

## THE CONJUNCTION OF CRIMINAL OPPORTUNITY - A TOOL FOR CLEAR, 'JOINED-UP' THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME REDUCTION

Eklom, P. (2000). The Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity - a Tool for Clear, 'Joined-Up' Thinking about Community Safety and Crime Reduction', in Ballintyne, S., Pease, K., and McLaren, V. (eds.), *Secure Foundations: Key Issues in Crime Prevention, Crime Reduction and Community Safety*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

### Introduction

Recent developments promise to give considerable impetus to community safety and crime reduction (CSCR) in England and Wales. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, accompanied by substantial official guidance, places local, partnership, effort in this field on a statutory basis. The Audit Commission's recent report on Community Safety suggests how best value may be achieved by the partnerships. And a £250m, three-year national Crime Reduction Programme has been launched, to develop knowledge of what is cost-effective across the entire range from early intervention among children at risk of offending, to design against crime, to sentencing and treatment of convicted offenders. The strategy has the particular aim of ensuring that the knowledge gained is incorporated in mainstream policy and practice.

There is an emerging consensus indicated in these developments and elsewhere that cost-effective and appropriate practical action in CSCR must be **evidence-based** as well as experience-based. But this evidence - of what works, and what is cost-effective - is currently both inadequate and insufficient. It is inadequate because there is still a severe lack of **reliable evaluation results** for thorough coverage of the field. It is insufficient because the effectiveness of an intervention usually depends on the particular social and physical **context** in which it is implemented. The context moreover includes any other interventions which may together be part of a package (such as lighting *and* CCTV *and* enhanced police patrols). The evidence and experience must, therefore, be much more than a pile of disconnected (and sometimes inconsistent) observations and results. It must be **organised** through **clear principles** reflecting an understanding of the causes of crime and how to plausibly intervene in those causes in specific contexts. This covers that majority of cases where knowledge of 'what works' is currently missing, or its applicability to particular circumstances is unknown.

The principles themselves should ideally derive from **theories** that are clear and tested (or at least plausible). However, the available criminological theories have limitations in their turn. Theories are notorious for only covering part of the field of 'things to be explained'; they overlap, compete for explanation and may be untested or actually already proven wrong.

Despite recent attempts at integration, the theoretical basis for deriving practical principles to support good quality CSCR remains very patchy. But practitioners facing particular crime or safety problems cannot wait for theory or research to be 'finished' - despite major gaps in what these cover, they must intervene when they have to.

Shortcomings of evidence and theory are widely acknowledged but a further, rarely-discussed problem is the lack of a good **conceptual framework** for CSCR. Practitioners are significantly hindered by shaky concepts and loose, conflicting and inconsistent terms. This is a state of affairs that could destabilise the whole edifice and prevent the practice of CSCR reaching its full potential as a **professional discipline** which is equivalent, for example, to health sciences. (Interestingly, a similar approach is being pursued within the community development context.) In the absence of such foundations, much of the effort and enthusiasm currently being put into CSCR could be wasted in action that is of poor quality or inappropriately matched to the crime problem targeted. In this chapter I will argue that there is a serious need for some work to develop such a framework covering the entire field of activity. After expanding upon the inadequacy of the status quo I present my own attempt at a framework, developed in a practical context, drawing together 'what works' knowledge, strategic policy, practical principles and theory into a set of high-level concepts. The aim is to support local Crime and Disorder Partnership action and that of the Crime Reduction Programme.

The starting point for the framework was earlier work of my own, which stemmed from involvement in the Safer Cities Programme and other crime prevention activity, and drew on a range of earlier schemata in the field. Based on this, definitions were further developed and agreed by a national steering group with a remit to work towards arrangements, and a curriculum, for education and training in CSCR. Its membership included senior representatives of the former Home Office Crime Prevention Agency and Crime Prevention College, the police, probation service, former local government associations, Crime Concern, NACRO, academics and others. A related group subsequently convened to produce guidance material on training for the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The framework was further developed in that context and appeared, in abbreviated form, in the guidance website ([www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact/cstrng5.htm](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact/cstrng5.htm)).

### **Muddling through - not good enough**

Society's ways of attempting to reduce crime and promote community safety are many and varied - from imprisonment of robbers to 'motor' schemes for joyriders, from better locks to puppet shows with a moral, from family support to fines, from police patrolling to publicity campaigns urging self-protection. Policymakers, practitioners and academics within each domain of crime control have their own traditional language and concepts. These differ in significant ways. Some focus on criminal events in the community while others focus on the convicted offender. There is a serious cultural divide between those in practice, policy and research who pursue the situational approach versus those who favour offender-oriented action (often known as 'criminality prevention'). The formal Criminal Justice System is built around concepts of free will and criminal responsibility which sit uneasily alongside more scientific notions of causality. Retribution in particular focuses on events past, while crime prevention looks to the future.

There are understandable reasons why these distinct conceptual domains have become established - including pursuit of specialist expertise, development of occupational cultures, and constitutional separation of the judiciary from the executive branches of government. But when we seek, as now, to bring together the entire CSCR field in the furtherance of local and national strategy and to foster its development as a professional discipline, we find at the heart of crime reduction and community safety a veritable 'Tower of Babel'. All too often, for example, we see **crime prevention** *contrasted* with **detection, repression, punishment or deterrence** (they overlap); or with **criminality prevention** (the latter is a subset of crime prevention if the latter is defined, as below, as reducing the risk and seriousness of criminal events). The terms **crime prevention, crime reduction, crime control** and **community safety** are used much less to denote clearly different ideas than to bestow nuances or flavours, to indicate allegiance to particular schools or traditions, or even to follow fashion. There is also much confusion from labels focusing variously on different **facets** of the whole field of action: *what is done* (eg crime prevention through environmental design), *who does it* (eg police-based prevention), *on which targets* (eg reducing property crime), *against which offenders* (eg juvenile crime prevention), *at which class of risk* (primary, secondary or tertiary prevention), *in what context* (eg community crime prevention). These or similar headings are often seen juxtaposed in lists of activities or responsibilities. Arguably, the central facet should be *what is done* - the methods and causal mechanisms of CSCR interventions - although each of the other facets needs to be on view in appropriate circumstances.

With experience, most practitioners and policymakers 'know what they mean' in this situation and can make intelligent guesses about what their professional partners mean. But nevertheless serious consequences result from conceptual confusion when combined with gaps in the coverage afforded by theory and evaluation:

- *Partnership*-based working groups, whose diverse members are unable to communicate efficiently, to share understanding and to articulate proposals, are hindered from progressing beyond the '*talking-shop*' level and superficial consensus about what needs to be done. Tried and *untested* popular approaches to CSCR are often proposed. Any 'expert authority' that professionals have developed has difficulty making itself heard.
- *Strategic thinking* across local and national CSCR is inhibited - it remains *compartmentalised* and '*method-oriented*' rather than '*problem-oriented*', without any one strategic decision-making body in central or local government having complete awareness of the range of policy levers at its disposal. In particular the newer approaches to CSCR (such as situational prevention) have tended to remain strategically (and hence operationally) isolated from conventional law enforcement and penal systems.
- There is a *failure to focus on how, precisely, CSCR measures are intended to work* (the causal mechanisms, or more broadly-speaking principles, through which interventions have their impact). This leads to *weak implementation, weak quality assurance and uncertain integrity of programmes* in the first instance, and *limited scope for evaluation* in the second (if a scheme is not well-specified it is difficult to evaluate - and may not be worth evaluating anyway). This in turn limits replication, through failure to accumulate specific 'what works' knowledge for best practice. When CSCR actions themselves fail, it is difficult to learn constructive lessons if it proves impossible to describe exactly what had been intended to be implemented, and how. Further problems arise for evaluation

particularly at the strategic, policy, level. There may be a lack of clarity about the precise goals any policy is intended to achieve (reduction of crime in absolute terms, or relative to expected growth, etc); and there may even be lack of agreement over the terms and concepts used in evaluation itself.

- Obstacles to closer coupling between practice and theory mean *failure of practice to test and refine theory, and failure of theory to inform practice*.
- *It is hard to define and compare cost effectiveness* of different CSCR interventions when outputs, outcomes etc are depicted in different ways in different fields.
- *Education and training lack a coherent basis* to develop a curriculum, core competences etc.
- *Collaboration and exchange of 'what works' information is inhibited* (especially development of efficient computerised databases). In the *international* context, in particular, no lexicon will help if the underlying concepts themselves are loosely defined.

If we remain content with conceptually just 'muddling through' we are significantly increasing the risk of wasting both national and local effort and squandering opportunity to reduce crime and improve community safety on a grand scale. In the rest of this chapter I set out the current version of this attempt to develop a framework. It comprises both terminology and a 'conceptual map' covering definitions and descriptions of crime prevention, reduction and control and community safety as distinguishably different perspectives of what is mostly the same territory, and the same underlying activities, and how these relate to the crime-reducing function of the Criminal Justice System.

It has been argued in some circles that attempts, such as this, to introduce greater rationality into what is, admittedly, an intensely political, fashion-driven and gesture-prone field are pointless. However, one can equally argue that it is *precisely because of the lack of conceptual clarity, hard evidence and good theory that CSCR is currently prone to these features*.

### The utility of the framework

The framework should be judged on its utility in providing **tools for thought** in policy, practice, theory and research:

- At the **policy** level, such tools should help think about prisons, probation, community penalties, situational or offender-oriented prevention and crime-reduction implications of wider social policy in equivalent terms no longer isolated by terminological and cultural domains - what they do, how they work, what problems they are most suited to tackle, how they should be compared and contrasted.

