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Crime Prevention Policy: Current State and Prospects

Paper for II European Colloquium on
Crime and Public Policy in Europe
Buchenbach/Freiburg,
September 3-7, 1989

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August 25, 1989

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Crime Prevention Policy: Current State and Prospects

1. In this paper, I will not try to give an overview of the current body of knowledge about crime prevention. Neither will I give detailed guidelines for future policies or experiments. I understand HEUNI has commissioned J. Graham of the Home Office to prepare a draft of such a comprehensive report, in preparation of the next UN Conference on Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders. Instead, I will just try to make a contribution to the debate by reflecting upon some current trends. In the course of this, I will argue for a new conceptual model, covering both various forms of crime prevention, victim assistance and the activities of the criminal justice system.

2. **Subject matter**

Crime prevention is an often used concept with a loosely defined meaning. According to Johnson (1987) prevention is based on four interrelated ideas: 1) that something evil unpleasant or destructive is impending; 2) that this eventuality can be forestalled by human insight and ingenuity; 3) that much of the preventive activities are outside the boundaries of the criminal justice system; and 4) that human intervention should be initiated *before* the undesirable event occurs.

Building upon these ideas, I propose the following tentative definition of crime prevention: *the total of all policies, measures and techniques, outside the boundaries of the criminal justice system, aiming at the reduction of the various kinds of damage caused by acts defined as criminal by the state.*

This definition covers fear reduction programmes, since fear can be seen as a damaging result of (perceived) criminality. It also covers, as we will argue later, victim assistance policies since these can be viewed as forms of damage control.

The most contentious part of the definition is the term "outside the boundaries of the criminal justice system". In the 20th century, criminal lawyers in Europe emphasize the constructive, preventive effects of criminal justice interventions (the influence of just desert philosophers being largely limited to the USA). In this view criminal justice itself is

a form of crime prevention. Although the capacity of the criminal justice system to prevent crime seems inherently limited, its activities can indeed be interpreted de facto as a kind of crime prevention. In fact, the term "crime prevention" in the title of the United Nations' conferences on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders seems to refer primarily to the deterrence effects of criminal justice interventions upon the general public.

In our view, the administration of criminal law and crime prevention in its narrow sense are both essential parts of an all-encompassing criminal or crime policy. In practice there will often be an overlap between both kinds of interventions. Drugs treatment programmes, for instance, will often be made available for both convicted offenders as a special penal measure and for other categories of addicts as a voluntary option. For both analytical and organizational purposes it is important, however, to distinguish sharply between crime prevention and criminal justice. In order to make this point, the Dutch government has introduced the term *administrative* or *social crime prevention* for what is defined here as crime prevention. In the USA the term *community crime prevention* is often employed for similar reasons (Rosenbaum, 1988).

3. Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention

In the literature, a distinction is often made between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention (Kaiser, 1988; Friday, 1983; Lab, 1988). This typology is inspired by the public health model. Primary prevention involves attempts to lower rates of new cases by initiating some measures directed at the general public to counteract perceived harmful circumstances before the onset of the problem. Secondary prevention involves some form of intervention directed at groups or individuals diagnosed as having early symptoms of the problem. Diagnostic techniques are supposed to discover the especially crime prone (the risk groups). Tertiary prevention is directed at offenders to forestall further crimes. As discussed above, we prefer to keep prevention through punishment (or involuntary treatment of convicted offenders) outside our concept of crime prevention. Some forms of voluntary aftercare could rightly be seen as tertiary crime prevention in our view, though.

According to Lab (1988) primary prevention is directed at the elimination of conditions of the physical and social environment that provide opportunities or motivations for criminal acts. This definition includes opportunity reduction by potential victims. Secondary prevention are measures directed at conditions in selected environments with high crime rates (Lab, 1988). Kube (1986), unlike Lab, defines all forms of opportunity reduction by potential victims as secondary prevention.

