



ISSN: 2752-3799

Vol. 2, No. 1 (2022): i-iv

10.19164/jcche.v2i1.1286

Editorial

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One of the eminent French philosopher Alain Badiou's best-known concepts is the idea of the 'Event' (Badiou, 1988). Capitalised to symbolise its significance, a political 'Event' is not merely the occurrence of something cataclysmic that significantly underlines the dominant order's failings, contradictions, and habitual injustices – even though events do tend to occur within the context of existing socio-cultural, political, or economic antagonisms. Rather, the political Event is something of seismic political resonance that has the potential to generate a powerful fidelity to a new order, revise beliefs, instigate new political discourses, or a way of living and governing society. Therefore, such an Event is both destructive and creative. It not only makes the continuation of the old order impossible but unavoidably in the process marks the beginning of something new. The precision and fidelity that the Event inspires symbolic change: moving forward we speak, think, and act through the lens of the Event. Christ's crucifixion was arguably a religious Event. For Badiou, the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution were both examples of political Events. If we look back through history then, 'True Events' that result in substantive change, therefore, are rare.

Thus far, the 21st century has arguably been a century of failed would-be/could-be 'Events'. The global financial crash (GFC) of the late 2000s was calamitous for the global economy and ordinary working people. It exposed the folly of neoliberal ideological beliefs that the masses are best served by allowing economic and financial elites to engage in footloose speculation on global financial markets and demonstrated the vast inequalities opening up between those responsible for the crisis and those most affected by its consequences. At the time, there was great talk that the GFC spelled the end of neoliberal capitalism, that there was no going back, and that the global shockwaves generated by the GFC would propel a radically new political economic order into existence. But the GFC failed to materialise into an 'Event'. It failed to create a

fundamentally new discourse or inspire fidelity toward a radically new way of social life and economic governance.

As we all know, in the aftermath of such a crisis generated by neoliberalism, mainstream politicians from across the political spectrum nevertheless continued to draw on neoliberalism's language, myths, and mottos, positioning the very same logic as the only means out of the crisis. When such politicians drew on the neoliberal falsehood that taxes pay for public spending – an ideological myth that provided the political-economic rationale for austerity as something unpleasant but necessary and inevitable – there was no fundamental challenge forthcoming. The best that could be mustered, it seemed, was an anti-politics which grumbled about the unfairness of the global economy and chanted hollow mantras about the suffering of the 99%. But this did not create a new way of seeing, speaking, and acting in the world. While it was an incident of major historical significance, it did not materialise into a political Event in larger Badiouan sense.

The same could also be said of the 2011 uprisings which saw protests stem from the Arab Spring to political movements, riots and unrest in Europe and North America. Once again, the political order and neoliberal economic value system was questioned as it appeared that the whole world was protesting. It felt that a new world order was imminent and on the horizon. Neoliberalism had failed the world again. The indignation, the anger, the discontent suddenly was collectively present in numerous countries around the world. Yet, despite the noise and unease, nothing emerged of political significance; opposition activists could not muster the energy or support to offer a legitimate alternative. No such Event emerged.

Is the Covid-19 pandemic going to amount to another failed would-be/could-be Event? The presence of a new virus coupled with, in some cases, the widespread use of untested restrictions, produced pandemic context which exposed the fragility of long, globalised, just-in-time supply chains, prompting increased calls for de-globalisation, shortening of supply chains, and increased sovereignty around energy, food, minerals, and other critical resources. The falsity of neoliberal mantras that public spending is funded through tax revenues, as sovereign nations with the power to create currency spent huge sums of money to tackle the pandemic at a time when the tax base was shrinking at an alarming rate. Current issues of inflation stem from supply chain problems, corporate price hikes, and geo-political events rather than pandemic-related public spending. Calls for a 'return to normal' were short-lived, dismissed as either undesirable or impossible, and were replaced by a slogan repeated by political leaders across the world who universally promised to 'build back better'. This was the 'new normal' we were told we would encounter after the lockdowns. Certain commentators even made tongue-in-cheek suggestions that we move away from the Gregorian calendar and its use of BC/BCE and AD/CE, in favour of BC (Before Coronavirus) and AC (After Coronavirus). The ultimate verdict on this remains inconclusive as we continue to feel the ramifications and shockwaves, shockwaves that are further amplified by the war between Russia and Ukraine and a cost-of-living crisis.