- At the **practice** level they should help practitioners think about how to draw on *all* the available methods of CSCR to tackle specific local and national crime problems. This should apply whether these are provided by national programmes for implementation of policy, by statutory law enforcement, judicial and penal bodies, by local partnership plans, by private security services, and by everyday acts by ordinary people of informal self-protection and social control. The tools should facilitate the systematic envisaging and choosing of soundly specified and evidence-based options for intervention to match the crime problem and its context, whilst aiding communication between diverse stakeholders. (Here, the aim is to move considerably beyond the ‘practical, but limited’ frameworks such as the Problem Analysis Triangle (‘features of the victim, features of the location, features of the offender’). These have value as an elementary teaching and thinking aid in the short term but, if seen as the last word, constrain the development of more sophisticated and ambitious approaches.) There is also the need to foster the **operational integration** of diverse approaches - for example tackling a severe local car theft problem by resident surveillance, fitting of vehicle security devices, improving security in car parks, police patrolling, crackdowns on illegal activity by car breakers, targeting of high-rate offenders and schemes to address offender motivation. It is currently rare for such ‘combined operations’ to be pursued, although some notable efforts have been made in the field of repeat victimisation. The tools should also help practitioners and their managers identify key aspects of their action to **monitor** and **quality assure**. More broadly speaking, they should contribute to the development of a professional discipline of CSCR. This should help reconcile two desirable aspects of practice, which up to now have often been sought at each other’s expense: *local* autonomy in addressing local problems, and *national* standards of quality.
- At the **theory, research and evaluation** level, the tools for thought should act as a 2-way conduit between theory and practice. They should also help identify where theories overlap or conflict, and where gaps exist. The framework should do this by providing a common language to describe the elements of the various theories of crime and map out the elementary processes which the theories cover, or collectively fail to cover. It should help evaluators plan what to look for in advance of the CSCR action being implemented, and afterwards help them systematically uncover the reasons for its success or failure. This applies whether the evaluators are working in a local context of ‘best value’, and the Audit Commission’s (1999) concept of a ‘learning culture’; or a national context of ‘what works/cost effectiveness’.

In support of all these tasks, it is essential that the terms defined in the framework set out below have a *logical* relationship with one another. This implies that inevitably, there will be times when it is necessary to unpack the meaning of particular concepts in some detail. However, this is not pedantic but practical. Relying on connotations and traditional (mis)understandings will simply perpetuate the problems we are trying to solve.

It is worth also stating what the framework does *not* do. It makes absolutely no assumptions about (cost) effectiveness of any of the methods of achieving community safety or crime control. In mapping all the methods of CSCR it largely only covers their *intended* functions. (Not all are effective, of course, in particular contexts. Some may be generically ineffective - as *Reducing Offending*, the recent Home Office review made clear. They may even at times *exacerbate* crime or feelings of insecurity.) While such deliberate agnosticism on (cost) effectiveness may seem odd given the cost effectiveness orientation of the national Crime Reduction Programme and the ‘best value’ equivalent in local partnership CSCR, our state of

knowledge of what works is currently so limited that it would be presumptuous to rule out any approach completely. '*What is thinkable*' should be a far wider set of CSCR activities than '*what is currently known to be cost effective*'. Constructing the framework is therefore an entirely separate exercise from evaluating the activities which are described by it. The framework further favours no particular *theory* of the causes of crime - aiming instead to provide a means of expressing any such theory in common terms, and of making diverse theories covering adjacent parts of the map 'join up'. Nor does it promote, say, situational prevention at the expense of offender-oriented. Rather, it tries to bring these approaches together.

### **A framework for community safety and crime reduction: the *Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity***

#### ***Roadmap***

Describing a framework which does justice to something so rich and multifaceted as CSCR, and aims to meet the utility criteria set out above, cannot be done in one move. It must be built up in layers:

- We first briefly look at how social problems are defined as crimes, and compare alternative perspectives on CSCR: community safety, prevention, reduction and control of crime all cover more or less the same activities but adopt different perspectives on criminal events or careers, and time frame – past, present and future orientation.
- **Crime prevention** is then defined as intervention in the causes of criminal events. We then map out the generic situational and offender-oriented **causes**, as the Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity.
  - We then turn to the **interventions** in each of these causes – crime prevention. We cover prevention in two main ways:
    - In particular – a review of the generic interventions at the disposal of prevention.
    - In general – a) the core elements of action – intervention, implementation, and insertion; and b) doing prevention at different procedural levels – operational practice and policy, capacity-building and gearing-up against crime.
- We then move on to **crime reduction**, defining it more broadly than prevention, covering 'present-tense' intervention directly in criminal events and halting their further consequences as well as 'future-tense' intervention in their causes. There is special consideration of how crime reduction (and by implication, prevention) relate to the formal process of the **Criminal Justice System**, and to the wider work of the CJS agencies.

- Finally, we consider a somewhat different strategic perspective – **crime control** – focusing on the concept of keeping crime risks below tolerance thresholds defined with reference to the consequences of criminal events on individuals and community.

### ***Defining social problems as crimes***

Every social problem faced by society requires an appropriate blend of generic solutions: **care, control, conflict resolution and collaboration**. Defining some problem behaviour as a **crime** not only places it firmly in the realm of formal control (alongside infringements that require regulation), but immediately makes presuppositions on how it should be controlled, and by whom. (This can happen as much at practice level as at policy level - an incident of disorder reported to the police may get an enforcement response; the same incident reported to the local social work department may receive a welfare response.) In the past, this has sometimes closed minds to the wider range of solutions now envisaged under the heading of crime reduction and community safety. **Partnership** approaches can be seen as an attempt to overcome some of the disadvantages of rigid division of labour in handling these crosscutting problems whilst preserving the advantages. A wider review of solutions to social problems should not rule out the possibility, for some offences, of **decriminalisation** (the behaviour is no longer defined as an offence), or **offence abolition** (the offending behaviour is no longer possible - eg replacing vehicle excise duty with increased fuel tax so that 'driving untaxed' can no longer happen). Of course, the opposite strategy - of **criminalisation** of previously legal actions - has also been an important policy option, both nationally and, with bye-laws, locally.

### ***Alternative perspectives***

The **criminal event/ crime risk** focus has to be reconciled with the **criminal career** focus of Criminal Justice disposals and certain kinds of crime prevention/reduction – particularly 'criminality prevention'. Of these two perspectives, event/risk takes priority in the present framework - because it fits best with crime as a problem in the community, best draws together a unified picture of causes and thus gives greatest scope for considering alternative cures, and comparing their effectiveness and cost-effectiveness. However, the framework does aim to encompass careers.

Crime prevention, which is **forward-looking**, has to be linked in a logical way to the somewhat different concepts of crime reduction and crime control. Prevention and reduction must also be linked to the **retrospective** aspects of Criminal Justice and victim support systems. This connection follows from both the scope of the national Crime Reduction Programme, and the general nature of the local community safety partnerships and specific criminal justice provisions that form much of the Crime and Disorder Act.

Crime prevention and reduction are often implemented in the service of the wider goal of **community safety**. This is a rather elusive concept and it may be premature to define it too closely. However, community safety is perhaps best seen as ***an aspect of 'quality of life' in which people, individually and collectively, are protected as far as possible from hazards or threats that result from the criminal or anti-social behaviour of others, and are equipped or helped to cope with those they do experience. It should enable them to pursue, and obtain fullest benefits from, their social and economic lives without fear or hindrance from crime and disorder.*** Further discussion of community safety along these lines is in **the chapter by Rogerson, Ekblom and Pease**, and at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact/cstrng5.htm](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact/cstrng5.htm).

Underlying much of the confusion between terms and perspectives are the questions of **time frame**, and the **particular criminal event** in focus. Reaction to *past* crimes prevents *future* crimes - victims shut the stable door before the *next* horse bolts, and offenders and others are deterred through *anticipation* of future punishment. Intervention in *present*, ongoing, crimes similarly prevents future offending. Likewise, if a crime preventer - say a security guard in a store - is attacked in the course of one crime, shop theft, then they may become the target of a *fresh* crime, assault. Or 'subsidiary' crimes may be committed during preparation for the principal offence (eg stealing the getaway car for a robbery) or afterwards (eg intimidating witnesses).

Related to these issues is the confusion which frequently slips in over the *status* of particular CSCR action. The terms 'crime prevention' and 'crime reduction' can both be taken to refer to **aspiration** ('we aim to prevent/reduce crime by 20%'); **activity** ('we are introducing these crime prevention/reduction measures'); **attributable achievement** ('our scheme has worked - we have successfully prevented/reduced crime'); and even **accident** ('the compulsory motorcycle crash-helmet law has serendipitously prevented/reduced a significant amount of motorcycle theft').

## Crime and crime prevention

Crime prevention focuses on the future. It is about ***reducing the risk of occurrence and potential seriousness of crime and disorder events by intervening in their causes.***

These causes are many and complex, and can be quite remote - such as children's early upbringing, socioeconomic influences generating deprivation and inequality, or even the market price for car spares. But the remoter influences all have to act through chains of cause and effect, which ultimately channel through a common set of **immediate precursors** that combine to generate the criminal or disorderly event. Here, in a 'universal story' of the criminal event, an **offender** encounters, seeks out or engineers a crime **situation** comprising a suitable **target** of crime, in a favourable **environment** and in the absence of capable **preventers** (or guardians). This can be called the **conjunction of criminal opportunity**. Before we can discuss crime prevention itself we must first expand the view of this conjunction, to get a clear picture of what it is that prevention seeks to prevent (Figure 1).