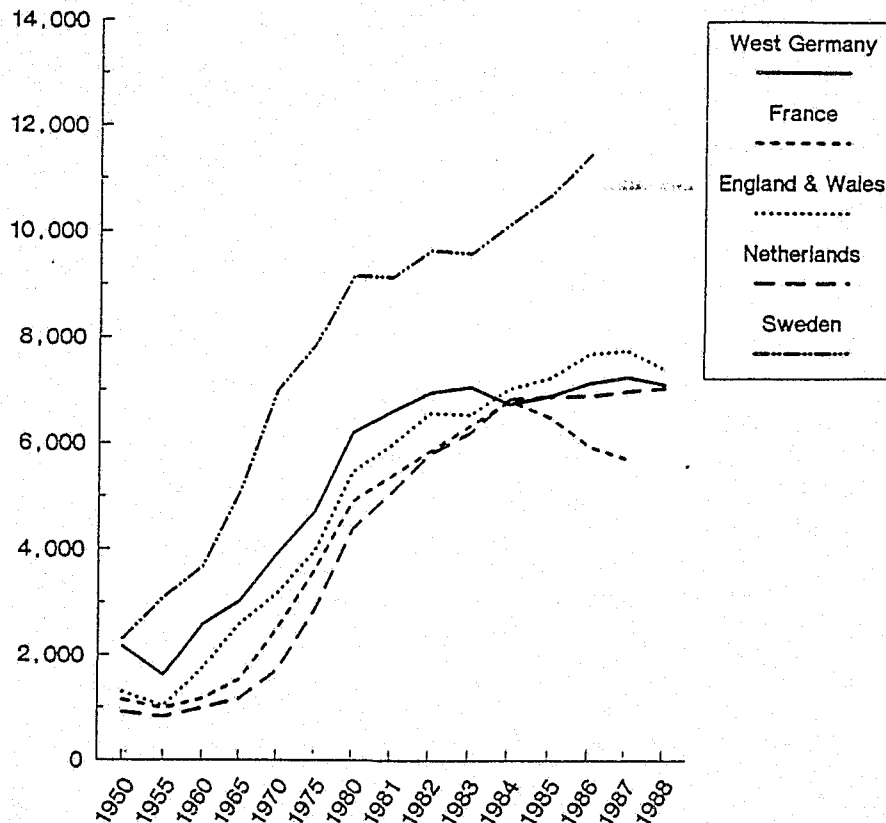
Lab and Kube like Brantingham and Faust (1976) do not differentiate between policies directed at victims and those directed at offenders directly. They define victim-oriented prevention as part of either primary or secondary prevention in general.

In this paper we will argue for a conceptual model distinguishing from the outset between victim-oriented and offender-oriented crime prevention. We will also argue for the retention of the distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

4. Victim oriented crime prevention

The recent history of crime prevention policies has not been quite the same in the various Western countries but some general patterns can yet be discerned. In the sixties crime prevention was often equated with programmes of social reform (Jeffery, 1977). It was advocated as an alternative to the punitive policies of the criminal justice authorities. The dominant notion was that crime could be cured by better housing, schooling, welfare and employment policies. As Wilson (1975) has pointed out, it is ironic that this ideology was most popular in a period experiencing both rapidly improving social and economic conditions and exploding crime rates. The development of registered crime rates clearly showed that more prosperity did not lead to less crime. To underline this argument, it can be pointed out that in Western Europe registered crime started to rise first and foremost in Sweden (precisely the country whose economy was less damaged by the Second World War and which was the first to build a welfare state). An overview of the trend of registered crime in five European countries, is presented in the figure 1.

Figure 1: Crimes known to the police in five European countries



As a commentary to the Swedish crime boom Svensson (1986) observed "In the 20th century - the criminality of the destitute has been superseded by what may be called welfare criminality" (cited by Young, 1988).

In the seventies, the concept of crime prevention through social reform gradually lost its credibility. Since the preventive concept had failed, the expenditures for the criminal justice system were expanded in many countries (Young, 1988). In the same period a new kind of crime prevention activities became fashionable which didn't aim at (pre)delinquents but at those at risk to be victimized by crime. Crime prevention became victim-oriented.

The new buzz words were: target hardening, crime prevention through environmental design, defensible space, situational crime prevention and opportunity reduction (Newman, 1972, Mayhew et al., 1976; Brantingham and Brantingham, 1981). It was subsequently understood that, in order to be effective, such measures need to be combined with organized surveillance

(Van Dijk, Junger-Tas, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1988). A second wave of crime prevention initiatives in the eighties aimed to strengthen informal social control by means of neighborhood watch, private security, caretakers etc. (Hope, Shaw, 1988).

