Grey Area
Jacques, Scott

Published by University College London


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Nuisance

Nuisance is a mercurial concept. It includes everything from annoying noise and parking problems to disorderly offences such as loitering and littering to attracting violence, theft and vandalism. If coffeeshops directly or indirectly cause these problems, they can be punished for violating the ban on nuisance. Yet no personnel knew of a coffeeshop being closed or otherwise sanctioned for such an incident. Nonetheless, personnel are in a daily struggle against boorish and threatening behaviour. Lizzie said it best: ‘You have to tell people all the time what to do, and especially what not to do.’

Nuisance ranges from minor to serious. At the lower end of the scale is impoliteness. Some bad manners are behavioural. ‘The worst thing that happens in here’, Finn exaggerated, ‘which immediately means a red card [expulsion], is if a male person uses the female toilet. That is a capital crime in here.’ Rudeness may be verbal, too. Jens told me: ‘If you act up, you have to leave. We treat each other nice here. Say “Please” and “Thank you”’. Ruben’s review of the house rules referred to both acts and words:

Don’t shout, don’t put your feet with your shoes on the couch. Just treat the coffeeshop like it is my home. Everybody can have a [rolling] paper, but ask [don’t just grab one]. When you are not buying anything and you just walk in for a paper, don’t grab, just ask me. You want to go to the toilet when you are not a customer, no problem, but say ‘Hello, can I go to the toilet?’

In addition to what should be said, another aspect of politeness is knowing what not to say. Gwen gave a couple of examples: ‘Often [the problem at the coffeeshop] is just the boys [young customers] who are new, and they just want to show themselves [i.e. act tough]. Normally, they come in and they start bitching about the weed, saying it isn’t good enough or [that]
the person behind the dealer’s bar doesn’t treat them as they want to be.’ Sophie described a verbal slight to which she responded in kind:

This one time, I was in a very good mood and there were two Americans sitting at my bar. I started talking to him and he was, ‘So, are you working in the red light [district] and are you standing in the window as well?’ I was like, ‘No’, and I made a joke out of it. I was like, ‘So what are you? You are from Texas are you? So, you are basically hillbillies?’ He got mad, mad as hell, though five minutes ago he called me a whore. He was as mad as hell. He walked out.

Volume is a further facet of polite talk. When I was speaking with Willem about preferred types of customers, he pointed across the street and stated: ‘A large crowd, like those guys there, they are the type of people I prefer not to come in.’ He was referring to a ‘stag party’ or ‘bachelor party’ – an occasion in which a group of adult males get together to celebrate a member’s upcoming marriage, often by acting like boys. Typical of such groups in the 1012, the group in question was loud – and likely to be that way wherever they went, including coffeeshops.

At the serious end of the nuisance continuum is fighting between customers. Kamila laughed about an incident involving a couple of female customers: ‘Someone was jealous and so they just started fighting here. They were shouting, “You were just looking at my boyfriend!” It was just so funny.’ Wouter mentioned that at Live Long, the locals ‘get in fights with each other a lot’ over ‘little bullshit’. A slightly more serious fight was described by Olivia:

A psychotic guy felt like somebody was not listening to him. It was one of our neighbours, a guy who comes in quite often. We saw him deteriorate, just doing more and more drugs, just getting stranger in his head, just getting weird. I think he feels like he is attacked all the time, he was like [to my colleague], ‘You don’t respect me. You never listen to me’. There were some [customer] guys in the shop that were like, ‘If he doesn’t shut up now, we are going to kick him out’, and my colleague was remaining quite calm. I think he [the psychotic guy] went on, and the other customers actually kicked him out. They hit him, and he did hit back.

Max talked about a conflict between black market traders who walked into Everybody. ‘We had to laugh about it’, he said, ‘but it was for us, in the beginning, a little bit dangerous.’ Here is the story:
I was sitting upstairs. Two guys who looked like Moroccan guys, but they actually were from Algeria [we later found out], they wanted to buy cocaine from a Surinam guy on the streets. The guy, the Surinam guy, didn’t have any cocaine, but just wanted to take their money. He said to them, ‘Yeah, yeah, give me the money, and I have to go in here [to get the cocaine]’. He went into the shop, and locked himself into the toilet and thought, ‘As long as I stay here in the toilet, after a while these guys will go away’. I was sitting upstairs, and we were focused on that [guy]. All of a sudden I see two Moroccan-looking guys in the shop looking around. As soon as I saw the Surinam guy was staying in the toilet a long time, I thought, ‘What is happening?’ Then a few [personnel] went to the guys to ask them ‘What are you looking for?’ He said, ‘Yeah, we are waiting for the guy’. [Personnel told them,] ‘No, you have to go out!’ So they went outside, and then we heard that they were waiting for this guy in the toilet.

