

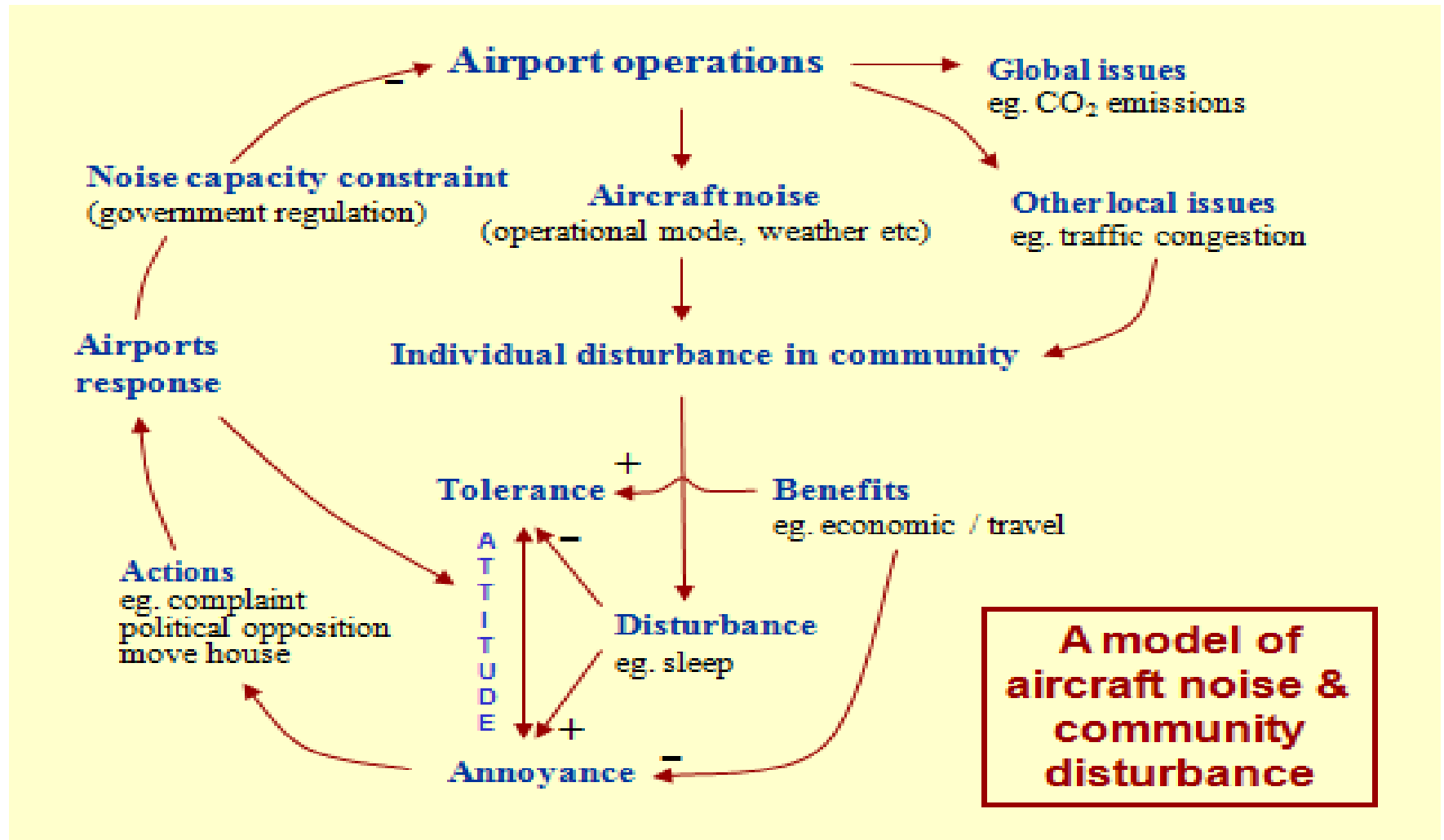
How can complaints be used as an index of community disturbance?

Dr Ken Hume

Research Fellow, Manchester Metropolitan
University, UK

k.i.hume@mmu.ac.uk

Model-link of complaints and community tolerance



Ideal complaint system

- Public awareness of the system
- Ease of contact and use
- Appropriate recording and logging of details of the complaint
- Computerized a/c noise and tracking system
- Empathetic staff
- Acknowledgement, follow-up and action
- Comprehensive analysis, reporting and archiving
- Transparent, audit and feedback to committee

Raw complaints – problems:

