



# White Rose ESRC Research Studentship

## Project Title: 'Policing Social Disorder and Urban Unrest'

University of Leeds

Network Title: 'Beyond the Riots: Sustainable Social Order, Urban Governance and Disorderly Elites'

**Closing Date 3 February 2012**

### ***Resilience, Threat and Urban Governance***

Supervisors: Professor [Adam Crawford](#), School of Law, University of Leeds;  
Dr [Layla Skins](#), School of Law, University of Sheffield

The Centre for Criminal Justice Studies in the School of Law at the University of Leeds would like to invite applications for this fully funded ESRC PhD studentship investigating 'Policing Social Disorder and Urban Unrest'.

This PhD studentship will explore a number of themes that coalesce around the contemporary policing of social disorder and urban unrest in the context of the broad aims of the 'Beyond the Riots Sustainable Social Order, Urban Governance and Disorderly Elites' network (see below).

In the context of an economic downturn, austerity measures, growing social inequalities and a crisis in authority, recent events in England have highlighted the importance and challenges facing the policing of urban unrest. These include domestic and in some instances transnational forms of political mobilisation, as well as 'riots' across England in 2001 and 2011. These events point to the challenges of maintaining security and reducing disorder in unequal societies, whilst also protecting justice and citizens' rights to assembly and free speech. These events can also be understood in the light of the history and organisation of the police, including developments in technology which permit enhanced surveillance of citizens and new ways of using force (e.g. tasers), as well as the deployment of new crime control techniques (e.g. 'kettling'). Policing some forms of protest, in particular those taking place on private property (e.g. airports) implicate a range of diverse actors within and beyond the public police, including local authorities, private businesses and voluntary sector organisations. It is also increasingly acknowledged that regulation is more likely to foster compliance and be deemed legitimate by the policed where it is responsive to the conditions in which policing arises and the capacities of the policed for self-regulation, and involves cooperation/coproduction.

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## *Objectives*

1. To assess and conceptualise the key varieties of urban unrest in England and Wales and/or one other jurisdiction and their sources in terms of structural and organisational processes.
2. To explore and conceptualise the key varieties of police responses to urban unrest in England and Wales and analyse the extent to which they prevent or provoke future conflict, are deemed legitimate and foster behavioural compliance on the part of the policed.
3. To critically examine and compare contrasting styles of policing responses to unrest within and possibly beyond England and Wales (i.e. drawing comparisons with other jurisdictions).
4. To relate the policing of social order and urban unrest to the theme of building sustainable security in contemporary societies in ways that support justice, fairness and equality.

Research questions include: Why did some cities remain immune to the urban unrest in August 2011, even those with a recent history of rioting? What is the role of the police, if any, in contributing to this stability and what other factors were at work? What methods and strategies are used in the prevention and policing of urban unrest and social disorder and what roles are played by diverse (formal/informal) policing agents?

## **Network themes:**

Social order and its disruption through urban unrest present urgent concerns for modern societies. Managing sustainable social order in ways that prevent social conflict, minimise harm, promote inter-group tolerance and enhance community and institutional resilience in the face of outbreaks of unrest constitute pressing challenges for national governments and local authorities. The summer 'riots' of August 2011 inevitably brought more emphatic forms of disorder and wider urban unrest to the fore of public conversations, prompting new questions about why some locales experienced unrest whilst others appeared immune from what some feared to be a spreading phenomenon. These questions underline the importance of understanding the continuum upon which social order and urban unrest are aligned. Research has suggested that the riots occurred because of a number of complex intersecting factors: situational, individual, community and societal. Situational facilitators included, for example, rapid information transfer through social networking media. Societal factors include the idea that those involved felt little sense of having a stake in society (Morell et al, 2011).

Notwithstanding the importance of understanding and unravelling the reasons for the events of August 2011, the focus on individual choices and overt criminality mask a continued need for robust empirical research capable of delivering broader and more comprehensive explanations for disorder and deeper roots of what some have come to see as a re-emerging urban crisis linked to a legitimisation crisis of social elites, problematic policing practices, social disinvestment in deprived localities to say nothing of the broader impact of the financial crisis. Our network will seek to broaden debates and conceptualisations of disorder as the riotous acts have perhaps obscured the way in which the disorder might be couched or interpreted within a broader debate beyond the witnessed disorder. Arguably there is a wider coherence which has framed the response to the unrest and which requires further empirical investigation. Consequently, this network seeks to look beyond questions about why the summer 2011 riots occurred, to consider a number of salient sub-themes that inform the disorders and events of urban unrest as well as attempts to respond to and police them. By including an emphasis on the broader aspects of urban governance, the research objectives of this network will be able to consider how order is conceived within the context of daily social and policy routines and how the responses to the summer 2011 riots may signal crisis responses to growing social retrenchment and aggressive welfare reforms. The impact of disequilibrium in the careful balance of order and disorder have been made manifest through changes in governance (such as housing policy, evolving policing responses to unrest and a crisis in legitimacy amongst social and political actors and institutions).

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This network will examine these diverse responses and areas of enquiry and contribute to ongoing public and policy concerns about what contributed to apparently new forms of unrest and insecurity. The network will provide insights into the prevention of unrest and the promotion of peaceful social relations and inter-group tolerance by assembling an expert supervisory team and experienced network co-ordinators across the inter-disciplinary headings of sociology, social policy, criminology, law, housing studies and town and regional planning.

*References:* Morell, G., Scott, S., McNeish, D. and Webster, S. (2011) *The August Riots in England: Understanding the involvement of young people*. A Cabinet Office Commissioned Report, London: NatCen.

## **The ESRC/White Rose studentships for 2012 offer:**

- A full ESRC stipend: (£13,590 pa in 2011/12)
- A fee waiver at the home/EU rate (Overseas candidate are welcome to apply)
- A Research Support Grant

## **Closing date: 3rd February 2012**

This PhD studentship is part of a network funded by the ESRC through the White Rose Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) which combines the universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York. The '*Beyond the Riots: Sustainable Social Order, Urban Governance and Disorderly Elites*' network aims to develop PhD students with capacities for cross-disciplinary theorising and combining research methodologies. The network will promote and coordinate the interaction of students and supervisors with shared interest in contemporary urban unrest and social disorder.

Two other studentships within the 'Beyond the Riots' network are available: one based in at the University of Sheffield and another based at the University of York. *Applicants can apply for more than one of these studentships but must clearly indicate their preferred studentship.*

## **Appointment criteria**

- An undergraduate degree at the level of at least 2(1) honours.
- An appropriate social sciences Masters (either completed or to be completed before the studentship commences)
- Applicants should be able to display a good level of understanding of key academic ideas that relate to the themes of 'Policing Social Disorder and Urban Unrest'
- All candidates are require to set out in their application a proposed research outline which engages with the research themes and questions ohighlighted in the project description and advances the wider aims of the network.
- Applicants should be able to outline in an interview a proposal for an innovative empirical research project that addresses the project's core themes and concerns.

# Background information

## Contacts

For more information contact Karin Houkes for administration queries ([k.m.houkes@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:k.m.houkes@leeds.ac.uk)) or Professor Adam Crawford for project queries ([a.crawford@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:a.crawford@leeds.ac.uk)).

## How to Apply

Complete an [online application form](#)

Submit an outline research proposal that advances the aims, objectives and thematic priorities of the White Rose studentship.

Further information on the application procedure can be found at:  
[http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/postgraduate\\_scholarships/wrs](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/rsa/postgraduate_scholarships/wrs)