[Figure 1 here ]

### The conjunction of criminal opportunity - a map of the immediate precursors of crime

For a crime to occur:

- The potential **offender** may be an individual, an informal group or a corporate body. Offenders must be ready, willing (or, depending on the law, merely negligent), able and equipped for crime:



- having a **predisposition** for crime (**criminality** - longer-term, personality-based influences involving excitation or the absence of inhibition, such as aggression, antisocial attitudes, lack of conscience, criminal self-image, habits or 'standing decisions to offend'; drug **addiction**)
- lacking **resources to avoid crime** (such as social skills and ability to gain a legitimate living)
- being currently **ready to offend** (shorter-term influences relating to current life circumstances and recent events eg motivation by boredom, shortage of money or need for drugs; being in a conflicting relationship; being in a particular emotional state; being **disinhibited** through alcohol or drugs)
- having the **resources for crime** (eg physical, technical and social skills, 'inside knowledge' of attractive and vulnerable targets, criminal contacts, and crime facilitators such as tools or weapons)
- **anticipating** that risk and effort and likely feelings of guilt and shame are minimal enough, and reward sufficiently large, to **decide** to act
- being **present** in the situation or able to influence it remotely
- The **situation** must also be conducive:
  - the **target** of crime may be human, physical property, data, environmental or service-related. Targets must be present, attractive or provocative, and vulnerable (in the passive sense - susceptible to damage or injury, forgery, removal etc). Some crimes and disorderly events, by their definition in law, do not involve a target at all, but merely comprise behaviour that is judged inappropriate (disorder, nuisance), or self-destructive; or possession of illegal substances which can harm the possessor or others, such as drugs or explosives. But the rest of the picture applies.
  - the target may be sited within a vulnerable and perhaps attractive **target enclosure** such as a fenced compound, building or safe. In some cases these may be 'layered' one within the other. Enclosures have (by definition) demarked or protected **perimeters**, 'official' **entry or exit sites** (or interfaces for transaction such as a computer terminal or cash machine), and an **interior** that may be protected eg by alarms, surveillance or patrols.
  - targets and enclosures are located within a wider physical and social **environment** which may attract or generate crime. **Logistically**, the environment helps the offender (access, concealment, escape), and hinders preventers; and may **motivate** offending particularly through **setting the scene for conflict** (eg thin party walls between flats causing disputes over noise, narrow gangways causing jostling, uncertain ownership and use of land, absence of rules governing behaviour), or otherwise **bring offender**

**and target together** (particularly through routine activities eg at railway stations or entertainment districts).

- **crime preventers** must be absent, incapable, or at least not credible as a threat at the time of the crime or afterwards. Preventers are active, or potentially active, roles. These can be performed by anyone with a **formal** crime prevention responsibility (police, probation officers, community safety staff, concierges - and increasingly, active software for example in detecting and responding to fraudulent transaction patterns); or an **informal** responsibility (residents, parents, teachers, employees in general, even passers-by simply *being* there, or exercising legally-sanctioned powers such as 'citizen's arrest' or 'reasonable force' in defence). In advance of the criminal event preventers can reduce its likelihood by **shaping the situation** (eg by locking doors) or **influencing the offender** (eg by applying social pressure not to steal). They can **intervene** during the event (defending themselves or protecting their own property, or that of others) or **react** after it. The preventers' *potential* to intervene and react can influence the *current* crime event through the offender's **anticipation** ('Will the victim or passers-by overpower me? Will I be identified to the police?'). Preventers can also influence the *next* event by the action taken (eg victims securing their house against repeat burglary, or reporting an assault to the police in the hope of initiating detection, criminal proceedings and punishment).
- **crime promoters** may be present or exert influence in other ways. In contrast to preventers, promoters are roles which *increase* the likelihood of a criminal event by careless or provocative behaviour, encouragement and highlighting an offender's reputation (including labeling as a criminal), or more practical contributions such as 'criminal service providers' who supply weapons or buy stolen goods.

Note that the situation need not be a physical one but could be **remote** - eg an interface with a computer network hosting a benefit system or other vulnerable and attractive target. Offenders can make obscene telephone calls or hack a computer via the Internet. Preventers may be linked to the situation by CCTV. Promoters may have 'wound the offender up' some time before the crime is committed. Note also that **victims** of crime play remarkably diverse roles: owner of the target of property crime, target of crime against the person, legal complainant, crime preventer and (in the case of carelessness or provocation) crime promoter. (In the rest of this chapter, for convenience I use victim to mean human target or owner of target property - the rest comes under the 'active' preventer or promoter roles.) In a street fight, which combatant is later assigned the role of victim and which later becomes the offender, may depend on the turn of events and subsequent judicial judgements - for example as to who used unreasonable force or who provoked whom.

Criminal events (and their prevention) are so complex and dynamic because of the interactions between the immediate precursors - active roles of offender, preventer and promoter each perceiving, anticipating and dealing with the others and with the target, enclosure and environment. The conjunction itself is brought together through social, economic and psychological processes ranging from the structure of society and the market, to channelling by transport and the rest of the built environment, to the victims' and offenders' current life circumstances, routine activities and lifestyle. (Remote causes in particular rarely operate through just a single, analytic, ray of Figure 1.)

From the **offender's** perspective, the aim is to exploit, or otherwise cope with, the situation using available resources to maximise material, psychological or social reward from the crime whilst minimising effort, guilt and the risk of detection, punishment and shame. This process ranges from the rational, sophisticated and organised planning and completion of a range of preparatory and consummatory '**scenes**' (eg seeking out target bank, stealing getaway car, executing robbery, escaping and disposing of the proceeds), to the opportunist scanning for a house with an open window, to an impulsive violent retaliation for an insult in a bar. The concept of **opportunity** has usually been associated with purely situational crime prevention. But an open window three floors up is only an opportunity for an offender who is agile and courageous. It is worth, therefore, bearing in mind that opportunities are made as much by offenders' **resources** for creating or exploiting a situation as by the situation itself. (This is why I refer to the *conjunction* of opportunity.) The outcome of one crime event will of course influence the offender's inclination to commit more, whether through a temporary decision to 'rest' until the police crackdown is over, or a more permanent 'standing' decision to desist because on average, the rewards are significantly outstripped by the effort and risk.

Theories of crime cover the gamut of structures and processes alluded to above. But however remote and subtle the causes they envision, it should without exception be possible to re-express them in terms of how they generate or influence the various immediate precursors of the criminal event, or how they help bring the precursors together to produce the conjunction of criminal opportunity. The conjunction of criminal opportunity itself is only a theory in a minimalist sense - indeed, it is more of a truism, a detailed description of what makes up a criminal event. But it is, in effect, where all substantive theories of crime have to converge or project; and the point of the map at which gaps, conflicts and overlaps can be identified.

### **Disrupting the conjunction: the methods of crime prevention**

From the **preventer's** perspective the aim is to **intervene** to **disrupt** the conjunction of criminal opportunity, either by changing the situational or offender-related precursors in advance of the criminal event, or by preventing them coming together. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 here]

There are two ways of looking at crime prevention, both necessary for clear understanding, practical competence and good research and evaluation. We begin with the particular, reviewing the range of interventions and the methods that bring them about; and move on to the general, covering the core elements of preventive action common to all interventions, and the levels at which the action can be conducted. The general is a rather less exciting topic than the particular, but neglecting it, whether in the practice of running a scheme, or in setting up the local and national **infrastructure** to support preventive action on the ground, would risk much misdirected effort.

### ***Crime prevention in particular – the interventions in the causes of criminal events***

Returning to the conjunction of criminal opportunity, we can map onto the immediate causal precursors, the corresponding types of **crime prevention interventions** that disrupt or divert them at some point 'upstream' (Figure 3). Each intervention is achieved by various methods – illustrative examples of which are listed below.

[Figure 3 here]

On the **offender-oriented** side, we can distinguish between six types of intervention:

- **Early or remedial intervention** (alternatively 'criminality prevention' or tackling the 'roots of criminality'). This includes influencing people's potential to offend by intervening in their early lives (through families, schools and peers) in order to bring about changes in their trajectories of development and the 'programming in' by family and subculture of motivations, values and emotions; and remedial interventions post-conviction such as control of sexuality or reduction of persistent theft. Many of these interventions act by establishing 'inhibitory' processes in the offender - such as conscience, or a more general curbing of impulsivity.
- **Supplying offenders with resources to avoid offending**, principally through **cognitive or social skills enhancement**, is a more positive set of approaches aimed at helping offenders obtain desired ends by legitimate means (such as through the ability to obtain a job through improved competence at reading and writing), and teaching them how to avoid or manage conflict.
- **Changing current life circumstances** of individuals (such as their debt, poor entertainment facilities, membership of offending peer groups, or reputation for aggression) which may be influencing their current state of motivation, emotion or decisions to offend, or bringing them into conflicting relationships or into contact with promoters.
- **Restricting resources for crime** that offenders can bring to bear on the crime target or use to deal with crime preventers and logistically difficult environments. (This includes anything from control of firearms, to clearing bottles and bricks from downtown streets before the weekend, to limiting use of colour photocopiers, to crackdowns on fences of stolen goods, to denial of passwords or decryption software, to regulating the purchase of night vision goggles, to keeping 'inside knowledge' secure or traceable.)
- **Deterrence and discouragement** - influencing the offender's **decision** to commit crime by increasing the **perceived risk** of arrest and punishment or informal censure; increasing **perceived effort** to commit crime (eg using property marking to render stolen goods unsaleable or at least so they require hours to repaint), and reducing **perceived reward** from crime (eg confiscating profits from drug dealing). It is immaterial whether the perception is valid or illusory. There is also the possibility of **disabling excuses** offenders may offer to others and to their own conscience ('shoplifting is theft' notices).

