

Ongoing problems with vandalism criminology essay



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The topic I am going to address in this study is the ongoing problems with vandalism in everyday environments and public transport services in particular. The problem I am trying to confront is how vandalism affects our experience when we travel and how new implications of design in public transport may help to prevent vandalism. I will explore the factors that vandalism involves such as criminal damage to public property, as well as graffiti, loud noise and even effects of drunken behaviour. In able to highlight how aspects of the public transport sector are affect by the causes of vandalism, we must firstly break down the reasoning behind vandalism and why people conform to it. Hopefully by addressing each component of the study, it will be possible to give an outline of the main problems with vandalism and possible ways of dealing with the main issues when it comes to travelling by public transport. This study will involve exploring the aspects of why people vandalise, their motives and whether these actions towards services in the public transport industry are avoidable using careful and purposeful design.

Vandalism prevention is not solely a matter of good design and technical systems, but also of enlightened management of buildings, urban facilities and spaces. (CIRIA, 1994, p. 1)

Rationale

In order to propose a series of solutions to reducing the problems of vandalism, it is important to also consider the environments and hotspots of where vandalism commonly occurs. By increasing the awareness of these locations, it could hopefully allow us to implement an ideal environment for public transport to operate safely without much risk of vandalism arising. I

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will then explore theories and current systems that are up and running around the world aimed at reducing or even preventing acts of vandalism.

I will explore the reasoning behind the opportunity of reduction as previously stated in an earlier section of this thesis. I will also use examples of anti-vandalism programmes as illustration, reviewing the outcomes and problems with each system and depicting the main factors that have an affect on the problem in hand. By doing this, it could assist in thinking through the impact and potential use of various approaches to reducing the risk of vandalism. In considering how to deal with a specific problem of vandalism, it is important to recognise that what works in one situation, may not always work in another. When it comes to selecting measures, considerable thought needs to be given to the mechanism that it is hoped to trigger and how far the context is likely to either help or hinder the operation of that individual mechanism.

Every section of society is involved in reducing the senseless damage and destruction of the built environment. (CIRIA, 1994, p. 1)

Once I have divulged in the aspects surrounding the issues of vandalism, I will move onto looking into the various types of transport systems in use around the globe and try to identify which areas seem to work and how the operation is funded and run. I will then delve into the design element of public transport vehicles and predict changes to reduce vandalism through careful research and past case studies. This will involve looking at the visual appearance of vehicles such as busses, trains and taxis, considering the style and modernization of the design. I will also look into the idea of new

materials and design strategies being furthered towards tackling the risk of vandalism.

My initial intentions of this thesis are to identify some particular past experiences where a regular journey by public transport has been affected by the outcome of vandalism. This could involve situations where the experience of travel may have been jeopardized by the effects of vandalism, such as damaged vehicles that may have become offensive and sometimes dangerous for people to use.

Methodology

My own primary investigation will be to evaluate existing schemes in various cities such as Shanghai, London, New York and Rotterdam in able to review the affect they have on public transport and how effectively these systems run. I will study these major cities by visiting them in turn to observe the transportation systems that are in use as well as the scale of vandalism. I will document my findings, backed up as written notes and photos. I will also try to find out how they are dealing with the issues and of any schemes they have in place to tackle the everyday threat of vandalism. I will gather further information from books, case study reports carried out by police investigation groups and local journalists as well as design companies looking to provide new ideas to tackling everyday issues with vandalism. The books I will mainly use will be centred on vandalism cases and problems, detailing the areas where it most commonly occurs.

The first book that I used is Dealing With Vandalism - A guide to the control of vandalism by CIRIA, 1994. This book outlines the motives behind

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vandalism and explores the elements of an environment which draws offenders to damage and graffiti. It gives examples of cases of vandalism in past events to assist the reader with understanding why people vandalize. It presents design principles and strategies, whilst taking into account the problems with affecting an urban environment and considering alternative methods.

The second book I used was a police research report called Preventing Vandalism, What Works? by Mary Barker & Cressida Bridgeman, 1994. I found this book particularly relevant to my research topic as it contained information about approaches to combating vandalism that are in place in other countries outside the UK. I consider this to be vital if I am going to find a potential solution to reducing the level of vandalism to public vandalism in Britain. This book also delves into the impact of putting theory into practise and devising strategies for preventative action and successful implementation.