I went knocking on the toilet door. ‘Hey, get out, you have to go out of the shop!’ But he didn’t want to go. He was afraid to get out because the two guys were standing there like ‘He took our money!’ They wanted to grab him. [Once the Surinam guy left] one of the guys [who works at the coffeeshop] got in between them. ‘I don’t even know why you are helping him’, I said. ‘He wants to rob a few tourists, and they’re not very smart because they want to buy drugs on the streets. But if they want to kick his ass, be my guest because he also went into our shop and thought it was safe or something. That will teach him a lesson.’

Customer fights are not common in coffeeshops, reportedly occurring at only 12 per cent of them in the previous year.\(^7\) To give a point of comparison, they occur 10 times more often at bars in the 1012.\(^8\) Perhaps there are relatively fewer fights in coffeeshops because personnel spend so much time controlling smaller problems,\(^9\) or because cannabis intoxication inhibits aggression, especially compared to the effect of alcohol.\(^10\) As Noah and Charlotte respectively commented, ‘Smokers don’t fight that much’ and ‘Weed calms you down, it doesn’t make you aggressive’.

**Sources of nuisance**

Personnel think of three groups as being prone to cause nuisance. One is homeless individuals.\(^11\) They are unwanted inside coffeeshops because
they damage the atmosphere. Dean described how their appearance and smell affects the vibe:

A lot of homeless people, they use the coffeeshop as a hangout place. You have different people. Some people who live on the street are looking very dirty. In the beginning [of being homeless], they look good. But after a half year, they have dirty clothes. In the first half year, they use the coffeeshops for hangouts and that kind of thing. [But after a while] the people who are standing on the streets, they smell of sweat. Then we have to tell them to go out and take a shower or something. They stink a lot.

The actions of homeless people damage the atmosphere, too. Maud recalled one incident: ‘this guy who came in, he was looking around, and I saw he was a little bit lost. I thought there was something different about this guy. He was bothering my clients [by begging, I found out].’

On other occasions, instead of asking for handouts, Emma commented that homeless individuals ‘go by the ashtrays to see if there are any leftover joints’.

Drunk persons are another group cast as a common source of nuisance. In addition to being loud, as are many stag/bachelor parties, they say things that, to quote Jana, ‘can be annoying. They make you think they have drunk a little too much’. Jens described an individual who ‘wasn’t a customer from the coffeeshop; he was someone who came in off the street, and was really off his face [drunk] and annoying’. Stefan recalled an encounter with ‘a drunk asshole; he came in and was all mellow and sat down, and [then] started visibly annoying other groups of people’.

It is ironic that a cause of nuisance in coffeeshops is alcohol, as it cannot be sold or consumed on the premises as of 2007. ‘In the beginning’, Lola explained, ‘you could start a coffeeshop also with an alcohol licence. After a few years, they changed to one or the other.’ Each coffeeshop had to choose between the cannabis and alcohol trade. Remnants of this bygone era are still visible. Some coffeeshops have a counter with stools, like those common in bars. On the outside, coffeeshops have signage that includes a cocktail glass (visible at five coffeeshops) or writing on the windows or wall reading ‘Café-Bar’, ‘Café’, ‘Bar’ or ‘Pool Café’ (visible at seven coffeeshops).

No coffeeshop secretly sells alcohol, but customers try to consume it, covertly or openly. ‘Before you realise’, Joseph told me, ‘you see their beer bottle, and it’s not allowed to drink.’ Some offences are due to
ignorance of this rule. It is surprising to foreign customers, who assume that since you can smoke cannabis in coffeeshops you will also be able to drink alcohol there. But not all violations are due to ignorance. Signs specify the ban and personnel tell clients about it. Lizzie described a time that customers asked her about the rule, only to wind up ignoring her: “Can I drink alcohol?” I say: “No, I don’t serve any alcohol.” “Oh, do you have beer?” So I say: “Well, beer is alcohol.” “Oh, yeah. Can we bring our own?” “No, you cannot do that,” I explain. Then I come over to the table, and there are three plastic cups and a bottle of Cognac on it. So I get very annoyed.’

