Communicating Security:
local perceptions of mega-event policing
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Introduction

Security and policing has become crucial to the hosting of mega sporting events such as the Olympics or Commonwealth Games . The budgets for such events often run into hundreds of millions of pounds and utilise a wide range of security and risk management strategies . The overall aim is to ensure a safe and secure games for athletes, spectators and members of the public. However...
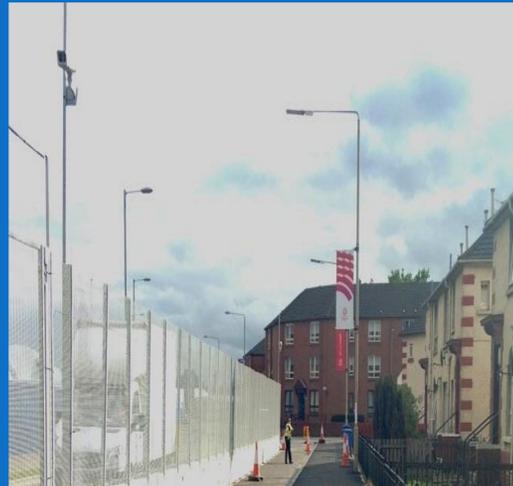
The manifestation of security in the built environment can "transmit powerful conflicting transactions and messages, both intentionally and unintentionally, eliciting a range of subjective emotional responses." (Coaffee, O'Hare & Hawkesworth 2009:50)

Research problem

The deployment of security for Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games (G2014) in the east end community of Dalmarnock, presents an opportunity to look at how aspects of the security operation, including policing, is perceived by local residents who encounter it within the context of their everyday environment.

Policing sends out many different 'control signals' (Innes 2014) - for example, reassurance and deterrence. Whether such signals are received as positive or negative depends on a) how policing is conducted and b) how it is perceived.

Research questions

1. Which factors influence whether policing at G2014 is perceived as positive or negative?
2. What lessons made could help contribute to a positive policing 'security legacy'?

Decreasing crime	Strong social cohesion and informal social control
Dalmarnock Profile	
Low fear of crime	Minimal police/community interaction and engagement
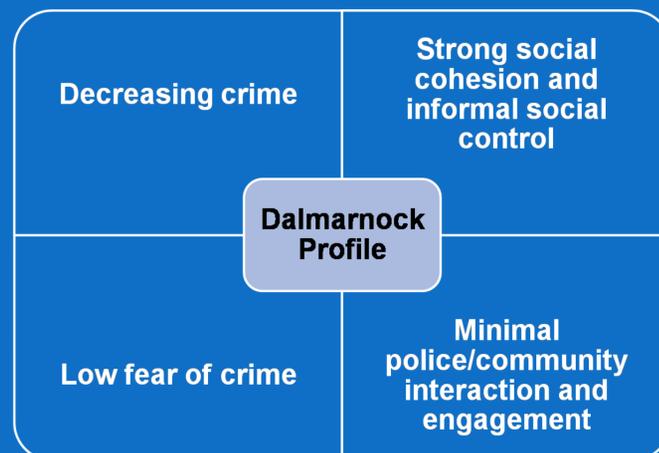
Qualitative methods

• In depth, episodic interviews with 40 local residents of Dalmarnock
• 10 semi structured interviews with key personnel involved in security planning for G2014
• Unstructured observations within study area before, during and after games

Factors influencing transmission of signals

• **Police presence 'doseage'**
• **Type of patrolling** e.g. idle patrolling or guns viewed negatively
• **Personal engagement and interaction**
• **Friendly games 'attitude'**
• **Dissemination of knowledge**

Factors influencing interpretation of signals

• **Individual characteristics** – e.g. age, gender.
• **Pre-existing perceptions of vulnerability to risk/crime**
• **First hand and second hand (non) experience of negative encounters**
• **How police are understood within wider socio-cultural context** - e.g. whose interests they represent and the connotations associated with their presence

Recommendations

Empirical findings affirm aspects of Ian Loader's (2006) theorisations on policing, recognition and belonging.
• **Feeling safe and secure is not directly related to (wide but shallow) things like crime, physical security or policing.** Community policing or 'ambient policing' can be pervasive, intrusive and furthermore, the connection between visual or symbolic signs of control and reassurance cannot be taken for granted.
• **Security and policing and the way that it is conducted (communicated), sends signals about peoples position in society** - Police are both '*minders and reminders of community*.' (Walker 2002: 315). As such, **Policing should seek to nurture the ontological aspects of security** – making people feel like they belong and are at ease in their everyday environment. Building trust through recognition of power relations, different minority views, democratic rights of locals.
• **Policing should reaffirm the idea that public participation is important -** to conceive of policing and security as a collective project (Loader & Walker 2003).

References
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