The third book that I used for my dissertation is New Transport Architecture by Will Jones, 2006. The book is split up into four sections; air, road, water and rail, all detailing architectural structures and environments of beauty and careful design. Most constructs in the book are of such marvel and elegance that they are nearly all, in themselves, vandal proof. The book highlights how each building has been designed and produced, including the materials it was made from and how it was originally constructed. I feel this book will be of major importance to get an idea of how design can influence the mood and affect that it has on people around it and of those who use it.

All of the books I have just stated I will reference where necessary to follow up any argument or statement that I make during this study.

After researching using the various books that I just stated, I found a useful DVD based on the costing of rail companies called The Money Program: Jarvis - Trouble on the Tracks, 2004. Jarvis are a highly controversial rail company based in Britain. I decided to use this to explore the problems of unsuccessful transportation services and discover the major factors that result in its failure.

I will be looking out for good use of design to solve everyday issues, taking into account the funding and budget that is available to implement that transport service as well as the desirability and location. I hope to explore that plan enough to see how each anti-vandalism scheme is working and whether the risk has lowered because of it. By looking at other anti-vandalism schemes and smart design in major cities, it could be possible to identify which areas are affected most and for what reasons. I propose to target specific places with dramatic schemes in place, where dealing with problems with vandalism is a high priority. I plan to do this because I feel that by focusing on high demand areas, I hope to get a clearer idea of how the problem is being address and dealt with.

There is a connection between design and behaviour, and the users' sense of pride in the object or facility. (CIRIA, 1994, p. 2)

Main Body

The definition of vandalism is not always clear in common usage. Definitions can often vary depending on the context of the act where in some cases, <https://assignbuster.com/ongoing-problems-with-vandalism-criminology-essay/>

almost indescribable due to the strange nature and sometimes the level of damage. In dealing with these definitional problems, one approach that has been radicalised has been to focus predominantly on the motives. As a framework for understanding vandalism, Cohen's typology has categorized vandalism in six ways, as acquisitive; tactical; ideological; vindictive; play, or malicious (Cohen, 1973). Although these main classifications were first produced back in 1973, the common view is that they still have not been improved on. It remains nevertheless problematic to incorporate the motivational aspect into the definition of vandalism itself. Take for example a broken window, it is impossible to tell just by looking at it whether it was broken due to vandalism and intent to break it or that it just happened accidentally in the course of play. Any classification linked with accidental damage has been removed from the subject of motivational vandalism. In order to devise an effective preventative strategy, a precise definition of the particular problem is always essential. This should take into account the circumstances where the behaviour occurs as well as the range of potential motivations. This will be required to recognise that the multi-faced nature of vandalism may require different measures to address different aspects of the problem on certain levels. In conclusion to this, the financial costs of repairing vandalism as well as the human costs of inconvenience and annoyance have suffered majorly as a consequence. This is enough to justify putting effort into finding effective ways of reducing its incidence and prevalence. Although the act of vandalism may contribute to fear and anxiety and sometimes have links with the general decline of an area that people live in, there is no true reason to suggest that vandalism is a sign of overall rising crime and declining morals.

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“ As an estimate, the annual cost of removing graffiti on our metro service is more than £400, 000.” (Nexus, Passenger Transport Executives, Tyne & Wear)

Travel, is only just now becoming a vastly emotive subject. Today, opinions are starting to be raised in both our support and also our ability to go faster and faster due to the growing change in transport in global society. The human race is driven by a compulsion to further itself in all aspects of life, travel and therefore transportation is unlikely to be left behind.

When people choose to travel by public transport, they are influenced by a variety of factors that they can make a choice or decision about: time, cost, access and the frequency of travel options in accordance with their daily schedule. But personal security is another important factor that people will consider. In addition, crime and the fear that goes with it can be the most dissuasive of all. Considering the amount of journeys made on public transport in the UK, close to six billion are made by bus, coach or rail each year. However, actual incidences of crime happening to the passengers are extremely rare. This result is because, for many people, their perception of crime on public transport can have as great an impact on travel habits as an actual experience. Likewise, for more vulnerable members of society or someone who has been affected by such an incident in the past, it can dissuade them from travelling via public transport altogether.

A well-designed object encourages the user to identify with its uses and thus informally to supervise its surroundings. (CIRIA, 1994, p. 2)

Concern for a person's personal sense of security is not always necessarily confined to the time spent on board the train or bus, which people often consider to be the safest part of their journey. Instead, it could be the apprehension felt when waiting at a bus stop or station platform, the environment that surround them or reservations about hiring transport vehicles such as taxis or minicabs. The Department for Transport are currently trying to establish help points, clear signage and improved lighting conditions around stations and bus stops in an attempt to improve the feel of public security, especially in unfamiliar locations.