Alcohol-related nuisance also includes passing out and vomiting. In a similar way to how people are warned not to mix grape (wine) with grain (beer), personnel think it is a bad idea for drunk people to ‘start a fire’ (smoke cannabis). Lizzie gave an example of the effect:

If you are really drunk and you smoke a joint, it can go badly. You can get very ill. One time I had a Japanese guy sitting where you are [at the counter]. He was like this [appearing nauseated]. I looked [away and then looked] again – there was a pool of puke. I told the guys [colleagues] to please help me pick him up because he passed out [and] carry him outside. The puke was running down his face, on his clothes and everything.

Dean narrated a similar incident:

We had someone puke. A lot of people come in here drunk, and you have tourists, they think that they can smoke. A lot of people, they go and eat, they drink. Then they are a little bit drunk and they think, ‘Oh yeah, come on, let’s go to the coffeeshop and we will smoke a joint’. They smoke a joint after their drinks. If you drink and smoke together that is fine, but if you drink a lot and then you smoke, everybody can puke, for sure. Me, I am a regular smoker and a good smoker. If I drink a lot and then after a while I smoke, that happens to me, also.

Along with tourists, young people are characterised as drinking too much before smoking. In Mara’s words: ‘Young people drink, drink more, drink more, drink more. [Then say to themselves,] “I have to smoke, then I’m the big guy.” They throw up!’

In fairness to alcohol, smoking on its own can make people sick. People who smoke too much – in quantity or potency – are the third group
identified as regular contributors to nuisance – albeit only that related to accidents and falling ill. Dean observed: ‘Sometimes you can puke if you had a long flight. You come off the plane and smoke a big joint. Then you get too tired and puke.’ More than any other nationality, personnel stereotyped Americans as smoking more than they can handle. Time and time again in coffeeshops, I heard them say to dealers ‘Give me your best’ or, in the form of a question, ‘What is your best?’ This is conspicuous consumption at its finest, or maybe foulest. Victor talked about how this mindset affects the propensity to make themselves sick:

They [Americans] always think they can handle the biggest, the baddest and the strongest stuff. Then 20 minutes later, they are blowing [vomiting] in the corner and I have to go over [to help] because they can’t handle it. It just seems a little bit stupid, you know? Why don’t they just slow down a little bit and then see how far you can go, instead of taking the strongest stuff and just falling down? It’s not fun even. What is the fun of being sick on the floor?

Being high leads to accidental injury and property damage, too. ‘People do get hurt when they pass out’, Linda commented, ‘and bump their head against the table.’ When I asked Luca about violence at the business, he answered: ‘The only injuries are people so stoned that they fall off their stools!’ In response to the same question, Victor replied: ‘No [violence], except for people smoking too much and falling on the ground and smashing their own head. I have seen people fall through glass windows. They black out [meaning ‘pass out’]. They just walk and they black out. I have fucking seen people fall over chairs. They are like ghosts [in skin tone].’ People being so high that they walk through a window is not hyperbole. Adam told me of one such instance: ‘This American guy was really stoned; he thought it was the exit, but it was a big window. Just walked through it. He was actually all right, I think. He was just [like afterwards], “What did I do?”’

Managing nuisance

As with controlling minors and hard drug possessors, personnel look out for nuisance and work to distance it from their coffeeshop. If outside, sources of nuisance are asked to go further away. If trying to gain entry or make a purchase, they are denied. If already inside, they are expelled. Whether proterred to manage minors, hard drug possessors or nuisance,
personnel use distancing techniques because their concern is stopping violations from occurring at their coffeeshop. Of much less concern is what happens beyond its borders.\textsuperscript{16}

When I asked Elias if there are certain people refused entry, he gave homeless people as an example: ‘Yes, junkies and some people are just too filthy to be inside; maybe they have slept on the street for a week. They are not going to sit on my seats.’ Stijn gave a similar response: ‘Junkies, people from the street, they cannot come in. They are not allowed to come in here.’ Referring to ‘bums or people that don’t order anything’, Emma stated: ‘I tell them to leave, usually they leave. Usually they don’t start to argue, but if they do, I just repeat myself again, and usually they go. I never have a problem with this.’