- **Excluding or deflecting offenders from crime situation** - ranging from stopping more than two children entering a shop together, to incapacitation of convicted criminals through imprisonment, curfew or electronic tagging; to supplying legitimate attractions elsewhere which divert offenders from tempting targets and may constructively occupy their time (eg a youth club).

On the **situational** side, the focus of preventive methods is variously on:

- **Hardening the target** of crime (eg making banknotes more difficult to forge, supplying security guards with protective armour, or encrypting data), **reducing its value** (eg through property identification or changes to product marketing strategy), **concealment and disguise**, or **removal of the target** altogether (eg removable car radios, cashless public telephones).
- **Improving perimeter, access or interior security** of the **target enclosure** - respectively fencing-in storage yards, locking windows and installing posts before shop fronts to stop ram-raiders; strengthening doors and improving their locks, setting up firewalls against computer hackers, screening computer disks for viruses, screening people for weapons on entry to airports or for stolen goods on exit from shops; detecting intruders inside a factory, in-house fraud or the operation of computer viruses missed when the infected disk or internet file was first screened.
- **Design of the wider environment** - making residential neighbourhoods or city centres less attractive **logistically** as a place for criminals to operate, by enhancing possibilities for surveillance, or blocking paths of retreat. Reducing **conflict** by tackling **motivating** aspects such as colliding flows of pedestrian traffic, or uncertain territorial boundaries; or by **rule-setting** (as in libraries, camp-sites, football stadia).
- Facilitating the presence, motivation and capability of **crime preventers** in their exercise:
  - of **self-defence** (such as combat techniques, avoidance of personal danger, how to spot a particular con-trick, or how to alert fellow shopkeepers to the presence of a shoplifting gang)
  - of **perimeter, access or interior control** of enclosures
  - and in the wider environment of formal or informal **surveillance** (eg police patrols, security guards or Neighbourhood Watch) or **social control** (eg informal censure of young people's misbehaviour; or getting peer members, family or other 'intimate handlers' to dissuade or divert the offender from crime)

**Aids for preventers** include eg spyholes in doors for access control, CCTV and street lighting for wider environments or tamper-evident seals on food jars. Preventers' effectiveness and motivation may also be boosted by clearly marked territorial boundaries, as with Defensible Space, or by simple warnings such as 'beware - people are

passing off forged banknotes in this area'. Formal preventers, such as police officers, may have special **legal powers and duties to intervene**.

- **Discouraging, deterring or alerting deliberate, reckless or inadvertent crime promoters** (eg **disruption of markets** for stolen goods, **police crackdowns** on fences, **publicity campaigns** of the practical 'lock it or lose it' type or the moral 'don't ask someone to drink and drive', **training in social skills** for ticket inspectors on trains in order to reduce assaults, etc).

Figure 3, and the above description, are of course much simplified. Even quite a narrow crime prevention method may intervene through several disruptions simultaneously (eg target hardening may both physically block a crime and discourage the offender from attempting it; surveillance will supply crime preventers to intervene during the approach to the target and will also deter in anticipation). An intervention often has parallel or 'interlocking' effects on the situational and offender sides simultaneously (eg improving *perimeter security* may make it easier for *crime preventers* to *exclude offenders* from the crime situation). The disruption achieved may not always be the disruption intended (the knowledge of the mere act of installing a preventive scheme in an area may be enough to deter offenders, whether or not the scheme's intervention worked as planned). What appears at first glance to be a single method may when seen in close-up comprise a mix of interventions (a 'motor' club for convicted joyriders, for example, may involve remedial changes to criminal attitudes, supplying skills for holding down a legitimate job and finding constructive ways of occupying time). Sometimes many methods are combined in more or less holistic packages which address a number of causes together.

Some uncertainty is always attached to whether the intervention will succeed in preventing the criminal event. The intervention may not be intense enough to do so; or other influences may switch the causal stream back to its original channel. Hence, it is sensible to talk of interventions causing **reductions in risk of criminal events** rather than inevitably knocking those events out. This also helps bridge the gap between the single-event perspective used here for purposes of clarity, and the fact that in the real world prevention acts probabilistically against **classes** of events (such as 'all possible criminal events which may occur against parked cars in this car park', or broader or narrower variations).

The point of intervention may be causally **remote** from specific criminal events (eg changing potential offenders' predisposition for crime by community-level action to influence children's upbringing, or adjusting the production and marketing processes for computer memory chips). Or it may be **immediate** (eg occupying specific young people's leisure time more constructively to prevent vandalism, rehabilitating specific offenders post-conviction, or installing screens in buses to prevent assaults on drivers). Remote interventions may have the strategic benefit of influencing a wider class of criminal events, but the disadvantage of greater uncertainty, there being 'many a slip 'twixt cup and lip'. Immediate interventions reduce the risk of a much narrower class of event - as with much situational prevention - but offer the prospect of a much more intense and targeted treatment. However, the promise of greater impact may not always be realised. Such intensity can bring with it the possibility of displacement, recidivism of offending and offender replacement (arrest Mr Big and Mr Not-so-big takes his place). With remoter interventions, however, the causes which eventually lead people to offend may not have been conclusively established and the only indications available to intervene on may be so-called **risk factors** - positive correlates of

offending such as poor parental discipline - and **protective factors** or negative correlates such as good social bonding with teachers.

### ***Crime prevention in general***

To make interventions happen requires the familiar concept of implementation and a new one, 'insertion'. This section begins by identifying these additional **core elements** of crime prevention action. It then progressively widens the view to distinguish between different **procedural levels** of action, within which the core elements are conducted or supported: operational practice and policy (concerned with the here and now of crime problems), capacity-building and 'gearing up against crime'.

#### *Core elements of crime prevention action – intervention, implementation, insertion*

Intervention itself remains the most important, defining element of crime prevention action. It was fully discussed in the previous section. But as practitioners will attest, a typical preventive scheme, such as a local burglary reduction project, involves far more. Crime prevention interventions themselves have to be **implemented** – set up and perhaps maintained (such as an alarm or CCTV system).

Implementation focuses on the relevant **actions on the ground** that lead to the intervention and the **processes** that lead to the actions. Implementation has methods of its own such as 'how to select appropriate locks', 'how to do a crime prevention site survey', or 'how to conduct a course of treatment for convicted repeat burglars'. Some interventions, particularly in the Criminal Justice context, are implemented as a **routine**, heavily-embedded in other organisational procedures, rather than a distinct, one-off **scheme**. Examples are police patrolling, treatment of offenders in prison, or supervision of probation clients. Even here, though, the introduction of problem-oriented approaches mean that routines are not what they used to be; and within some routines, **cases** – such as offenders receiving treatment – have a distinct boundary.

The *professional* preventer may directly intervene in the chain of cause and effect leading to the criminal event (eg installing an alarm system or working to reduce a youth's aggression). But more often, the professional's role is to **act at a distance** - to motivate, inform and assist other, often informal, preventers (such as 'place managers', or 'intimate handlers' of potential young offenders including families and teachers) to implement the intervention and/or maintain it. Acting at a distance is not in itself an intervention as defined above; it could be termed '**insertion**'. Methods of insertion typically involve setting up local working groups, running publicity campaigns of the 'lock it or lose it' kind, or supplying information packs. This requires understanding the **perspective**, and **resources** of the front-line preventers themselves, and the **incentives** that can acceptably and effectively be manipulated to get them to act (or indeed to change from promoters to preventers).

Thus in these circumstances insertion by professional preventers is intended to lead to implementation of interventions by others, which in turn disrupt the conjunction, reduce the risk of crime occurring... and hopefully succeed in preventing some class of criminal (or disorder) events, or at least reducing the seriousness of those that do happen. In its turn,

this absence of criminal events may have consequences such as ‘knock-on’ improvements in individual or collective **quality of life** (a core aspect of community safety), **regeneration** and **wealth creation**. This whole sequence is illustrated in Figure 4, which is a kind of ‘universal story’ of a crime prevention scheme.

[Figure 4 here]

The methods employed in inserting, implementing and intervening act on or through a diverse set of ‘entities’ in the real world, ranging from the individual offender or target, to features of society as a whole. These entities can be described in terms of a range of **social levels**:

- the **individual** - individual target, environment or offender
- **family and intimates**
- the **peer group**
- **institutions**, eg schools, work organisations
- the **media**
- the **area** of residence, leisure or work
- **community**, involving some kind of common interest, with multiple role relationships and networks
- the **societal** level, involving processes operating within society as a whole, such as employment, manufacturing, distribution and transport
- and inevitably, the **global** level

Interventions in the causes of criminal events at one of these levels may lead to reductions in risk, and ultimately in the frequency of criminal events, at other levels (eg intervention in the criminal subculture of a local community may reduce the offending of its individual members). Likewise, wider benefits may occur at still other levels (for example, a reduction in *individual* risk may improve *collective* quality of life).