As levels of vandalism are increasing on a day-to-day basis there becomes more and more of a need to bring in new crime prevention schemes that tackles the current problem in hand. Therefore I will review the effectiveness of new methods that have been set up to prevent vandalism. Commonly today, most approaches to identifying the problem and controlling vandalism are new educational subjects, social programmes, new laws to the criminal justice system and opportunity reduction. Of these four main approaches, I will mainly focus on the opportunity reduction element as I will identify design floors and changes that reduce the chances and risks of vandalism. I will also try to discover past systems that have failed and the reasoning behind why they have been unsuccessful.

I contacted the British Transport Police (BTP), for further information regarding incidences of vandalism in the UK. The BTP employ specialist crime reduction teams that concentrate on fighting the offences of vandals. Their role is to help rail operators implement crime reduction strategies,

including at the design stage. They managed to get back to me with two reports on graffiti and route crime as well as a future report plan for 2010-11.

Designing with vandalism in mind must not be allowed to produce severe objects or an outdoor urban environment lacking grace and delight. (CIRIA, 1994, p. 2)

In the first report, the BTP consider graffiti as criminal damage and that its artistic merits are completely irrelevant. They see graffiti as pollution as it commonly involves a group of people imposing themselves on others, similar to when people play music too loud. They also believe that when people see graffiti around stations and trains, it gives the impression that the vandals are in control, due to the rebellious nature and not the police or the railway management companies. Knowing that graffiti is shown around stations gives the idea that the environment is either overrun or out of control and due to the fear of being attacked, then people may not chose to travel. Also, if the desirability of the area drops, possibly due to connections with drug problems, drinking, fighting or begging, then the fear of crime increases. The BTP see graffiti as a green issue and that is posed as a direct attack on the environment. This can lead to passengers that have no other option but to travel, left with a poor experience or distrust in the service they are travelling with. Danger is often considered as a thrill for the majority of vandals, so therefore passenger and staff safety is always an issue for concern. A typical vandal will search for somewhere daring and brave and usually high up to "tag" an area with graffiti, putting themselves and others in danger. Commonly these are places such as bridges, train tunnels or railway sidings. I feel that a way to avoid this would be to design the station

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platforms so that areas that would be desirable to vandals and graffiti artists would be out of their boundaries and therefore there would be no possible chance of vandalism. In the other hand, a simple change of materials or paints could allow graffiti to be washed away with water or by rain. However, the costs of cleaning up all of the graffiti around railways can be enormous and can very rarely be eradicated with immediate effect. This problem will usually leave permanent scars on the walls and surroundings of railways.

In some cases, vandalism can be very dangerous to the safety of public transport passengers. If a vandal were to graffiti over a vital signal or communication equipment, it could obstruct the view or decisions of train drivers, putting everybody on board and around it at risk. Another concern would be if someone threw a stone off a bridge or a siding at a moving train, then the impact of the hard object could be lethal and easily break through glass windows. Some cases of extreme vandalism cannot be avoid and is down to chance, but this scale of offence is very rare.

Don't leave "broken windows" (bad designs, wrong decisions, or poor code) unrepaired. Fix each one as soon as it is discovered or the problem will occur again and again. (James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, 1982)

There have been a wide number of schemes in the past exclusively negotiated to combat the threat of vandalism. However, it comes to mind that many of the schemes have failed as they lack rigorous evaluation of the problem often leaving the main practitioner with an extensive choice of measures, but little guidance as to their effectiveness or the reasons for success or failure.

Currently, many attempts have been made to prevent the behaviour of vandalism by educating people, particularly young people who are main offenders, about its nature and consequences. Though education has a broad meaning and can cover the whole of a person's social learning and training from birth.

Vandalism and graffiti strongly affect people's perception of crime and their personal security. They give the impression that a certain area is unmanaged and potentially out of control.

" No urban area will prosper unless it attracts those who can choose to live wherever they wish." - Jonathon Barnett

Across the Netherlands, there is only one major network rail company which is the NS (Nederlands Spoorwegen). It runs from Amsterdam to all major towns and cities across the Netherlands and is also linked at most stations with the smaller Metro tram system. I was able to see that it was a system that had been around since the 60's and had been restored every few years to keep it looking modern and maintained. Over many years of extensive development and maintenance, it was clear that there were few signs of any vandalism towards the trains or major stations. This was most likely because it had a history and was unique to only the Netherlands and no other country, a network that people could recognise as traditional and of great pride.

