



Bike share and vandalism

A summary

Why?

Why do people vandalise property? Some reasonsⁱ that apply particularly to bikeshare schemes:

- Acquisitive motivation (stealing bikes or components to sell on);
- For play (also called 'exploratory vandalism'ⁱⁱ – vandalising things is more fun than the other options on offer);
- Malicious vandalism (often aimed at 'symbolic middle-class property'ⁱⁱⁱ. Some studies have found vandalism rates to be higher in neighbourhoods where low-income and more affluent people live near each other);
- To assert your presence: young people feel marginal to society and commit 'expressive' crimes, which 'contain a significant emotional element such as anger, hostility or excitement'^{iv}).

Plan

Planning for vandalism is realistic - some factors are outside our control. For example.:

- A surge in vandalism in the late 80s, and a subsequent rapid decline, correlates with the removal of lead in petrol^v. Childhood exposure to lead lowers IQ and increases impulsive/ violent behaviour;
- Anti-social behaviour tends to peak in school holidays^{vi};
- Social media may facilitate vandalism (e.g. posting videos of antics) but may also limit it, providing other outlets for self-expression^{vii}.

Design

Situational crime prevention (SCP) seeks to design out opportunities to commit crimes:

- Increase effort, e.g. make it harder to access the site to vandalise/ steal bikes;
- Increase risks - make it more likely perpetrators will get caught, e.g. by installing CCTV or siting bikes in busy places where they are overlooked by properties;
- Reduce rewards, e.g. make it hard to sell the bikes on, or make it impossible to use them if stolen
- Reduce provocations - vandalism occurs more frequently in generally degraded environments, so if you have existing signs such as broken windows or graffiti, fix these quickly;
- Remove excuses - make it harder for perpetrators to justify the crime to themselves, e.g. as a 'victimless' crime. Personal messages ('This is part of my thesis project – please ring me if you want more information') reduced interference with research equipment left outdoors in a 2014 study^{viii}.
- Also, having a sense of belonging to a place and feeling an affinity with the people who live there reduces crime^{ix}. A small project in the West Midlands^x smartened up an area of woodland and saw antisocial behaviour reduce dramatically. Their recommendations:
 - Involve the community in planning and managing the area;
 - Make spaces appeal to a range of people (dog walkers, young parents) to reduce the likelihood of them becoming the 'patch' of a particular group;
 - Think about strategies that don't increase the 'visual brutality' of the place (e.g. thorny hedges rather than fences);
 - Plan for long-term management as neglected areas can quickly become 'no-go areas'.

Bike share and vandalism

References

- ⁱ Cohen, S. 1971. Direction for research on adolescent school violence and vandalism. *British Journal of Criminology*, 9, 319-340.
- ⁱⁱ Long M., and Burke R.H. (2015) Vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour across Late-Modern Societies. In: *Vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour. Critical Criminological Perspectives*.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Goldstein, R. 2013. *The psychology of vandalism*. Springer.
- ^{iv} White, R. 2001. Graffiti, crime prevention and cultural space. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 12;3, 253-268.
- ^v Reyes, J.W. 2015. Lead exposure and behavior: Effects on antisocial and risky behavior among children and adolescents. *Economic Inquiry*, 53;3, 1580-1605.
- ^{vi} <https://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/9862476.anti-social-behaviour-on-rise-during-school-holidays/>
- ^{vii} <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21041160>
- ^{viii} Clarin, B.-M., Bitilekis, E., Simeners, B.M., and Goerlitz, H.R. 2014. Personal messages reduce vandalism and theft of unattended scientific equipment. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 5;2, 125-131.
- ^{ix} Popay, J., Thomas, C., Williams, G., Bennett, S., Gatrell, A., and Bostock, L. 2003. A proper place to live: health inequalities, agency and the normative dimensions of space. *Social Science And Medicine*, 57;1, 55-69.
- ^x <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-regeneration-and-greenspace-partnership/greenspace-in-practice/practical-considerations-and-challenges-to-greenspace/crime-and-vandalism-challenges-and-practical-considerations/>



beatekubitz.com

07974 369240

Speak to me for mobility
research, insight and
communication