The common element of victim-oriented crime prevention is that potential victims are exhorted to take measures to protect themselves against criminal risks. Crime policy is no longer the exclusive responsibility of the state. Several typologies of such protective, defensive or community crime prevention measures are proposed in the literature. A distinction is often made between technical and social measures (technoprevention and socioprevention). Another important distinction is between measures taken by individuals and those taken by social groups.

On the basis of these two criteria a typology can be construed as presented in figure 2.

Figure 2: Typology of victim-oriented crime prevention strategies

	individuals	social institutions
technical	locks and bolts burglar alarm	CCTV urban design
social	neighborhood watch	private security professional surveillance

5. Primary, secondary and tertiary victim policies

The public health categories of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention are rarely applied to victim-oriented prevention as such. It seems useful, however, to distinguish between three different policies, targeted at groups of the population with a varying degree of exposure to criminal victimization.

Some measures are recommendable to the public at large. Examples are the installation of adequate locks in houses and steering column blocks in cars and the taking of elementary safety precautions. General social measures like adequate street lighting, surveillance in public transport systems,

and responsible planning and design also fall in this category of *primary victim-oriented crime prevention*.

Special measures must be taken by groups of the population with high victimization risks, such as personnel of banks or petrol stations and owners of expensive property living in detached houses. Several businesses are by nature of their activities exposed to crime (e.g. department stores, soccer clubs). The protective measure against such special risks can be defined as *secondary victim-oriented crime prevention*.

Tertiary victim-oriented crime prevention, finally, consists firstly of protective measures taken by actual victims to prevent further victimization. The prevention of victim recidivism is indeed an important subgoal of many victim assistance programmes. In our view the emotional and legal support given to actual crime victims are also part of tertiary prevention, since such activities seek to minimize the harm done by a crime. In public health prevention at this level, individuals suffering an advanced stage of disease are treated to prevent death or permanent disability. Interventions which try to help crime victims to overcome their victimization with as little lasting effects as possible, seem very similar.

The borderline between primary and secondary crime victim-oriented prevention will often not be clear. Protective measures taken by young women to prevent sexual harassment can be seen as either primary or secondary prevention.

The distinctions at issue have several theoretical and practical implications. It brings into focus that some measures seek to lower average victimization risks (primary prevention) and others try to reduce special risks to an average level (secondary prevention). Displacement effects can perhaps be better understood if a distinction is made between primary and secondary prevention. Operationally, there are several important implications. If the special risks are generated by commercial activities, the responsibility for preventive measures will usually lie primarily with the institutions itself. Most governments require banks, for example, to install a reasonable level of security precautions in their offices. Secondary crime prevention policies will often be facilitated because the target group can be made aware of its special risks (and so of its interest

in prevention). Insurance companies promote secondary crime prevention amongst their customers. The task to reach a limited target group is also easier than in the case of primary prevention programmes aiming at larger parts of the population. By and large secondary victim-oriented crime prevention seems to be an easier avenue for preventive policies than primary, overall prevention campaigns. A long term crime prevention policy, however, should also seek to reduce criminal opportunities created by the public at large, including businesses and state institutions.

6. Prospects and limitations of victim-oriented crime prevention

Prospects

Crime prevention in Western Europe has been dominated since the seventies by the concept of protection against criminal threats, just as in Northern America. Interestingly in France, but also in Italy and Spain crime prevention of the social reform type seems to have retained its appeal (Waller, 1989).

Much progress has been made so far with secondary prevention in particular. Banks across Western Europe have improved their security. Largely without any initiatives by the state, private security firms have grown in number and size. In the area of primary crime prevention, the developments may have been somewhat slower. However, various forms of target hardening are much more widely applied now than fifteen years ago. In order to get some indication of the distribution of crime prevention measures, we have collected data about the expenditures on private security firms, the purchase of household security equipment and state-run crime prevention programmes of five European countries (see figure 3). We have added data on expenditures on police and prisons.

