pm until to 2am (Reardon, 1996).</p>
<p>By the early 1990s, there were regular media reports that taxi journeys originating from Northbridge generated assaults on taxi drivers in distant suburbs, provoked as drunken customers tried to evade the expensive fares. Taxi drivers responded by avoiding Northbridge, leaving the crowds exiting nightclubs stranded and frustrated on the streets for hours. The industry also responded by installing cameras in every taxi. In 1995, the after-hours maxi taxi service was introduced to help clear the streets by carrying up to ten passengers, and substantially reducing the cost for each.</p>
<p>A further complication with the taxi service arose from now the infamous Claremont murders, which involved the abduction of three young women exiting licensed venues in Claremont late at night. For a time (1996-97), media and police suspicions implicated taxi driver involvement in the murders. It was in response to these events, that all taxis and patrons have since been compelled to use the designated taxi ranks in the Northbridge, Fremantle, and Claremont night entertainment districts, but not in other areas of the city.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Overview of the Macro-level Crime Precipitators</p> <p>At this scale of analysis the Northbridge entertainment district is of itself a source of frustration and provocation and could be defined as a 'capsule environment' (Graham and Homel, 2008) or even a 'zone of entrapment'. It is a contained and concentrated environment, which is easy to access but difficult to leave. From this perspective, the anti social behavior and crime associated with Northbridge can be understood as a displacement of road related crime and trauma that was abruptly reduced by the enforcement of the drink driving legislation. Given that the enforcement of the drink driving legislation preceded any public policy attempt to facilitate and enable alternative transport options, the impact and consequences of this displacement was undoubtedly intensified.</p>

Table 4. Meso-level Crime Precipitators

Description
The Northbridge entertainment district is located to the north of the railway line and is somewhat isolated from the retail and CBD districts of Perth and the bus interchange. The pedestrian studies established that there were no safe walking routes at night between the CBD and Northbridge, and that the active area begins to shrink and intensify from 10pm. Active streets and walking routes on the way in, become dark and empty on the way out.
The number of businesses open in the precinct declines from over 400 establishments in the day, down to approximately 130 by 8pm. Most (80) of these are restaurants, cafes and function centres, most of which are licensed to sell alcohol with food. By 10pm, most of the food venues have closed, implicitly signalling the exodus of a more diverse and older crowd, and rising dominance a younger male cohort focused on alcohol. The male to female ratio shifts from 1:1 at 8pm to 10:1 after 10.00pm
There are 16 'low risk' hotels (potentially open until 2.00am) and 11 'high-risk' nightclubs, potentially open until 6 am (Stockwell <i>et al.</i> , 1992). The majority of these 'high-risk' venues in Northbridge are spatially concentrated located on four main streets, inducing crowding and the potential for conflicts, particularly at peak operating and closing times.
The cluster of large licensed premises closes in waves from 1am (Hotels) 2am (Taverns), and 3-6am (Nightclubs). Once the closing hour is reached, the licensing regulation requires rapid exit procedures, which results in the expelling of waves of 2000-4000 intoxicated young adults (predominantly males) onto the streets at the same time. According to Bromley and Nelson (2002), High levels of assault and antisocial behaviour occur when venues close and distribute large numbers people onto the streets who then have to compete for the limited transport, food and toilet options.
With barely a dozen restaurants and take-away outlets to service the late night crowds, the venues themselves can become potential pressure points for irritated patrons. Itinerant food vendors are not permitted in the City, despite the flexibility to service the need for food and the potential to offer islands of defensible space.
All taxi drivers and the patrons are required to use two taxi ranks. These are poorly designed, lack sufficient signage and information for customers and the whole process tends to confuse and irritate visitors and tourists (Gleeson, 2005). The taxi ranks are pressure points associated with anti-social behavior and violence. Extra marshals, security guards, and police have been employed to manage the taxi ranks, which are sites of multiple points of provocation arising from an irritating cocktail of compromised territoriality, obedience, and compliance issues.
The number of patrons waiting in the taxi rank can be as high as 320 people around 3.00am on a Saturday morning. Patrons living in distant Perth suburbs can expect taxi fares of up to \$100 or more. The time, frustration and expense involved act as a significant set of environmental irritants and barriers. In effect, the younger and poorer of the night-time patrons are pressured into staying in Northbridge later than they otherwise would choose.
Interviews indicate that for some patrons, the expected difficulties getting home serves as a permission to continue to revel in the later-operating nightclubs. Among those who are refused entrance to night clubs, some will try to walk home, while others will loiter around Northbridge until the morning train and buses depart at 6am. Such coping strategies heighten the risk of crime, by bringing together potential victims and perpetrators in confused and poorly managed spaces.
Frustrated and inebriated young adults strolling aimlessly around Northbridge are more likely to enter urban spaces, which they would not normally visit. This can increase opportunities and motivations for graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. The predominance of young males arguably creates a group dynamic, which in the absence of informal censure by other groups, can operate to justify and permit anti-social behaviour.
<p style="text-align: center;">Overview of the Meso-level Crime Precipitators</p> <p>The international research tends to conclude that public safety, crime and violence issues at night generally arise from two sets of conditions; people milling around impatiently in crowds; and empty dark spaces devoid of people and movement. From our observations in Northbridge, government agencies are almost always implicated in creating and fostering such conditions, explicitly and implicitly through the layers of poorly integrated regulation and servicing of the NTE. This level of analysis mostly involves the public realm, and where there is an interface with private operators (taxis, security services, food and drinking venues), it tends to be subject to intense regulatory scrutiny, licensing and enforcement. Accordingly, the elements of the environmental backcloth that have been identified as crime precipitators, are the largely the outcome government policy and implementation rather than the decisions of individuals or corporate agents.</p>