In response to being questioned about who is denied service, several personnel stated that drunk individuals are handled that way. ‘If they come in and I see they are drunk’, Hassan asserted, ‘I put them out.’ Stijn remarked: ‘Sometimes people come drunk in the morning, like the English [tourists]. They come from the boat; they have been on the boat drinking all the time and they come in and they are agitated, they want to smoke, and then you don’t want to serve them because they are drunk. You say, “No, go to your hotel, chill out and come back tonight”.’

The main reason personnel distance minors and possessors is to protect the coffeeshop from punishment. However, this is less true of managing nuisance because single cases rarely, if ever, result in legal trouble. In these cases, therefore, personnel’s motivation is to protect the establishment’s atmosphere and customers. That is why Ruben distanced ‘smelly ones and drunk ones, because we don’t want to change the atmosphere in here. When somebody is really drunk they may start out being nice, but in five minutes they can change’. ‘Sometimes’, Anna stated, ‘someone is very angry, but we don’t let them in. We tell them they have to go out because they are drunk. We do not want to make problems here. We have our responsibilities to our customers. I don’t want to only make money from them.’

In addition to distancing people from the coffeeshop, personnel prevent bad behaviour by limiting the amount of cannabis sold to people. Well, not all people, but only those acting improperly, or who appear on the fringe of doing so. Such clients are ‘cut off’, meaning they are allowed to stay in the coffeeshop, but not to buy any more cannabis. The goal is twofold: to protect the establishment and to protect customers from themselves. Lizzie put into words the way in which personnel act as stewards:
You know people travel, they don’t eat. They travel on the plane, don’t eat breakfast, come with their suitcase to the coffeeshop, smoke so much, either puke or get so stoned, wander around the city and I say, ‘Why do you do that? Why? Go check in first, then you know where your hotel is. You eat something, then you come to smoke’. That is why I think it is good that there are coffeeshops in Amsterdam, because we supply a lot of information. People come sometimes, they want to buy four space cakes. I say, ‘Oh, are you going to have a party with your friends?’ They say, ‘No, it is all for me because I am going on the plane.’ I say, ‘Look, I am not going to sell you four space cakes. You can have two, maximum’. You have to be like [how you are] when you serve alcohol. At a certain point you have to say, ‘Look, enjoy this last beer because after this, I am not serving you any more alcohol. You can have coffee, tea, juice, but that is it.’ I tell them, ‘I care and have responsibility for you. You are inside and from me you do not get another drop of alcohol, finished’.

A third, and certainly the nicest, way of managing nuisance is helping its source. This is the response to intoxication-induced sickness. Lizzie talked about this as well, because it is how she reacted to the Japanese customer who vomited:

I told the guys [working], ‘Please help me pick him up because he passed out, carry him outside’. We picked him up like this [carrying him by his armpits]. We gave him a bucket of water to clean himself up. Then I asked the guy if he had a place to clean himself up. He said no, and that he was going on a train that afternoon. So [I] advised him to buy for €5 some clothes on the Waterloo secondhand market and to spend another €3 in having a shower at Central Station.

She went on to describe her general approach to helping:

I always keep an eye on people. As soon as I see them change to a little bit grey, or the sweat drops come here [the forehead], I tell them to sit outside first of all because of the fresh air, and it does them a lot of good. I feed them sugar water. Many of them will throw up, but then it is already outside so I am happy. But people will sometimes get up, want to make it to the toilet, don’t tell me they are ill, pass out here on the floor and then puke and lie in their own puke. The show must go on, so we grab a bucket of water and clean it up as fast as we can. That is the most disgusting part.
We look after you when something happens. I had this one guy, he was walking down the street, the other guy passed out. He came back running in here: ‘Call an ambulance!’ He was screaming. [I said,] ‘OK, sugar water’. Then he yelled at me: ‘Don’t make a fucking espresso! Call the ambulance!’ I said, ‘Look, first rule, relax, don’t panic. We are already helping’. He was high, his friend was high, passed out. The guy doesn’t know what is going on, and he starts to panic. I had [another time] one guy who went to walk out here, couldn’t make it, fell on the steps and split his head open. So many stories like that. I sent him down the street there, where there is a medical post, with a towel.