Figure 3: Indicators of annual expenditure on crime policies in five European countries in the mid eighties, per 100,000 inhabitants in million \$

	police officers	private security officers	prisons	household security measures expenditures	expenditure on crime prevention	total
WEST GERMANY	12,4	8,0	1,5	0,42		22,30
FRANCE	10,4	5,2	0,8	0,42	0,01	16,79
ENGLAND & WALES	10,0	8,4	2,2	0,34	0,25	21,21
HETTERLANDS	9,6	3,0	1,0	0,28	0,04	13,96
SWEDEN	7,2	10,0	2,7	0,42	0,02	20,39

Note: the annual costs per police officer and private security officer are estimated at \$40.000 for all countries

Source: HEUNI, 1985/Council of Europe, 1988
 Frost and Sullivan, 1988
 Ministry of Justice, 1984
 Van Dijk, 1988
 Home Office, 1988

Private security is much more prominent in Sweden, FRG and England and Wales than in France and Holland. The rates of household security sales are less divergent, but somewhat lower in England and again Holland. Government expenditures on crime prevention are modest in comparison to those on prisons and police forces across Europe. The expenditures on crime prevention are extremely low in the FRG, since federal programmes do not exist and only some of the states have developed concrete policies. The expenditures in the UK are largely part of other government programmes such as employment schemes. Expenditures on Home Office crime prevention projects are of marginal importance (app. 0.02 million dollars per 100,000 inhabitants, mainly spent on massmedia campaigns). By comparison the annual expenditure of around 0.04 million dollars in Holland seems rather high. The Dutch expenditures have been politically justified with reference to even higher expenditures which would be required for criminal justice if prevention would not be promoted adequately.

Although expenditures on crime prevention by both the private and public sector have gone up in the eighties, there is still ample scope for further

growth. Insurance companies seem ready to promote secondary crime prevention more actively. Marketing research predicts a continuous annual growth of 10 percent in household security equipment. Similar growth rates are expected by private security firms. Plant managers are becoming increasingly aware of the economic importance of crime prevention as a part of a wider risk control policy, also covering computerized data processing (Van Soomeren, 1989). Local governments have likewise been sensitized to the importance of crime prevention as part of their efforts to improve the quality of life in urban areas. The number of neighborhood schemes is rapidly expanding in the UK. On the continent surveillance is strengthened by the employment of more caretakers, busconductors, city wardens etc.

Victim-oriented crime prevention seems not yet to have reached its full practical potential. Many governments are still hesitant to invest serious money in it. Field and Hope (1989) have persuasively argued on economic grounds for government subsidies in the market for primary crime prevention. Other important priorities for the government are research and development, the development of European standards and a better regulation of the activities of private security firms.

Effectiveness

Evaluation research on target hardening and other forms of victim-oriented prevention has so far yielded ambiguous results (Mayhew, 1984; Rosenbaum, 1988; Lab, 1988). The ability to reduce specific types of criminal activity in specific situations has been demonstrated clearly. The value of such effects is often limited, however, by a displacement of the avoided crimes to other locations or by the substitution by new types of crime. Displacement or substitution effects are no ground for a general debunking of victim-oriented prevention. It should yet be acknowledged that successful offender-oriented prevention may have more lasting benefits for the community at large.

Fear

Fear reduction has been defined here as part of crime prevention. In practice, the relationship between crime and fear reduction is far from

simple. Some measures or policies may serve both goals. Some may serve one of them exclusively. Another possibility is that certain policies have positive results in one area but compound problems in others.

Several victim-oriented policies have been found to reduce fear, without having a measurable impact upon crime levels (Fowler et al., 1979). Security surveys, crime prevention information campaigns, the redesigning of neighborhoods and community projects have sometimes been found to lead to intensified fear (Winkel, 1987; Rosenbaum, 1988). Fear or anxiety should not always be interpreted as a social loss. In some situations it may even have important benefits. The fear-inducing side-effects of some victim-oriented prevention policies need always to be made part of their cost-benefits-equation, (Shapland and Vagg, 1988). The gradual greying of the Western European population in the next decades may make the side effects of intensified fear more important, since the elderly are particularly sensitive to fear-invoking information.

Saturation and resistance

Although there is still scope for a further growth in the purchase of security measures in most Western countries, it will become increasingly difficult to change the attitudes of those remaining parts of the population who have not yet been persuaded. To the extent that primary prevention has become more common, larger investments are required to bring about further growth. Mass media campaigns tend not to reach, or to affect, those least inclined to apply security measures (id est the ultimate target group of such campaigns). The younger population has a large share of individuals with an easy-going lifestyle. Risk taking in all fields of life is part of their way of life. This part of the population seems to be highly resistant to the idea of protective measures.

7. A renaissance of offender-oriented crime prevention

In recent years a series of criticisms has been levelled against victim-oriented crime prevention. Currie (1988) criticizes the use of an often superficial concept of "community" and the tendency to see criminals as dangerous outsiders which must be kept out of one's territory (the exclusionary vision). He also mentions the lack of awareness that offenders too are members of a community living in particular neighborhoods.