A public-health distinction widely-used in crime prevention further structures how to choose the subject of intervention:

- **primary** - focusing on the *general* population of potential offenders, or of potential crime situations or human and material targets of crime
- **secondary** - focusing on people at *particular risk* of offending, on targets at risk of victimisation or on places at risk of setting the scene for victimisation
- **tertiary** - focusing on those *already* convicted or victimised, or targets and scenes of existing crime (linking to the concepts of repeat victimisation, repeat offending, and hot-spots)



Up to now, these distinctions have mainly been made at the *individual* social level, as in the illustrations above. But there is no reason why they could not be applied to any social level – for example ‘the general population of institutions’, ‘areas at risk’, or ‘communities with a manifest criminal subculture’.

### *Doing crime prevention – procedural levels*

The ‘classic’ CSCR activity is the territorial scheme. Here, action implemented usually has a clear outcome objective in terms of reducing specific types of crime in specific places. Other common types of activity involve preventing crimes which might be committed in the future by specific offenders in the course of their criminal career. However diverse, though, these activities function at what can be called the **operational** level. This involves deploying currently available capacity to address particular crime or criminal problems, which may occur in specific places or may be committed by specific individuals, in the here and now.

A great deal of CSCR action, however, functions at one remove from the here and now. In many cases the formally-planned and implemented actions and outputs of a scheme stop at insertion, and the intention is that the preventers ‘out there’ in the community take over the relay baton to bring the scheme to implementation, intervention, disruption and outcome. At one extreme, such CSCR actions have quite specific courses to run, and funds and other resources are handed over to the preventers, with the usual strings attached. At the other extreme, the actions may comprise little more than raising awareness; or making self-help material generally available to the public, to act on as they choose, such as property-marking kits or packs for ‘what to do if you suspect your child is on drugs’. In all cases, what is being supplied is not the intervention itself, but the *capacity* for implementing interventions. We can call this the **capacity-building** level of action. A parallel level to capacity building, of particular importance to insertion, is that of **motivation** – including creating and manipulating incentives to encourage preventers and discourage crime promoters. [?]This subject is discussed in Laycock’s chapter.

Needed capacities may not always exist ready-made. A third level, even more removed from operations, covers identifying the requirement for new capacities and developing them. This can be called the level of **gearing up against crime**. We now look more closely at the operational, capacity-building and gearing-up levels in turn.<sup>1</sup>

### The operational levels – practice and policy

Most of the discussion so far on crime prevention in particular and in general has centred on the operational level. But there remains plenty more to say about it. In identifying how crime prevention is best done, experience suggests that a ‘cookbook’ approach - rigidly applying preventive methods drawn from a limited repertoire - is inadequate. The ability to apply theoretically sound first principles in designing an intervention is vital.

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<sup>1</sup> The ultimate level is the development of tools for doing this strategic thinking – embodied in this chapter itself.

Sometimes, however, what is 'special' and worth emulating about a CSCR scheme is less the intervention itself - which may be familiar, and of purely local relevance - than the *intelligent process* by which the solution to the crime problem was arrived at and put into place. More generally, experience has shown that insertion and implementation deliver the most effective interventions for the crime problem in question, and the most cost effective outcomes, when embedded in a wider procedure. This procedure has become known simply as the **preventive process**, a term which has close affiliations with Problem-Oriented Policing. At the local level it involves several stages:

- Homing in on specific crime and disorder problems identified and targeted through a strategic Audit and target-setting process, by collecting and analysing more detailed local information <sup>2</sup>
- Local setting of objectives and quantitative CSCR targets for reducing crime or keeping it below specified levels
- Devising preventive action closely tailored to the specific circumstances, with interventions based on evidence of effectiveness and application of theoretically sound principles
- Inserting and implementing the selected intervention on the selected crime problem at the appropriate social levels
- Managing the progress of the action through i) internal monitoring of insertion and implementation; ii) external monitoring of performance against CSCR targets; and iii) local evaluation of impact and cost-effectiveness for accountability and best value purposes
- Evaluating the conduct of the preventive process itself, and the attributable impact of the outputs on outcomes, both for immediate management purposes and in support of the more strategic procedural levels (capacity building and gearing-up, described below)

**Routine** interventions such as police patrolling or probation supervision will have an equivalent set of processes – more similar if a problem-oriented approach is adopted. A related approach to the **local** preventive process is involved when identifying and dealing with crime problems best solved at the **national or international** level. Typically this embraces interventions involving **design** of cars and other 'hot products', and design of services and procedures vulnerable to crimes such as fraud.

Many aspects of the local preventive process have already been discussed, especially inserting and implementing the intervention. Although the intention is not to go exhaustively

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<sup>2</sup> Beware the unfortunate dual meaning of 'target' – target of crime, target of crime prevention.

through the rest, it is worth also covering some other aspects which can benefit from the clarity offered by the conjunction of criminal opportunity framework.

From an **objective-setting** perspective, selecting which crime problems to tackle may not always be simple to articulate. Likewise, when practitioners are **planning their preventive action**, and trying to learn from prior experience elsewhere, information retrieval from a 'what works' database will be inefficient unless there is some uniformity of nomenclature. To aid these activities, the **scope** of a scheme can be defined in terms of any of the immediate precursors of the criminal event – for example 'reducing crime against particular targets, in particular environments, committed by specific types of offenders, using particular MOs and other resources for offending'. (The dimensions of primary/secondary/ tertiary, and social level can also be used.) Experience has shown that in many cases, the more specific the focus, the more likely interventions are to succeed. However, inclusiveness may work better in other cases, particularly where causes of crime are wide-ranging (for example, the local offenders are all adaptable generalists, there is a pervasive criminal subculture, or socioeconomic causes influence criminal predisposition in a broad way). Paradoxically, such inclusiveness, particularly when combined with holistic interventions and intervening in remoter causes, requires an even *greater* clarity and professionalism, to understand which causes of crime are involved, and what the broad package of interventions are aiming to achieve and by what causal mechanisms. Without this, holistic action is at especial risk of degenerating into superficial and ineffectual efforts with drifting objectives.

From **managerial** and **evaluative** perspectives, **inputs** of human or material resources can be fed in by professional preventers and others at any stage during insertion, implementation and intervention. The products of these stages are **activities** (such as confronting offending behaviour through role-play) and **outputs** (such as the number of young offenders exposed to a confrontation experience of a certain recognised standard). It is these which deliver the **intervention**. The disruptions caused by the interventions amount to **impacts on risk of criminal events** (for example, as measured by the number of offenders graduating from the course who pass some test criterion of 'acknowledging their wrongdoing'), which may be construed as an intermediate outcome. The **ultimate crime prevention outcome** is the set of 'non-events' themselves. The last may confer direct **cost savings** to the victim, community and state; and their consequences may give **wider benefits** in terms of improved quality of life, economic regeneration and wealth creation.

From the managerial perspective outputs, outcomes and wider benefits can be viewed as the **objectives**, of various kinds, aspired to by those who fund, manage or implement the scheme. From the evaluative perspective they are the **attributable effects** actually achieved by that scheme. Figure 5 shows these additional concepts mapped onto the previous diagram.

[Figure 5 here]

A number of feedback loops are built into the preventive process – some short and elementary to guide immediate tactical action, others longer and wider in scope to inform strategy. 'Internal' **monitoring of insertion and implementation** involves ensuring that the various objectives set for activities and outputs are being met or are on course – including quality assurance of the actions undertaken - and taking action to correct those which are

not. 'External' **monitoring of performance** involves ensuring that crime reduction targets are being met (such as 'a 30% fall in vehicle crime'). A full-blown **local evaluation** with attribution of cause and effect (such as 'vehicle crime fell by 40% and of this, 25% can be attributed to the scheme) may be conducted to ensure accountability and foster the achievement of best value by informing the decision whether to continue, modify, expand or replicate the scheme elsewhere within the partnership. Such local evaluations need not be particularly sophisticated, unlike those done for gearing-up purposes – building up the strategic knowledge base of what works.

What we have covered so far is best described as day-to-day **operational practice**. Such action is now likely to be formally encompassed within a wider strategic community safety process set out in the Guidance on Audits for the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (see Hough and Tilley 1998). This could be called the **operational policy** level.

### The capacity-building level

This involves action to deploy currently-available resources to give particular crime preventers the capacity to reduce crime as and when they need it. Such action may be instigated in response to feedback from internal monitoring or external monitoring/evaluation of operational schemes. The crime preventers who receive the capacity may either be professionals, or those in the wider society whom the professionals are encouraging to act. The resources in question may include:

- Realisation that crime can be prevented
- Information on crime risks, and offenders' MOs
- Awareness of types of solution
- Policy expertise – how to handle policy issues of acceptability, such as tradeoffs between privacy and prevention, or equity in distributing CSCR resources
- Technical know-how
- Equipment
- Money
- Other infrastructure such as setting up community organisation, or ring-around warning networks
- Leadership skills
- Access to incentives to influence 'subsidiary' preventers and *disincentives* for promoters, and know-how for applying it in acceptable ways

Obviously, some of the above capacities – particularly in the top half of the list – are specific to CSCR. They can best be described under the umbrella-term of **competences** – education and training for a **professional discipline of CSCR** – and the base of 'underpinning knowledge' that supports the competence. Others are fairly general in nature, just requiring sufficient priority and funds to provide them. Establishing community organisations (community development eg through setting up residents' associations) can be activity

which is particularly challenging and prolonged. It may be motivated by wider concerns than CSCR alone.