Helpful behaviour is not unique to Lizzie and Whole Truth. Across coffeeshops, personnel lend a hand to customers who overdo it. For people who vomit, Mara explained: ‘I put a chair outside and sit them in front of the door, and they get some fresh air.’ While talking to Max, I mentioned what I had observed at Everybody, as it seemed odd to me:

I’ve noticed twice, when I’ve been in this coffeeshop just by chance, someone would just be tripping their ass off [seemingly on hallucinogenic mushrooms]. So the way you guys handle that is you make them sit on a chair outside? Do you put a chair outside for them? Like how did this come up? Does this happen a lot? And where did you come up with that strategy, ’cause it’s interesting to just put someone tripping outside your shop on a chair and tell them to hang out.

Max explained the rationale:

You have to take responsibility for the people. I know we have a lot of tourists. What they do is they go to the museum, and they go to the Heineken Brewery, they don’t eat well. Then they come to the shop, and they all want the strongest stuff. But your sugar level drops, and I don’t want them to throw up in our shop. I have done that also many times – clean that up. I sold them the soft drugs, so that is my responsibility. But I take them outside so they don’t throw up in my shop. They also get fresh air. They need the oxygen and then I give them sugar. Of course, it looks a little bit silly, for all the people who are passing by, that somebody is tripping out in front of my shop. But I am responsible for them. People pass out inside, they wet [piss] themselves, that also happens. People have passed
out and then they let everything go, you know? I am responsible for
that. I clean it up, no problem.

The representative of Dollar Room, Dean, described a similar response to
sickness. This came up after I asked him, ‘When someone pukes, how do
you guys respond?’ He answered laughing:

Smash them in the face! No, not really! It depends. It depends on
what kind of customer it is. Most of the time, we are very kind. We
help on our side. They need fresh air [so put them outside]. We give
them sugar water. You mix hot water with a lot of sugar, or you mix
it with cold water and let them drink it; that kind of thing. And we
have to clean the place down where the bastard has puked.

Instead of distancing or helping sources of nuisance, personnel may
warn them to shape up or ship out. Jasper and his colleagues do so ‘if
somebody’s shouting and being rude. We say [as a warning], “Go get
your weed somewhere else, man”, and next time he’s very quiet’. Jens
said emphatically: ‘Don’t act up or else I will put my foot in your ass and
that will be the end!’ He meant that figuratively, adding: ‘I will tell you
that you are being a dick! Like dude, “We don’t do shit like that here, so
pack it up and fuck off!”’

Warnings are not always sufficient, however. This becomes the
case when a written or spoken warning fails to have its intended effect.
After Lizzie’s customers poured out Cognac, she told them: ‘Look, you
asked me. I explained to you, I explained to you twice [that alcohol is
not allowed]. I want you to pick up and go now because now you are
taking the piss. You come to ask me, I say no. I explain to you why so you
can have more peace with the rule, and you take the piss. So now, you
go.’ Joseph had a similar response to people who drank alcohol, despite
knowing it is not allowed: ‘When you come, you can see my display and
[the rule sign specifying] there is no alcohol. If you try to go contrary to
that, I don’t have the patience. I will tell you to go away.’

Personnel deem warnings as insufficient for unwanted persons, such
as those who appear homeless, drunk or threatening. Jack ‘will sit down
and chat to a drunk person who is being a bit lairy’, for example, ‘and then
send them on their way’. When a homeless person walked into At Last and
started talking to customers, Maud took action: ‘[I] went over to him. He
said he just wanted weed. I just asked what he was doing, why he was both-
ering my clients. I told him if he wanted weed, I could give it to him, but
if he did not have the money then I am sorry, I could do nothing for him.
I told him to please leave.’ And when the ‘drunk asshole’ annoyed Stefan’s customer, he ‘asked him to leave and calm down a bit. We asked him to leave a second time and he left. I’ve never had to remove anyone forcibly’.

**Hands-on expulsion**

Distancing gets touchy. Personnel universally see physical expulsion as a last resort. Yet it is one they are prepared to employ. To quote Victor: ‘If somebody doesn’t want to leave, if he doesn’t want to listen and is not following the rules, then we make him leave. That is your job.’ Physical expulsion ranges in severity from suggestive to forceful. The former is illustrated by how Ruben handled heavily intoxicated persons: ‘Most of the time, the only thing that happens is like [I] grab somebody by the arm, turn them around and tell them where the door is. That’s it. It’s just putting someone on to the streets.’ Gwen declared: ‘If somebody is really annoying, then I actually take them from the table, and I will actually take their arm. Then I just get him out. That does not happen a lot. I think in the last year, it happened four or five times that I actually had to take somebody from the chair.’ I asked, ‘And are you actually like grabbing them?’ She clarified: ‘No, I always do it like this first [lightly placing her hand on my arm], with no force, but I will make sure that you understand what I am saying.’