1. Classification

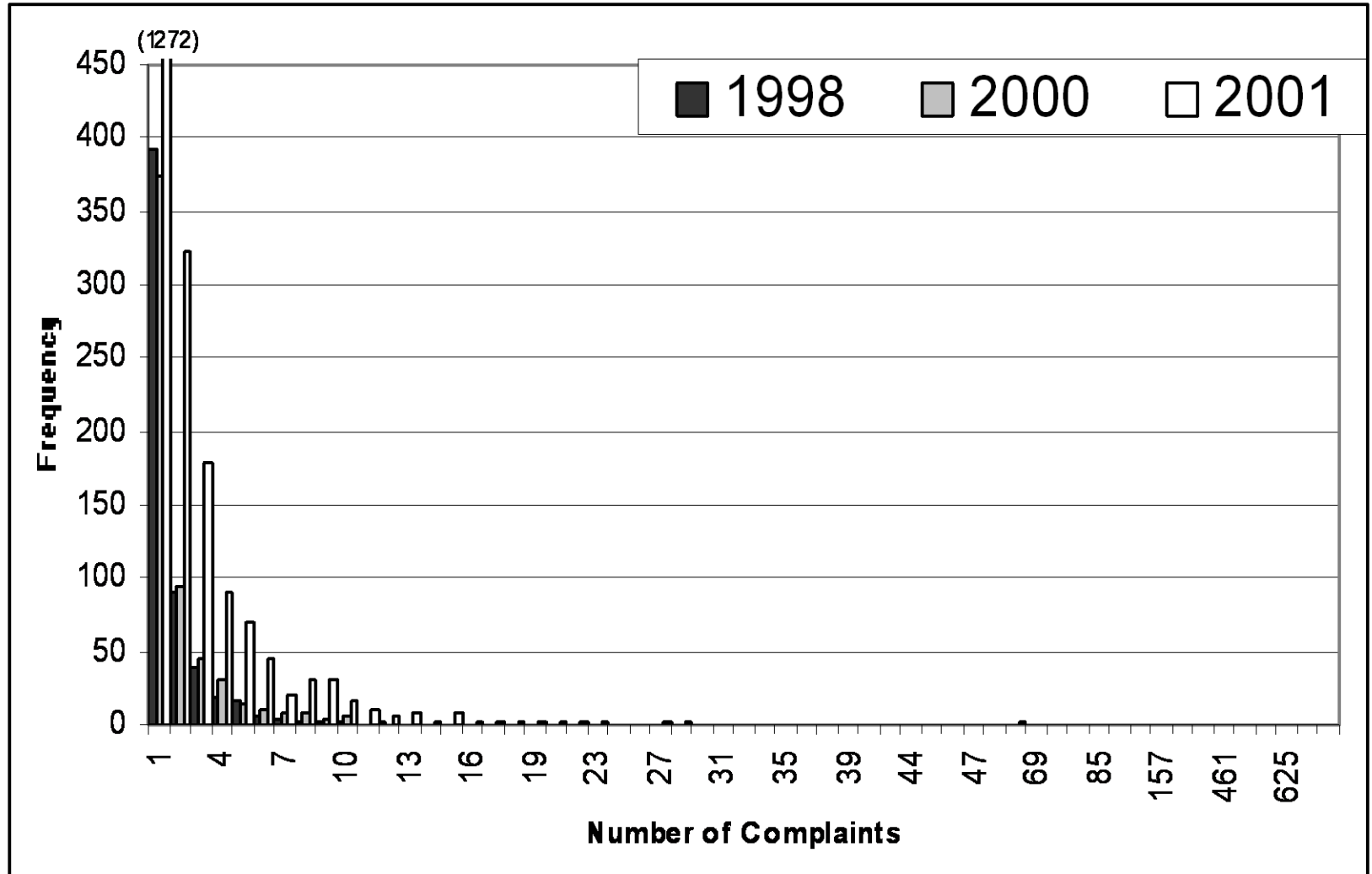
- 2 types of complaint general & specific
general - non-specific accumulation of issues, useful but limited
specific – linked to an ANE (aircraft noise event)
- Need a/c (aircraft) tracking and community positioned noise monitors linked to airport to check validity and for full analysis
- Collect as much data as possible (comprehensive data logging sheet) eg. address; length of residency; age; nature of disturbance; frequency of complaining; depends on communication mode (avoid multiple e-mail problem)

Raw complaints – problems:

2. Serial complainers

- Need to distinguish between serial and ‘normal’ complainers
- Serial complainers skew the data
- Arbitrary serial complainer definition at MAN airport >50 complaints pa
- Always express summary data with total complaints and total number of complainers
- At MAN tend to be male, well-educated, higher socioeconomic status, living in expensive houses in good neighbourhoods