Interestingly, similar ideas are floating around in the world of business security managers and consultants. Recent publications in The Netherlands and the UK about business security focus upon the internal sources of crime: theft and fraud by employees has become a new priority (Shapland and Wiles, 1989). Crime prevention is consequently redefined as a part of broader social policies of companies and not as a specialized response to threats from the outside.

There are signs that crime prevention in at least some Western societies will once again become oriented towards tackling the social problems, constituting the background of (serious) crime. The pendulum may soon start to swing back. In France, the UK and The Netherlands crime prevention is now relaunched as part of integrated urban renewal projects tackling both unemployment, housing problems and crime in deteriorated city areas. In this new stage, some of the older preventive solutions may be given a better - and perhaps fairer - chance. More emphasis will probably be put on the importance of adequate socialization processes and social control than in the "anarchistic" sixties (Currie, 1988). Future buzz words may be normative training, selfdiscipline, (electronic) surveillance and risk control.

New forms of crime prevention through social reform will lead to a renewed interest in offender-oriented crime prevention. This makes it worthwhile to reconsider the conventional distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary offender-oriented crime prevention and the various relationships with criminal justice.

8. Criminal justice and offender-oriented prevention

According to Steenhuis (1986) insufficient attention is usually given to the various target groups of criminal justice actions. Distinctions should primarily be made between actual offenders, potential offenders and what might be termed the conformists (i.e. citizens who are law abiding). In Steenhuis' view the resources of the criminal justice system should be allocated in such a way as to have maximum impact upon all three target groups. The arresting, sentencing and treatment of actual offenders should not be the sole priority of the system. The other two target groups must be catered for as well. Potential offenders need to be deterred from

offending. Reasonably high perceived detection rates are of the essence here. Random road checks may be waste of time as a means to arrest actual drunken drivers, but they can be quite efficient in reminding potential drunken drivers of the risk of an arrest. The third target group of the conformists does not need to be deterred. Their natural support for the law needs to be fostered, however. Service oriented policy is an important policy here. Good public relations can help to retain a conformist's respect for the law.

The three target groups, discussed by Steenhuis, bear a close resemblance to the target groups of primary, secondary and tertiary offender-oriented crime prevention. The group of law abiding citizens is the first target group of offender-oriented crime prevention. Examples of such primary offender-oriented crime prevention programmes are normative training programmes and truancy prevention in primary schools (Kury, 1988; Van Dijk, Junger-Tas, 1988). In my opinion, general social, economic, health and housing policies should not be viewed as crime prevention (such policies may have crime prevention side effects but have quite other principal goals). For the criminal justice system itself the public at large may be a more important target group than is generally recognized.

Examples of secondary offender-oriented crime prevention are employment, training and recreational programmes targeted at special high risk groups, such as school drop outs or drugs addicts or other socially marginalized groups. Several of the conventional child protection measures belong to this category as well. The same group is also the target of formal social control and deterrence by the criminal justice system.

Actual offenders are a prime concern for the criminal justice systems. Tertiary prevention is important in the form of conventional after care for ex-prisoners. Other examples are diversionary justice within the community or private justice exerted by businesses in cases of fraud or theft by employees. In The Netherlands community service or compensation is arranged for young vandals and shoplifters as a diversionary option (Van Dijk, Junger-Tas, 1988). The last programmes are generally viewed as crime prevention, but are supervised by the prosecutors and the police.

9. A comprehensive conceptual model

Some authors have tried to fit in opportunity reduction measures in the three overall categories of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Others have included criminal justice as well. In my view, it is difficult to qualify opportunity reduction logically as either directed at the public at large (primary prevention), at potential offenders (secondary prevention) or at recidivists (tertiary prevention). Most forms of such situational crime prevention are supposed to deter both ordinary citizens, prae-delinquents and experienced offenders from committing crimes. The health model distinctions do not seem to make much sense for this type of crime prevention. However, the public health model can be applied usefully to victims as a separate category. A distinction can be made between the general public, those at risk to be victimized and actual victims. Such an application is indeed rather obvious since victims can be seen even more readily as persons with a health problem than offenders (violent crime actually being recognized by the medical profession as a major health problem). A major advantage of this analytic approach is that it gives victim support a logical place within crime prevention, as tertiary victim-oriented prevention.