Table 5. Micro-Level Crime Precipitators.

Description
Six of the 14 high-risk venues in Northbridge generate the majority of the crime incidents, and they are generally the largest venues in the precinct (Coakes Consulting, 2010). Most are legitimate businesses, but some have links to organised crime. The difference in the ownership and management pedigree can permeate the venues and the patrons, establishing an expectation for trouble or not depending upon the reputation. The perception and 'image' of specific bars can encourage a certain type of patron and facilitate opportunities for crime (Madensen and Eck, 2008; Graham and Homel, 2008).
The 'false queues' outside some venues, which are 'managed' to create the impression of exclusivity, can create unnecessary crowding and potential conflicts (Graham and Homel, 2008), as can aggressive security staff.
Many bar/clubs demand identification, and some take photographs and the fingerprints of patrons before entry is permitted. This can frustrate patrons and exclude many individuals, potentially precipitating crime inside or outside the venue.
The layout of the bar can create pressure points, particularly where crowding and understaffing create long frustrating waits for service can generate frustration and diminish the sense of responsibility and the consequences among the patrons, and serves to permit and provoke crime (Madensen and Eck, 2008; Graham and Homel, 2008).
Bar theme and a lack of activities and entertainment can facilitate opportunities for crime (Madensen and Eck, 2008; Graham and Homel, 2008). Venues that are music focused and themed nights generate less crime, than those where drinking is the primary focus. Moreover, it appears that what could be taken as a provocation in one type of venue may be interpreted as a joke in another, and this mood is created by management and the difference is palpable and pervasive.
The rapid closure procedures in operation at licensed venues can also act to restrict the use of toilets by patrons and can prompt and permit urination in public as the only viable option, which has resulted in numerous arrests and raised the potential for conflict.
Ironically, the demolition of public toilets in the area, which followed complaints about drug activity and gay beats in the past, has nowadays acted in combination with spikes in pedestrian volumes and delays with transport to both 'permit' and 'prompt' a notable surge in public urination offences, and enough for the Police to publicly promise to take action.
Overview of the Micro-level Crime Precipitators
The micro interior environments of the venues and how they interface with the public realm, are all highly regulated, with controls, standards, licenses, and inspections applied to manage the crowds and the operators. In WA, all hospitality and security staff have mandated training requirements. As well as these layers of government regulation, the management in each venue have additional rules for the patrons and the staff to follow, and through a raft of management practises, they largely define and groom the mood of the venue. Despite this intensity of regulation, the environments are still dysfunctional in terms of service delivery and public safety. Despite this blanket of State Government regulation, some venues generate more crime than others. This appears to be linked to the situational crime precipitators that could be identifiable at this level of analysis. The police have not been able to discern the qualitative differences between venues and managed practises even though the crime statistics do suggest this to be the case (Coakes Consulting, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the UK, a plethora of examples exist whereby multiple agencies are working collaboratively on issues associated with NTE (e.g. Newton, 2007; Newton and Hirschfield, 2009; Home Office, 2008; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2009; Home Office, 2010; Newton, 2011) and that multi-agency working is a key element underpinning 'best practice' (Home Office, 2008; Newton, 2007). The relevance of ideas from environmental criminology are also highlighted as increasingly important (Hadfield *et al.*, 2009).