The papers in this special issue of *JCCHE* offer up criminological and zemiological analyses of different aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic. All of the papers herein reflect on the political, economic, and socio-cultural context that preceded the pandemic, while also speculating as to

what lies in store for us in the future. Simon Winlow and Emma Winlow consider whether or not the neoliberal era is coming to an end. Implicitly, Winlow and Winlow discuss the macro-economic change generated by the Covid-19 pandemic along the lines of the Badiouan event. They outline how policy and fiscal and monetary responses to the Covid-19 pandemic kicked many of neoliberalism's shibboleths into the long grass. They tentatively argue that one can hear the wheels of history beginning to turn once again, as governments across the world increasingly begin to both speak and act in terms of economic nationalism, sovereignty and security. Nevertheless, they observe that the *language* (if not the practice) of neoliberalism remains a tedious presence on the political stage, a truth exemplified by the recent prime ministerial contest in the UK. Winlow and Winlow's paper, therefore, examines this contradictory state of affairs in its wider political context, with serious implications for criminology and zemiology.

Anthony Ellis's contribution provides a critical forecast on violent crime as the world emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. Focusing primarily on the United Kingdom, Ellis offers up a contextual analysis of violence in Britain prior to the pandemic, considers the impact Covid-19 and lockdown measures had on violence during the pandemic, but most significantly provides a forecast on violence post-pandemic. In his forecast of violence, Ellis's timely article considers the amalgamation of the legacy of austerity, the impact of lockdowns, and the current cost-of-living crises alongside wider tensions generated by climate change, politics, and cultural issues.

The potential Event invites the possibility that political, economic and social life can be different thereafter its evolution. In their critical piece which focusses on the introduction of the Covid-19 vaccination passport in many countries, Telford, Treadwell and Bushell evaluate the use of the 'Covid-19 passport' which governments brought into use to supposedly 'manage the transmission' of the virus. They show how the scheme was scientifically and ethically unsound, showing how it violates ethical principles of informed consent and further entrenches some unvaccinated peoples' sense of political and medical mistrust. They frame the passports' introduction within a wider context of the death of the social and the 'Other' which they posit are part of our potential shift towards a post-social, contactless world where a primacy to technology has precedence over actual physical human interaction. All this falls within a general trend, they suggest, of increased technological and digital surveillance as part of a 'surveillance capitalism'.

During the social void of the lockdowns, the surrogate world of digital entertainment was embraced even more so as a means to distance ourselves from the Real and in his article examining the potential dystopian futures presented to us in film and series mediums, Briggs critically analyses the potential for these stories to play out in real life. Using such portrayals of end-of-world scenarios and dystopian future films and series as possible avenues for our potential trajectory, Briggs speculates about our future in a post-Covid world using aspects of Žižek's (2018) critical discussions on *hope* and *hopelessness* and Tom Moylan's (2020) concept of the 'dystopian structure of feeling'. In the main, Briggs argues, the power of such fictitious future depictions of political, economic and social life act as the disavowal for our current potential trajectory and

simultaneously act as the emotional cushion which removes us from engaging with the gravity of our current predicament.

In reality, as we saw quite quickly in the pandemic context, politicians and policymakers were far from being concerned with what was happening to precariously placed groups. Policies and approaches - engaged in the name of preventing viral transmissions - in more ways than one, did detriment to the most vulnerable groups in society. Reporting from Bulgaria, Dimitar Panchev ethnographically documents what such policies did to the already-socially-stigmatised Roma and Gypsy populations who, in the wake of the restrictions, needed to continue to generate money in the societal margins. He posits that the restrictions not only reduced their marginalised activities but acted as a magnifying glass on their activities when they did not conform to what was expected of them thus inviting further intervention from the authorities.

In the book review section, Emily Setty offers reflects on Briggs et. al's stand-out book, *Lockdown: Social Harm in the Covid-19 Era*, which offers up a comprehensive and critical overview of the multifarious harms that emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly those stemming from the various non-pharmaceutical interventions - such as lockdowns and other public health restrictions - which became the dominant mode of tackling the virus.

Finally, in our 'Conversations' section, Professor Simon Winlow sits down to talk with Thomas Raymen about his recent book *The Enigma of Social Harm: The Problem of Liberalism* (Routledge, 2022). Among other topics, Professor Winlow quizzes Raymen on some of the key ideas of the book; the nature of human flourishing and its role and relationship in defining social harm; whether or not harm has any positive role to play in our lives; and whether or not fields such as criminology and zemiology should simply return to philosophy.

On that note, we warmly welcome you to the issue and hope you enjoy.

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