At its widest, CSCR links to empowerment of citizens and institutions to reduce crime and disorder through informal social control and self-protective behaviour. It also connects with conflict resolution and depends on broader social and economic policy and practice - for example the reduction of some sources of criminal motivation in the short term, and criminal predisposition in the longer term, by tackling social exclusion. It follows that the competences and knowledge of the profession as a whole - covering both principles of prevention and how to apply them in these very different contexts - need to be extremely wide-ranging. But the central defining features of professional practice in this area must be **competence** in:

- how to carry out, or supervise, the various stages of the preventive process

a thorough **underpinning knowledge** of:

- the causes of criminal and disorderly events, risk and protective factors
- the offender's perspective on crime opportunities - risk of punishment, effort and reward
- evidence-based interventions, and how these work in particular contexts

and of course, like any other profession:

- a **conceptual framework** to knit all the competences and knowledge together into a functional whole

Gearing up against crime: catching up and keeping up with changing opportunities and adaptive offenders

The gearing-up level involves action to identify, and remedy, *qualitative* gaps in society's armoury of capacities. These are resources which cannot simply be made available by disseminating existing knowledge, or distributing and paying for existing materials from stock; they first need to be designed and developed. The gaps in capacity relate to crime problems which may be:

- Current
- Emergent, ie just appearing
- Anticipated

Again, gearing-up may be instigated in response to feedback from internal monitoring or external monitoring/evaluation of operational schemes. This will happen less often than excursions into capacity-building, which in turn are likely to occur less often than operational policy and practice adjustments. Gearing-up covers all the capacities discussed above – except these are to be developed, rather than supplied ‘ex stock’. In the case of incentives for preventers and disincentives for promoters, gearing-up will include *creating* fresh rewards and sanctions where existing ones are inadequate. These might take the form of a law to criminalise a new harmful activity, support the collection of evidence or boost police powers; or softer approaches (Pease 1998) such as ‘naming and shaming’, or ‘citations of good-citizenship’ to individuals or companies.

### *Current crime problems - strategic evaluation*

There is plenty of work still to be done to fill **current** gaps in the capacity we can bestow on practitioners and less formally-involved preventers. The list of competences and ‘underpinning knowledge’ for crime prevention as a professional discipline, discussed above, remains largely a shopping list. The accumulated body of knowledge on ‘what works, and how best to implement it, in what context, at what cost-effectiveness’<sup>3</sup> in particular is extremely patchy (and indeed it is the aim of the national Crime Reduction Programme to systematically begin to remedy this). Crime prevention education and training needs further raw material of knowledge and competence to impart if it is to play its part in supporting initiatives like the Crime Reduction Programme and the new local Crime Reduction Partnerships.

We have already seen how evaluation of impact and process can be conducted, as part of the preventive process, as a managerial means of ensuring accountability and best value. The other purpose of evaluation is to contribute to the collective body of ‘what works’ knowledge. At this level, such strategic evaluations are part of the gearing-up process.

**Outcome evaluation** of operational-level CSCR action is the process of reliably attributing changes in outcome measures (in particular crime rates) to the outputs and interventions of particular CSCR schemes. Where the interventions are remote from the criminal events they are ultimately intended to reduce, it may be necessary in the short-term to substitute **impact on some reliable indicators of risks of future offending**. These could include immediate disruptions, such as a change in attitude, or changes further downstream such as improvements in school attendance and performance. Where action centres on criminal careers, it may be desirable, but difficult, to link impact on these risks with reductions in local area crime rates, to place comparisons between different crime reduction approaches on an equal footing. Assessment of **cost effectiveness** quantitatively links the inputs to the outcomes; and **cost-benefit analysis** in turn links cost-effectiveness to the immediate savings from reduced crime and wider benefits such as improvements in quality of life.

**Process evaluation** of individual schemes or scheme-based programmes centres on insertion, implementation and intervention but assesses the entire preventive process – how it was conducted, what problems and issues were encountered and how they were coped with. In the strategic, gearing-up context, both outcome and process evaluators should aim to learn as much as possible from **failures** as well as successes – it is wasteful to reinvent the

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<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, ‘what works’ for short.

wheel, but even more so to reinvent the flat tyre. The concept normally cited at this point is Rosenbaum's distinction between 'theory failure' (the fundamental idea was flawed, or inappropriate for the context), implementation failure (idea sound, but implementation weak) and measurement failure (idea sound and well-implemented, but evaluation was insufficiently sensitive to register the impact). The whole framework presented here (insertion, implementation, intervention, wider preventive process) can in fact offer a far more detailed, generic checklist for what went wrong – like the accident investigator's mental toolkit.

### *Emergent and anticipated crime problems*

But however we improve our ability to evaluate and apply preventive methods to current crime problems, crime prevention cannot expect criminals to wait for it to catch up; and past patterns of offending are not always a sure guide to the future. Offenders will often adapt and find ways round existing preventive practices. And as the chapter by Rogerson, Ekblom and Pease describes, new crime problems are constantly **emerging** due to social, economic, financial and technical changes in society. These changes can affect any of the immediate precursors of the criminal event – for example by supplying new tools for offenders (like cordless drills) or new crime targets (mobile phones). Action at the gearing-up level is needed to set up systems to spot emergent crimes as soon as possible, and to go further, by fostering the **anticipation** of crime problems when products, environments and procedures are still at the design stage. This action involves:

- trying to **predict offenders' likely countermoves**, including the various kinds of **displacement**, to current interventions
- keeping alert to the **obsolescence** of existing crime prevention methods as adaptive offenders find ways round them, perhaps through exploiting new tools (such as colour photocopiers); planning and doing **maintenance** of existing methods to keep them effective
- tracking new **emerging crime problems** and new **potential offenders** - the latter through **audits of risk and protective factors** (affecting individuals, particular jobs that expose employees to temptation, or whole neighbourhoods)
- scanning further ahead to identify unfolding **trends** (such as demographic growth in an area's youth population), **new causes and new patterns of crime**
- conducting **crime impact assessments** - which can play a role similar to environmental impact assessments - in such fields as planning decisions (for example, what are the likely crime consequences of siting a particular housing estate next to a particular industrial estate?), proposed changes to local policies on employment or housing allocation, or the design of buildings and the surrounding environment. Competence in crime impact assessment not only prepares local or national partners for the future, but also helps foster alertness to crime and disorder issues throughout their organisations

Setting up systems and supplying motivation to make this work requires an infrastructure of its own. Crime impact assessment and scanning for new causes of crime and possibilities for

prevention will obviously be a rather hit and miss process. But it can at least be made significantly more systematic, if we look for impending changes under each of the immediate precursors of criminal events. What new potential **targets** or **sources of motivation or resources for offending** are on the horizon? What is going to **empower or inhibit, supply or remove** crime preventers from a particular kind of situation?

CSCR action can generally be characterised as being at one or other of the four procedural levels just described. However, action primarily designed to contribute at one level will usually have the scope for acting at the others. Operational actions, besides hopefully delivering reductions in crime, will usually have the additional benefit of capacity-building – in terms for example of training up practitioners, or installing crime pattern analysis software – which continues to yield dividends after the formal scheme has finished. And if the scheme was evaluated to an adequate standard, then the cumulative body of ‘what works’ knowledge may have grown – a case of gearing-up. Acquiring the ability to conduct the preventive process is a key aspect of capacity-building; developing new techniques to apply in the process (such as smart, pattern-seeking Geographical Information Systems for crime pattern analysis) is gearing-up. Some initiatives deliberately set out, at one and the same time, to systematically build up evidence-based knowledge whilst tackling particular crime problems on the ground – the prime example at the moment being the ‘Strategic Development Projects’ on domestic burglary of the Crime Reduction Programme. To be fully reflexive, of course, ways need to be defined for evaluating these in their turn. This is a challenge that faces the Crime Reduction Programme.

## Crime reduction

Crime reduction is, from a policy perspective, about diminishing the volume and consequences of crime. Whether the policy is implemented within the national Crime Reduction Programme, or by local CSCR partnerships, a key concern is how to make the best use of the resources currently available for crime reduction. For this, it is necessary to examine **cost effectiveness**. In this context, cost effectiveness is the amount of crime reduction that can be achieved by a particular activity, for a given resource input (usually expressed as money). The policy perspective also involves a concern to address the **totality** of the picture – for example, taking account of *net* benefits after allowing for displacement or diffusion of benefit; competition for limited resources between different crime reduction priorities; and unintended side effects of specific CSCR activities on other crimes or wider quality of life. (How such a totality might be balanced is considered under the next main section, on crime control.)

From the *practical* perspective of criminal events and specific crime reduction activities, the definition above translates into **reducing the number of criminal and disorderly events and the severity of their consequences**. The current framework, as said, is deliberately agnostic about (cost) effectiveness of the activities it describes – although the feedback loops discussed under crime prevention do of course reflect policymakers’ and practitioners’ *own* use of cost effectiveness information in guiding their tactical adjustments and strategic decisions. Although unintended consequences of the individual crime reduction activities – such as geographical displacement, crime switch and rise in fear – are considered, the strategic overview is a *policy* matter.