***Frequency distributions for number of complaints (log scale)
made by complainants in years 1998, 2000 and 2001:***



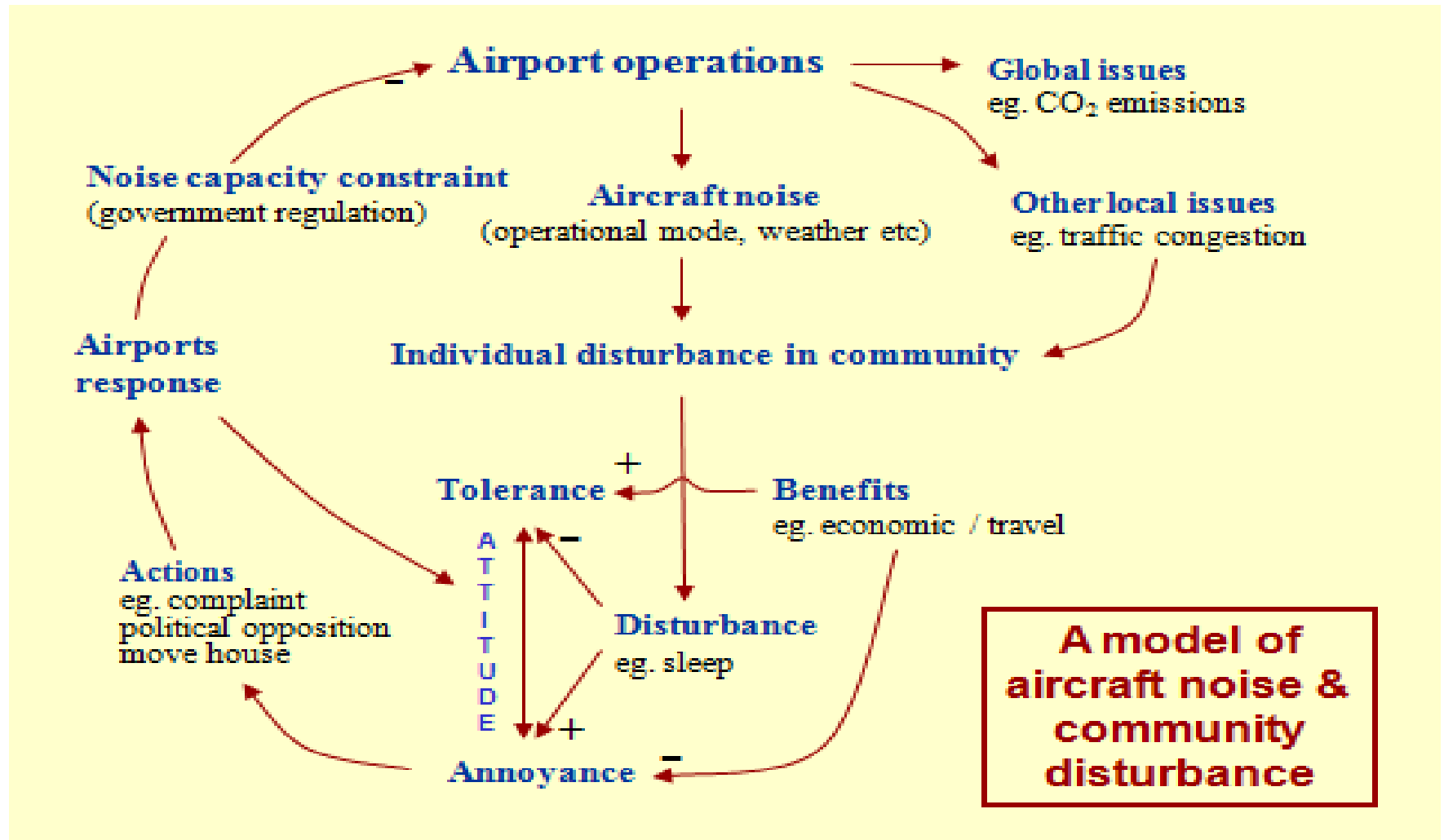
Advantages of a comprehensive complaint handling system:

- Continuous timeline of the level of disturbance/tolerance of the community (compared with survey data which gives a snap-shot)
- Rapid feed-back
- Relatively cost effective (offered free) but costs in setting-up and running
- Identifies local patterns of particular concern
- Could be used to Identify the nature of the disturbance (noise & behavioural affects)
- Provides a time-course of trends and peaks so the affect of operations and initiatives can be assessed
- Acts as a community 'pressure valve' to vent frustration and improve communication besides a source of information
- Airport response allows mechanism for dialogue (improve attitude)
- Standardization across airports would allow more meaningful comparisons – need universal metric!
- New technologies (GIS) are available and ideally suited
- If you don't use them intelligently Airport opposition will!

Complaint metrics

- Serial complainants need to be identified and controlled, therefore express data as both number of complaints and complainants
- More ATMs (air traffic movements) produce more complaints, so need to express complaints per ATM eg. Per 1,000 ATM
- More densely populated areas over flown greater the population to potentially complain, so express per 1,000 residents potentially affected (modelling)
- Temporal factors need defining (time-of-day, day-of-week & month)
- Suggested metric: No. of complaints/ATM/1,000 residents (per time variable)

Model-link of complaints and community tolerance



OMEGA project- UK (07-09/10)

- Aim – to investigate aviation sustainability issues with UK Government funding
- 8 areas were chosen including Noise issues
- Noise Project followed on from Australian (DOTARS) early 2000 & TNIP (Transparent Noise Information Package) – Dave Southgate
- Network of 9 Universities in UK formed
- Investigated aircraft noise information options that are less technical & more transparent to the non-expert to aid communication and dialogue

OMEGA

- Evaluated public understanding of conventional (eg. Leq contours) and supplementary metrics via focus groups
- Most metrics (eg. Leq) too complex for lay person to understand
- Much preferred site specific information with bar charts illustrating the numbers of events within ranges of maximum sound levels for given periods of the day
- OMEGA (RIP ?) Governmental cut-backs!