Hands-on expulsion intensifies from suggestive to forceful when a troublemaker is asked to leave but refuses. Referring to the guy ‘really off his face’, Gwen explained that he ‘wouldn’t leave, so he got kicked out. He got shown the hole in the door, and landed on the pavement. He was launched out’. Sophie said of the ‘hobo’ collecting joints that ‘we had to push him out’. Hassan described an encounter with a customer: ‘He didn’t keep to the house rules that I have here. He was taking off his shoes and walking around like that, talking to himself, that kind of shit; weird shit, crazy kind of weird shit. I think he was drunk and mentally ill, as well. He wasn’t like 100 per cent, you know what I mean?’ Initially personnel tried to talk sense into the guy, but things escalated:

We said all these things like, ‘You know that’s not the way you should act here’. He made the business look bad, because we had customers here and they don’t like that. He didn’t want to listen. He [the employee] told the guy to leave. He [the nuisance] was like, ‘No, I’m not going to leave’. He didn’t want to go out. So he was like, ‘Listen, I’m gonna tell you another time, you are going to leave if I have to drag you out of the business’. He was like, ‘Yeah, if you touch
I asked Hassan why it was important to remove the guy from the coffeeshop. He answered: ‘Because you need some kind of order in the coffeeshop, and he was destroying it.’

There are notable, and I think explainable, differences in how personnel’s responses to nuisance differed from those to minors and hard drug possessors. For one, personnel help customers who become sick, and warn people causing offence that their behaviour must change to remain inside. I did not hear or see these methods being used to deal with minors and possessors. The difference, I think, has to do with the risk posed by these respective groups. Coffeeshops are not punished for single cases of nuisance, not even serious incidents such as fighting, whereas they are sanctioned for the presence of minors or hard drugs. This makes helping and warning less appropriate for managing minors and possessors on the premises.

On the other hand, personnel physically expel people causing nuisance, which is rarer with minors and possessors. This is surprising, given that minors and possessors are a greater risk to coffeeshops. Perhaps hands-on distancing is more common with people who are drunk or mentally ill because these traits reduce their willingness to go away voluntarily. According to Luca, that effect is assumed: ‘A lot of people come here drunk off their heads, and of course there is some shoving.’ Another explanation pertains to respect and acknowledgement of one’s wrongdoing. Minors and possessors may leave without a struggle because they realise they are in the wrong, but people who are drunk or mentally ill may see things differently.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, personnel involve the police if deemed necessary to handle a problem.22 Lizzie, for example, said of fights between customers: ‘If it is really a problem, we call them [police] and ask them to come.’ Olivia told me what happened when the ‘psychotic guy’ got in a scuffle with customers at Elegy:

The employee called them [police] because he knew the guy and he thought he was having some kind of paranoid fit, so I don’t think the police even really arrested him. I think they just took him, gave him some valium and called his shrink or something. He is our neighbour, and his mum lives there, too. Sometimes she walks by and she is a really nice lady. She was just so embarrassed about what happened.

Jack reported a serious case of nuisance, including how and why personnel got the police involved:
We had about 15 very, very drunk Moroccan boys come in the shop. They were extremely loud and lairy and just not what we wanted and I sold them all some weed and then they all wanted to hang around. Then they started abusing my colleague behind the bar and generally abusing everyone else in the shop. They were standing there being abusive and it was getting to the point where they were looking to have a fight. I wanted them out and they weren’t going. I was like it is about to kick off, and suddenly 12 of my regular customers stand up ready for a fight, and I am like I really don’t want this to happen. Generally in my coffeeshop, I know that if it is ever going to happen I generally have someone at the back to help me. It was in that area [point of seriousness] where without police intervention, crimes would have occurred; there would have been a riot outside here.