Logically, crime prevention is a means to achieving crime reduction. The reduction of *risk* of *future, potential* crime and disorder events is intended to lead to the reduction in *observable numbers* of *actual* events over some particular period of time. There can thus be no act of crime prevention which is not also crime reduction. (Recall the observation above that both prevention and reduction can be seen as aspiration, action, attributable achievement and accident.) But what about the converse – what acts of crime reduction can we contemplate, which do not act via prevention? Prevention, as defined here, acts by intervening in the *causes* of *future* criminal events. The only logical alternatives to this are i), *directly intervening in criminal events themselves* as they unfold in the present; and ii) *stopping past events becoming progressively more serious*. So from the event/risk perspective, acts of crime reduction tackle crime both directly, and via its causes and immediate consequences. Reduction thus comprises:

- the **future** orientation of prevention, whether directed towards reducing the risk of individual criminal events (eg intercepting a specific racial attack planned for the weekend) or decreasing more general crime risks (eg the high risk of burglary in a neighbourhood, or making offending by particular individuals less likely)
- the **present** orientation of **disrupting and frustrating** specific crimes as they happen (for example through police action to halt a fight or a citizen's action to repulse a pickpocket); and **limiting progressive harm** after a crime has happened (eg halting further misuse of a stolen credit card)

In practice there will be very few crime reduction actions which do *not* have a preventive aspect. All that is needed for this to be invoked is for an offender to *anticipate* the present and retrospective actions and their consequences, and take avoiding action – hopefully by *not* committing the contemplated crime.

An alternative focus on ongoing processes and conditions rather than individual events would place more crime reduction activities in the present. This would emphasise intervening in:

- **chronic or repeating crime problems** such as domestic violence, racial harassment or other repeat victimisation
- **planned or organised crime** involving preparatory acts which themselves may be additional criminal events, such as theft of a getaway car; or a systematic series of offences such as continual fraud
- the convicted offender's **criminal career** to reduce the rate and severity of offending

Nonetheless, when seen from the event level, the interventions will mostly be preventive in nature, reducing future risk. Whatever the case, with a few minor adjustments and shifts of emphasis, the Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity framework can apply equally to interventions seen from a crime reduction perspective.

## Crime reduction and the Criminal Justice System

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) focuses its procedures on dealing with *past* wrongs in dealing equitably with those coming before the courts and maintaining public confidence by imposing punishment commensurate with the offence. Justice is in a dimension of its own and, in formal terms, has no direct utilitarian purpose – it is an end in itself. But the justice process and the punishment it delivers inescapably have a crime reductive (and preventive) potential, if not always a measurable effect. This applies in equal terms to the CJS taken as a whole, and to its component agencies and processes. In dispensing fair and satisfying justice, the judicial and penal process reduces the motivation for the proliferation of crime through vigilantism and revenge and reinforces the moral order that underlies self-control and informal social controls. **Reaction** also has the aim of reducing present and future crime through arrest, incapacitation and deterrence (law enforcement - ‘**repression**’ in European circles), and rehabilitation. **Incapacitation** within the CJS (imprisonment, driving bans or electronic tagging) aims to exclude convicted offenders from crime situations. **Deterrence** as delivered by the CJS - the anticipation and fear of being caught by the police and judicially punished - seeks to influence *convicted* offenders’ decisions to commit the *next* crime and through example, *potential* offenders’ decisions to commit any crime. From a public health perspective, **specific deterrence** falls under tertiary reduction, **general deterrence** under primary and secondary. In theory, at least, deterrence reinforces much of situational prevention which relies on heightening perceived risk of apprehension. More broadly speaking, however, current research evidence suggests that *increased* use of the CJS as a crime reduction tool is unlikely to be cost effective.

**Judicial crime reduction** can be defined as that which *reduces the number of crime and disorder events and the severity of their consequences by intervening in their causes, or by intervening directly in the events themselves, through the very existence of the CJS and through its formal processes in prosecuting, trying, sentencing and punishing individual offenders.*

For constitutional reasons, judicial crime reduction is tightly circumscribed, and therefore is generally difficult to link explicitly with partnership activities. However, application of specific civil and criminal legal powers to bind over to keep the peace, evict noisy neighbours or close down unruly pubs may form part of a wider local crime reduction strategy, together with the basic legal authority of the police to intervene in present and future crimes and react to past ones. Indeed, legal remedies of this kind feature in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Other statutes confer preventive powers enabling the police and courts to intervene by imposing bans on driving, requiring offenders’ attendance at classes to reduce alcoholism, debarment from being a company director or possession of certain tools or weapons.

**Conflict containment and resolution** in particular extends beyond the purely judicial to include **civil** law, informal **mediation**, **restitution/ restorative justice** and even the **town planning process**, all of which have the potential to significantly reduce violence and criminal damage between neighbours, for example, or landlords and tenants.

The rest of crime reduction, *acting outside the formal process of the CJS*, can be called **extrajudicial**. This is implemented by a range of agencies, partnerships, and private companies and individuals. But there is an intermediate area, within extrajudicial crime reduction, which is important to distinguish. The various agencies involved in the CJS - prison, police, probation - also implement a range of activities which are intended to exercise

powers to prevent impending criminal events, to deflect groups at risk of committing crime or to rehabilitate existing offenders. These operate, for example, by altering the predisposition or motivation to offend or supplying skills and the social and economic opportunities to avoid offending and go straight. Cognitive and social skills enhancement, for example, may be done in **prison**. Supervision in the community, through the **probation** service, may set the scene for efforts to resolve problems in offenders' life circumstances (such as unemployment) which may be motivating them to commit crime. And the **police**, of course, patrol the streets, frustrate offenders' preparations for crime, intervene in ongoing crimes, administer formal cautions and advise on prevention. Due to their significant impact on individual liberty and privacy, these activities are subject to stringent procedural checks and balances and are often formally linked to the penal process. Together they might be called **Parajudicial crime reduction**. This can be defined as ***crime reduction which acts through the agencies of the CJS, which may be formally linked to the criminal process but which is not strictly part of it.*** Figure 6 illustrates the relationship between judicial, parajudicial and the rest of crime reduction/ prevention.

[Figure 6? Here]

## Crime control

Crime reduction (and prevention) aim simply to reduce the frequency and seriousness of criminal events, on the (reasonable) assumption that they are already intolerably high. But it is possible to set reduction in a particular strategic framework which may help to prioritise the use of finite crime reduction resources with particular reference to the severity of **consequences** of crime and disorder. (Severity is thus seen from a real-world perspective rather than a purely legal one expressed as a punishment tariff.) The term 'crime control' captures this strategic viewpoint, which can also be set in the wider frame of community safety.<sup>4</sup>

The 'bottom line' of crime control simply involves ***halting rapid or accelerating growth in crime risk***. Such growth may happen with a specific crime problem (such as a spate of convenience store robberies in a city), or on a wider front. It may be a qualitative deterioration as well as quantitative, and may feed back on itself - with increasing seriousness and organisation of offending, intimidation, and ultimately corruption of agents of the CJS and (as has happened in some countries) partial collapse of the state's power and legitimacy.

The more 'everyday' aim of crime control involves (it is suggested) ***holding the risk of criminal events and related misbehaviour below a tolerable level***. This level is determined, primarily, by considering the harmful consequences of the particular criminal events in question for individuals and the community. These consequences include fear, harm to person or property or restrictions on economic and social behaviour, and generation of further crime problems. (With serious crimes and disorder problems, those which severely affect vulnerable people, or those minor ones which, left unchecked, may lead to wider trouble or inter-ethnic tension, it may be appropriate to strive to hold their level down as low as possible.) Other considerations relate to the availability of cost-effective methods to

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<sup>4</sup> If the term 'control' implies an easily achievable task, 'management' could be substituted – analogous to 'managing the economy'.

reduce the relevant crime problems, competing priorities for funds and other resources. Also relevant are side effects of attempts to control crime, such as exacerbation of other kinds of offending (eg with the US experience of Prohibition of alcohol), or adverse effects on other social policy areas or quality of life (as with privacy). A **tolerance threshold** for a given type of crime nationally, or in a given locality, or for particular groups of victims, could thus be an important consideration in setting community safety targets. In practice, however, it may have to remain more a way of thinking than centre on explicit crime risk figures, given difficulty of achieving consensus over priorities (a problem faced in equivalent areas such as health service 'rationing'). With disorder-type offending particularly, where the impact of crime has a significant subjective element, it may even be difficult to establish consensus over what constitutes serious misbehaviour - what is acceptable in the city centre may be very different from what is acceptable in rural villages. Crime control also has a particular overlap with community safety, as defined here, given a common focus on consequences of crime and the strategic target-setting approach to crime levels.

Two processes that are particularly relevant in a crime control context are **displacement** of offending and **replacement** of offenders. The former involves *existing* offenders reacting to crime reduction initiatives by changing the time, place, method or type of crime target. The latter involves *new* offenders moving in to fill the niche vacated by those (such as drug dealers) who have been arrested or reformed. Although displacement, particularly, has now been shown to be partial at the very worst, little is known about offender replacement. In both cases, the *rate* of displacement or replacement, balanced against the *rate* of implementation of new and effective crime reductive action will dynamically determine the crime level.

## Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show how good practice and policy in crime prevention, reduction and community safety depend on theory, education, training, briefing, quality assurance, research and evaluation being brought to a focus through a clear conceptual framework. The Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity framework began with the crime or disorder event, and on this built successive layers covering the causes of the event, intervention in the causes to disrupt their conjunction, implementation, insertion in the community, the operational context of the preventive process and the support and development of these at the capacity-building and gearing-up levels. Finally, the distinctive features of crime reduction and crime control were then added. The layers resemble the structure of an onion – and like an onion, probably brought tears to the eyes of the reader!