In WA, such multi-agency collaboration is clearly not evident, and we suggest that this may be due to the particularly fragmented nature of urban governance in WA, and Australian cities in general. Compared with UK with only two levels of government, local government in Australia is complex – with a three tier Federal, State, and Local Government structure (Dollery, Chaise and Johnson 2008). All land and most urban oriented functions are a prerogative of the State Government. In the UK, local government has the dominant role in delivering urban services to populations in order of 250,000-300,000.

In the USA, which also has a three-tiered federation, local government is recognised under the constitution, but this is not the case in Australia. In large US cities, the highly centralised mayoral-led administrations also have significantly more integrated authority than in Australia. The City of Brisbane (population 898,500),

which includes much of metropolitan Brisbane has the greatest capacity to integrate service delivery, while the City of Perth has the arguably the least. The City of Perth has a minor role in managing the NTE in Northbridge. Clearly, any attempt towards coordinating a 'whole of government' response to the challenges of the night time economy in Northbridge, is presented with the extra challenge of starting with a particularly fragmented form of urban governance relative to the task, and in comparison with other jurisdictions.

From our surveys and observations, it appears that government has responded to single issues. These include; road trauma and drink driving, taxi violence, abductions, stranded patrons, public urination and other nebulously defined social misbehaviors. Responses have not been part of any coordinated approach to managing and facilitating a robust NTE. For the past 10-15 years the policy and regulatory responses related service and infrastructure provision have been in 'catch-up' mode in respect to the fallout from the drink driving legislation and enforcement introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

From our review of the crime statistics and findings presented in the police report (Hughes and Thomson, 2009) and the WANA report (Coakes Consulting, 2010) it appears that the focus of these analyses does not consider the dimensions of the environmental backcloth. This may provide a different conclusion, to closing licensed venues early or targeting premises, which represent crime hotspots. If the objective of situational crime prevention is to create unfavourable circumstances for crime (Clarke, 2008) the authors suggest that the governance of Northbridge has actually created favourable conditions for crime and precipitated an unknown proportion of crimes. These may also be considered as negative 'externalities' of urban governance where the costs are borne by others (Roman and Farrell, 2002).

Northbridge is arguably a 'capsule environment' (Graham and Homel, 2008) or even a 'zone of entrapment' (Cozens and Greive, 2009) after 2pm. The crime precipitators identified in the data analysis and narrative, operate at the metropolitan scale (macro), down to the street level (meso) and venue context (micro). Our analysis suggests that in different ways, regulatory initiatives tend to generate conditions where people are either forced into crowded poorly-designed and serviced areas, or left stranded in dark vacuous spaces between such areas and home.

In order to understand and better manage the NTE, a more critical analysis of what is transpiring is certainly required (Graham and Homel, 2008) and this lack of critical research in planning (Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000) is patently evident in relation to crime and the NTE.

The strength of the environmental backcloth concept is that it was that able to some degree to anticipate and usefully reframe the findings from two very different crime-focused studies. The broader contextual place-based framework also has implications for broader range of physical and social planning responses, across a wider range of less than integrated government and private sector institutions that regulate and service the NTE. By highlighting critical points of integration failure, the crime precipitator perspective recasts the incidence of crime in entertainment precincts, as less a prerogative of people with criminal intent, and more a reflection place mismanagement underpinned by a less than comprehensive understanding of these highly regulated contexts. Three key recommendations emerge from this research;

- To redefine the boundary of Northbridge entertainment district. The existing police definition illustrated in Figure 2 fails to include vital public transport hubs. Significantly, the current definition does not consider the meso / macro scale of analysis.
- To conduct a scoping exercise to highlight a broader range of stakeholders.
- To critically inspect existing crime data and collaboratively share data across agencies responsible for the design, management and governance of the NTE.

Governance and regulations in WA represent "rules [that] have not been designed with an urban outcome, such as creating a great neighbourhood or city" (Landry, 2007, p33). In order to engage with the crime issues associated with Northbridge, stakeholders need to look more critically and systematically at both the problem(s) and the governance, which currently exists to manage it. The authors argue that instead of regulating against the NTE that we *do not want*, we should be planning, designing and governing for the NTE we *do want*.

This paper has highlighted how an environmental criminology perspective can contribute to understanding crime and the NTE of Australian cities. The authors have developed this perspective into a framework, which offers an important lens for interpreting crime statistics. The Scale Conscious Environmental Backcloth and Crime Precipitator Framework is more directly related to the realms of public policy reaches across a broader range of institutional responsibilities. This framework usefully shifts the focus beyond the immediate crime incident, involving perpetrators and victims. It considers how, at different scales of analysis, the poorly integrated servicing and regulation of the NTE has conspired to precipitate crime. In this sense, the framework offers a useful conceptual tool for the new cadre of NTE managers that are beginning to be appointed in Australian cities.

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