Criminal justice activities are traditionally interpreted as being offender-oriented and can indeed be qualified according to the three target groups law abiding citizens, potential law breakers and actual offenders. As stated in the beginning, we prefer to reserve the concept of crime prevention for activities outside the criminal justice system. Our main arguments are that most criminal justice activities are oriented towards the infliction of punishment upon offenders and for that reason are organized differently from crime prevention.

In figure 4 we have presented a comprehensive conceptual model or typology of crime prevention along the lines discussed so far.

Figure 4: A conceptual model of crime prevention including criminal justice

	primary prevention	secondary prevention	tertiary prevention
victim oriented	locks and bolts CPTED neighborhood watch caretakers	preventive measures of the elderly high risk groups risk control by companies	victim support legal aid state compensation restitution
offender oriented	general prevention* surveillance normative training truancy prevention	deterrence youth clubs (streetcorner) drugs treatment	rehabilitation treatment after care halfway houses diversion

*) Items printed in bold letters refer to activities of the criminal justice system

We acknowledge that some information policies and surveillance activities of the police are a form of non-punitive crime prevention. In The Netherlands crime prevention *stricto sensu* is divided into *police-based crime prevention* and *social crime prevention*. Police-based crime prevention (*politiële criminaliteitspreventie*) consists of the giving of advice to the public/business about security precautions and of supporting social crime prevention by police forces, e.g. by assisting in crime analysis, backing up community projects with special activities of patrol units or the CID. This distinction is reflected in the organizational structure of the newly established Directorate for Crime Prevention of the Ministry of Justice. The Directorate possesses one main unit responsible for social crime prevention and one responsible for police-based crime prevention. Victim support is a responsibility of both units.

10. Discussion

The proposed model or typology is unfortunately, rather complicated. However, in my view the different dimensions of offenders and victims must be reflected in any sophisticated conceptual model concerning crime prevention. Even in the epidemiology of crime one dimensional measures of crime do not suffice. Offenses, offenders and victims need to be measured separately. The prevalence rates of active offenders are quite different

from the rates of persons coping with effects of past victimizations. The one year incidence rates of criminal acts and criminal victimizations differ as well. We also think that the distinction between interventions directed at the various stages or degrees of being either an offender or a victim are analytically useful for both categories. We finally want to argue that crime prevention and criminal justice should be seen as related but conceptually different activities.

I want to finish with a few thoughts about the policy implications of the proposed model. In many countries crime prevention policies in the period 1975 till 1985 was largely of the primary and secondary victim-oriented type (locks and bolts, neighborhood watch). In this stage, responsibility for crime prevention was largely be put in the hands of the police as part of their public relations policies. Within an overall crime policy such activities were of marginal importance. A new situation arises if tertiary victim policies and offender-oriented prevention policies become additional priorities. These new activities need to be coordinated with various activities of the criminal justice system (with the uniformed police, CID, prosecutions, after care et al.). The concept of an integrated crime policy, the dream of 19th century positivist criminology, becomes topical again. So becomes, the question of organizational "ownership" or control over such a policy.

In my view, an integrated crime policy needs to be based upon a partnership between local government and the police. In many countries, the prosecution office will be the third party. At the national or state and federal level the Minister of Justice should be made responsible for coordination and support of local policies.

At all levels, concrete policies should start with an empirical assessment of the crime problem as issue. Victimization surveys and self-report delinquency studies are indispensable tools for such an assessment. Subsequently, the proposed model could be used as a checklist for the formation of a policy plan to tackle the existing crime problems. Each of the identified crime problems will require a special mixture of the various types of interventions set out in the model. For instance, in the case of a high rate of armed robbery, the optimal mix might consist of a secondary victim-oriented prevention (sophisticated protection of local banks,

training of bank personnel concerning coping strategies); b. tertiary victim prevention (victim support to actual victims); c. criminal justice activities (special squad of the CID to investigate local gangs); and d. tertiary offender-oriented prevention (after care programmes for bankrobbers released from prison). In the case of a high rate of vandalism against public property the optimal mix will of course be quite different. It may consist of special courses in primary schools (primary offender-oriented prevention), target hardening of public buildings at vulnerable spots (secondary victim-oriented prevention) and community service orders for young vandals (criminal justice and tertiary offender-oriented prevention).

The proposed model can be used in the same way in courses on crime prevention planning.

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