When a public service stands for more than just a method of getting from A to B it can substantiate a value unlike any other standard service. At most stations there were minimalistic styling, with a lot of the underground
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stations having just a few pillars to hold the ceiling above the station with no unnecessary objects or seating in the way that could be potential vandalism targets. This was also clear to see on outside stations, where a lot of overhanging canopies were made from solid metal poles and beams, very hard wearing and out of reach of people's reach. This is a clever station design element as it would be very difficult to graffiti or damage so therefore, there is no reason to do it. The only stations with CCTV cameras are in a few major cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht where there are football matches and sporting events that can lead to crowd trouble, but not necessarily vandalism. There are not many problems in the south of the Netherlands so vandalism is not really an issue. Planning companies regularly review the situation and condition of the stations and trains and are always looking to upgrade the materials and technologies.

I will now explore some of the anti-vandal schemes and product developments that have led to some adequate control of vandalism in other countries. By studying approaches in other countries I feel I can get an idea of how they are dealing with the issues of vandalism, the scale of the problem and if they are successfully reducing the threat.

The Whale Jaw - Hoofddorp, The Netherlands (designed by NIO Architecten)

The Whale Jaw is a bus station unlike any other in the world. It is perceived as a "pondering form, worn down by footsteps and sightlines" (Will Jones, 2006, p. 80), due to its vast scale and unusual shape. The structure creates shelter and seating for those waiting bus passengers, as well as space where conductors and drivers can take their daily breaks. The project was

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accomplished using a restricted budget, which meant the architect had to use creative thinking and consider materials as well as the design and labour. Instead of concrete, the building was constructed from polystyrene foam and polyester. As a result of this, The Whale Jaw is the largest structure in the world made from synthetic materials. The design and construction process was experimental from start to finish. The form was cut in a factory from huge blocks of expanded polyurethane foam. The entire structure is anchored using Contraclad, which is then used to connect steel plates bolted to the concrete pad that it sits on. Due to the experimental nature of the project, NIO Architecten had to test the materials used against conventional loads, deliberate tampering and vandalism. Tests were carried out to ensure that the polyester coating could not be compromised by knives, cigarettes or the solvents in spray paints. The structure is considered vandal proof, but not entirely graffiti resistant. The uniqueness of the structure endears locals to protect it against overt acts of vandalism. Alternatively, good graffiti art could potentially work in harmony with this creation, enhancing the structure even more. It passed all destructive tests, but it remains to be seen whether the structure will stand up to the test of time.

The Whale Jaw is a magnificent structure that draws a lot of attention, because of its scale and obscene form. It is well respected by locals and tourists, which makes it in itself almost completely vandal proof. It has a great combination of the right materials and beauty allowing it to stand almost untouched by everyone in its surroundings.

Public transport in Shanghai, China is extremely cheap and generally, very efficient. It can cost as little as 4 rmb (40 pence) to travel by Metro, which <https://assignbuster.com/ongoing-problems-with-vandalism-criminology-essay/>

makes it an extremely popular way to travel. However due to the large population of the city, the experience of travelling by Metro is quite unnatural and always very busy. Whilst in Shanghai, I noticed many underpasses and underground stations were brightly lit up, allowing a lot of vision for the busy passengers of the metro train system. The long light beams were anti-vandal Luminaire lights which were hidden out of direct view but provided enough power to light up any underground area. By researching more into these specific lights I found that they were housed with extruded aluminium allowing them to withstand a lot of impact due to the shock resistance but also very difficult to graffiti due to the offset structure of the casing. The casing also protects the bulb and all of the fixings inside it so the light cannot be removed or tampered with. Most walls of underground passages were already filled with art or posters so the more expensive and attractive lights were always vandal-proof.

Another way to travel around the busy streets of Shanghai is by bus. Bus stops are not as common as Metro stations, but get you to where you need to be when a Metro service is not around. Busses can sometimes be considered as dirty and overcrowded, but have comfortable seating and air conditioning and single fares are cheaper than Metro and start from as little as 1 rmb (10 pence). There are no bus shelters, only stops along the road which are frequent and well-signposted, but only in Chinese. These road stops are made from wooden banners hung to metal poles and are rarely vandalised due to their low value and unattractiveness.