The boss was thankfully here at the time, as well. I said to him, ‘Look boss, can you go over the road and get the police because this is going to kick off real soon and I don’t want to hit anyone?’ They really riled me up and I was getting lairy and it was ‘Get the police now because I will get in trouble if I hit someone’. They were there looking for a fight and I was about to give them one, so it was like, ‘Boss can you go across the road?’ – and the police were there. It was just a matter of saying [to them], ‘Can you come over here, we have a little issue over the road?’ and within 30 seconds there were six policemen here to take the drunk people away. They just arrested all of them. We pointed out these guys, they legged it and the police went after them and arrested them.

As much as the authorities do consider us criminal enterprises, the police do their best to work with us. As long as we can stay in line with them [with respect to the coffeeshop rules], we can count on them not treating us like gangsters, [for example] when I have a problem like that with 15 nutters about to start a riot in my coffeeshop. I can call on them for help in that respect and they will come running. They will come and help us. They don’t mess around. If we ask for their help they come quick.

For coffeeshop personnel such as Jack, the good and bad news about the police is ‘they are just right across the road’.

Notes

1. The Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (2002: 30) specifies: ‘Public nuisance occurs in many different forms … For this reason the concept of “nuisance” must be interpreted broadly.’
2. For information on nuisance with respect to coffeeshops, and Dutch drug policy more broadly, see Ooyen-Houben and Kleemans 2015.
4. Nuisance does appear to be used in a general way to close coffeeshops. This is why it is important to distinguish between nuisance incidents (for example, particular fights) and the general perception of a coffeeshop, or coffeeshops, as a nuisance.
5. This is the definition of nuisance adopted by Kelling and Coles (1996) and Wilson and Kelling (1982).
6. For information on stag/bachelor parties, see Briggs and Ellis 2017; Thurnell-Read 2012.
7. This pattern reflects the general inverse relationship between the seriousness and frequency of various forms of conduct, such as crimes of violence and property crime.
10. For information on the relationship between intoxication and aggression, see Boles and Miotto 2003; Felson et al. 2008; Meyerscough and Taylor 1985.
11. For information on homelessness and its relationship to crime and control, see Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Cress and Snow 2000; Desmond 2016; Duneier 1999; Snow and Anderson 1993.
12. For information on the interaction between alcohol and cannabis consumption, see Lukas and Orozco 2001; Robbe 1998.
13. See Becker 2015.
14. This reflects Veblen’s ([1899] 1994) notion of conspicuous consumption.
15. For information on executive function and motor control, see Raemaekers et al. 2006.
16. This reflects the old approach of expelling offenders from city states and the like, as government officials and citizens prioritised what happened in their community over that of others. However, this dissipated with the coalescing of these smaller sovereign territories into nations (Spierenburg 2007).
17. Whereas the other techniques of reactive control are penal in style, helping is what Black (1976) refers to as therapeutic (see also Horwitz 1982; Tucker 1999).
18. Dean also recalled a time that he asked someone who puked for compensation, specifically enough to dry-clean his shirt. Asking for compensation is fairly rare, so far as I can tell. Here is his description of the incident: ‘The guy comes in a little bit drunk [on the other hand] and the guy behind the bar tells him not to smoke. The guy here says, “OK, you can have something but don’t smoke”. But he [the customer] says he wants to, then he goes upstairs, smokes a little bit. Then the dealer goes upstairs and he sees him and says, “Go outside, I see in your face that you are not so good”. The guy says, “Blah, blah, OK”. After a few seconds he stands up and he pukes and a little bit over the dealer, pukes over the clothes of the dealer. The guy says, “Sorry for that”. But the dealer says, “Yes, but I have to go to the cleaning company so you have to pay a little bit for the cleaning”. For me that is totally good and if he pays the €20 then that is OK.’ For information on drug dealers’ use of negotiation to manage conflict, see Morselli et al. 2017; Jacques and Wright 2011, 2015; Taylor 2007.
19. For information on drug dealers’ use of threats, both violent and nonviolent, to manage conflict, see Anderson 1999; Dickinson 2017; Jacques and Wright 2015; Jacques, Wright, and Allen 2014; Taylor 2007.
20. For a classic exchange on how the seriousness of an incident affects its handling, see Black 1979; Gottfredson and Hindelang 1979.
22. Evidence that the seriousness of the incident matters is seen, for example, in Hassan’s explanation of why they did not call the police when the guy without shoes did not want to leave: ‘Because it didn’t go far. He wasn’t using aggression or anything, no hitting or anything like that. He was just a drunk guy acting in a “Oh, I don’t want to leave and this and that” kind of way. It was not necessary to get the cops involved.’