Public Order Policing and Political Protest

**Researchers: Dr Hugo Gorringe & Dr Michael Rosie**University of Edinburgh  
  
            [**Personal profile of Hugo Gorringe**](https://web.archive.org/web/20130704125823/http:/www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/sociology/gorringe_hugo)  
            [**Personal profile of Michael Rosie**](https://web.archive.org/web/20130704125823/http:/www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/sociology/rosie_michael)  
  
**Summary:**

Drs Gorringe and Rosie have undertaken a range of empirical projects in relation to the policing of various, predominantly protest-related, events. In 2005, they researched protest and protest policing surrounding the Gleneagles G8, a project which fed into five peer reviewed journal articles and several presentations. Subsequently they have analysed media coverage of the G20 in London and (with Dr Clifford Stott) the 2010 student occupation of Millbank. They have also carried out observational research into protests surrounding the Nato Parliamentary Assembly, November 2009, Climate Camp, July 2010 and the policing of the Papal Visit to Glasgow, September 2010. Findings from these are currently being written up or are under review. A non-academic report on the Papal Visit was submitted to Strathclyde Police in October 2010.

Gorringe and Rosie, with David Waddington (Sheffield Hallam), currently have an ESRC application under review to look at post-G20 approaches to public order training in terms of both training and public order policing.

**Key findings from the research:**

Gorringe and Rosie's research has underlined the ways in which police strategies play a key role in crowd dynamics, and that the tactics adopted can significantly impact upon how an event pans out. Such local variables are critical to the experience of 'global protest' and highlight the pre-conceptions and assumptions (frames) underpinning police operations. 'Negotiated management' of protest works best when both sides are committed to negotiation; police stereotyping of 'problem crowds' and/or protestor intransigence can lead to the escalation of any given event. The research illustrates the way in which public order police officers are trained to expect and respond to 'trouble' rather than with the flexibility and understanding to de-escalate situations. It also shows the role of media in raising fears and expectations of violence in the run up to an event and in stereotyping the 'dangerous' protestor and their supposed threat to even the most uncontroversial of crowd events .

**Impact:**

Findings from these research projects have been presented to a range of academic and practitioner audiences. In 2009 a debrief was held with the liaison police deployed at the Nato assembly protests. A subsequently workshop discussed current trends in public order policing and explored the lessons to be learned from existing research and policing experience. There were 55 delegates from a range of organisations, including seven of Scotland's eight police forces, the British Transport Police, the Scottish Police College and nine UK universities. Over the course of the day there were presentations from police officers and academics generating lively discussion on these issues and how best to implement the lessons learned.

**Publications:** To view details of Gorringe and Rosie's publications in this area see: [**http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/current\_research/public\_order,\_protest\_and\_policing**](https://web.archive.org/web/20130704125823/http:/www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/current_research/public_order,_protest_and_policing)