Forget the sluggish, old-fashioned Japanese bullet trains; Shanghai's Maglev claims to be the fastest, smoothest train in the world. Without a single pause <https://assignbuster.com/ongoing-problems-with-vandalism-criminology-essay/>

for hesitation, it is the most superior, relaxed way to get to Pudong airport. With a price tag of just 50rmb (5 pounds) for a single journey, few can resist the opportunity to sit back in comfort and feel the speed clock up to 420kmh (270mph). Its hi-tech new age design and elegant, sophisticated interior make it one of the most luxurious ways to travel. As far as a vandalism element is concerned, there are simply no reasons to damage or deface this proud machine. With a sense of cultural pride and blistering speed, this modern marvel is a public transport vehicle that many will immediately respect and care for.

Twenty years ago the stations and cars of the New York subway system were covered with graffiti. Passengers recall not being able to see out of the windows, so complete was the coverage. Today both are clear from painted graffiti.

The anti-graffiti initiative on the New York subway dates back to 1984. Subway staff were assigned to the terminals and yards to start cleaning the rolling stock. Those cars that had a stainless steel exterior, which had to be completely cleaned leaving those that were painted had to be painted over. Stations were cleaned one at a time and inspected every day to ensure that they stayed clean. Any new 'hit' was immediately cleaned off, or if this was not possible, painted over.

Recognizing that the task was enormous, and that to achieve some early success it would be important to make a visible impact, the subway network companies embarked on a line by line approach to cleaning the system. The

first graffiti-free rail line was the F Line in February 1985. The whole network was finally graffiti free in May 1989.

The theory that underpins the approach in New York is that the graffiti vandal (a term used in preference to 'artist') is motivated and rewarded by seeing their works displayed. This allows the artist to have an environment where he or she feels that it is acceptable to graffiti as long as its in a sensible, ethnical fashion that will not offend or cause major controversy. Over five million passengers pass through the stations each day, where countless others observe the cars that travel above ground. In order to remove the reward and hence the motivation, it is vital to clean off or cover over any graffiti before it can have an audience. Even if complete removal is not possible immediately, putting a line through it is an effective short-term measure.

During these early days cars had to be taken out of service to remove extensive graffiti. This caused delays and disruption to services, which ultimately led to increased passenger aggression against staff. However, this is rarely an issue now that the graffiti problem is under control.

Staff are employed to work at each of the terminals to inspect and clean each car after its journey down the line. Immediate removal has been found to be easier than allowing time for the paint to 'migrate' into the surface. Cleaners keep a graffiti notebook so that hits can be reported to the police. There is a mobile wash unit that goes out to stations during the night to remove graffiti. However with new materials or even a new design strategy it could be possible to eradicate the problem altogether. If there are no

possible opportunities to vandalize in the first place, then the problem will quickly resolve itself. Potential design solutions could be to redevelop the subway trains and stations with either more or less surface space that can be seen as hotspots to vandals and graffiti artists. Using simple washable paints to coat the outer surface of trains could provide an unlikely target for a vandal, leaving the offender with no graffiti result and a lot of wasted time.

Police officers were deployed to patrol and monitor the terminals and yards, as a deterrent and to catch vandals, with an addition to the CCTV system that already monitors the underground stations. There are also dedicated teams who are proactive and target known offenders. Large or significant pieces of graffiti are photographed to provide evidence if the vandal is caught and prosecuted. A record is made of the time taken to clean the graffiti and the cost of materials, and this information is submitted to the court.

The New York subway initiative was originally managed through monthly monitoring meetings, but these are now held on a quarterly basis. The media is seen as having been important in promoting the achievements of the initiative and attracting back passengers. Reporters were invited to see stations that had been cleaned up, and arrests of vandals are reported in the media.

“ Urbanism works when it creates a journey as desirable as the destination.”

- Paul Goldberger

The reason why I feel that the systems implemented in these major cities are dealing with issues of vandalism is because there is more demand for a <https://assignbuster.com/ongoing-problems-with-vandalism-criminology-essay/>

solution as the scale of the problem is grand due to the population of people there.. It is almost impossible to prevent vandalism from occurring altogether, but at least preventative measures allow the problem to stem into just a few opportunities to do it. With successful design practices and the right funding to fuel each project, it could be possible to create new methods of clamping down on the level of vandalism.

There are already many measures of anti vandalism equipment on off to public transport companies. The only real concern why not many are being used at the moment is down to the high cost levels, the vast workload to construct and implement all of the systems and also the value and proportion of the problem with vandalism.

Anti-vandal paint includes anti-climb and anti-graffiti paints. These paints employ a range of anti-vandal methods which means that the paint may never dry; being slippery and staining to clothes or it may render the surface impenetrable to graffiti, meaning that it can simply be wiped clean.

Conclusion