### Further reading

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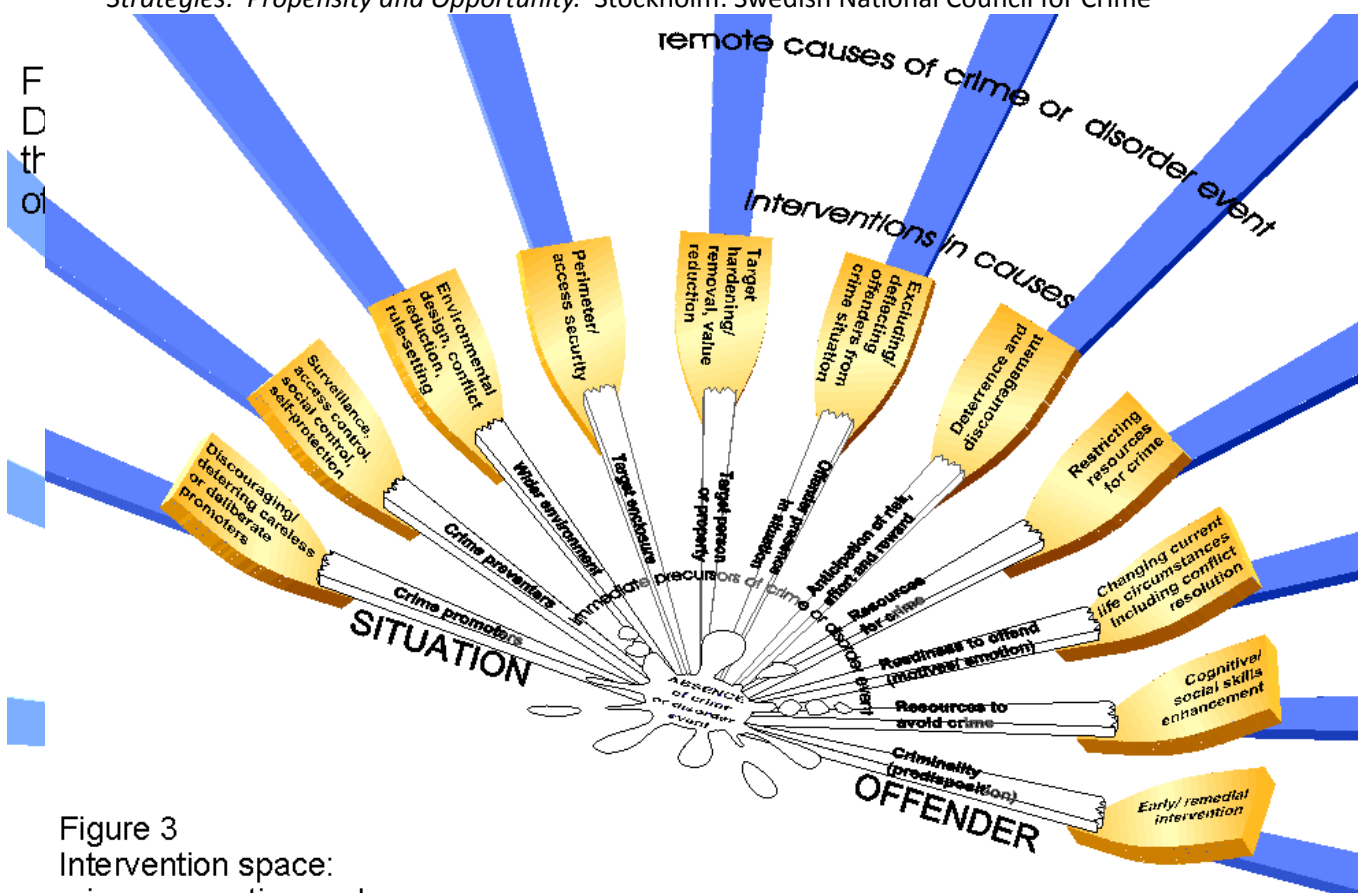
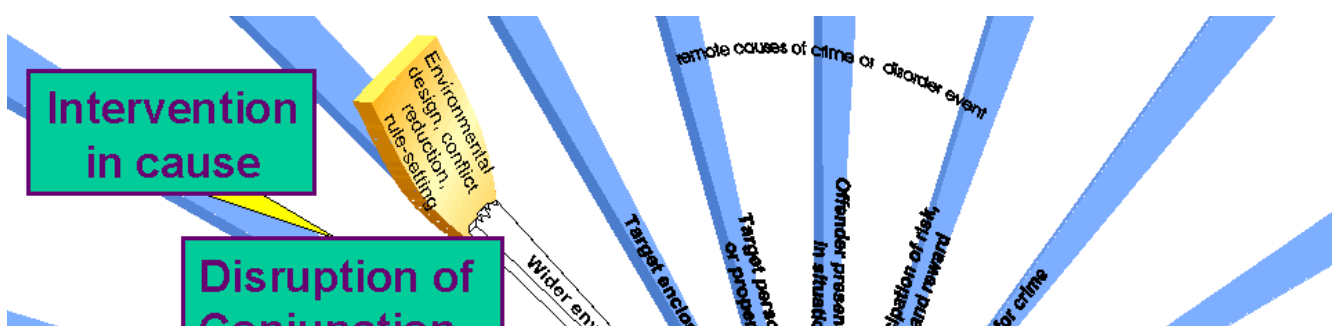
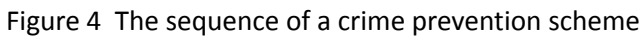


Figure 3  
Intervention space:  
crime prevention and  
the conjunction of criminal opportunity







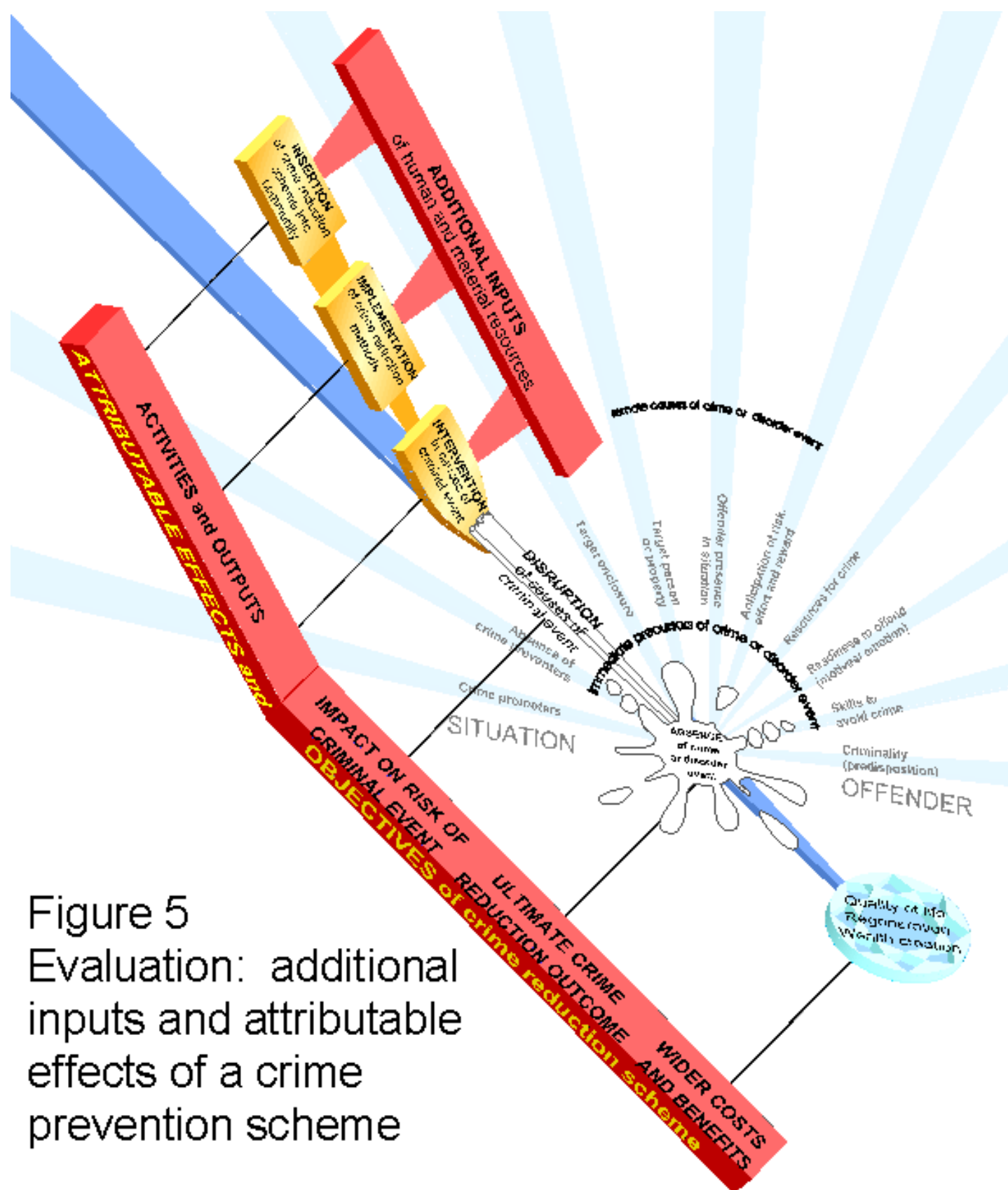


Figure 5  
Evaluation: additional  
inputs and attributable  
effects of a crime  
prevention scheme



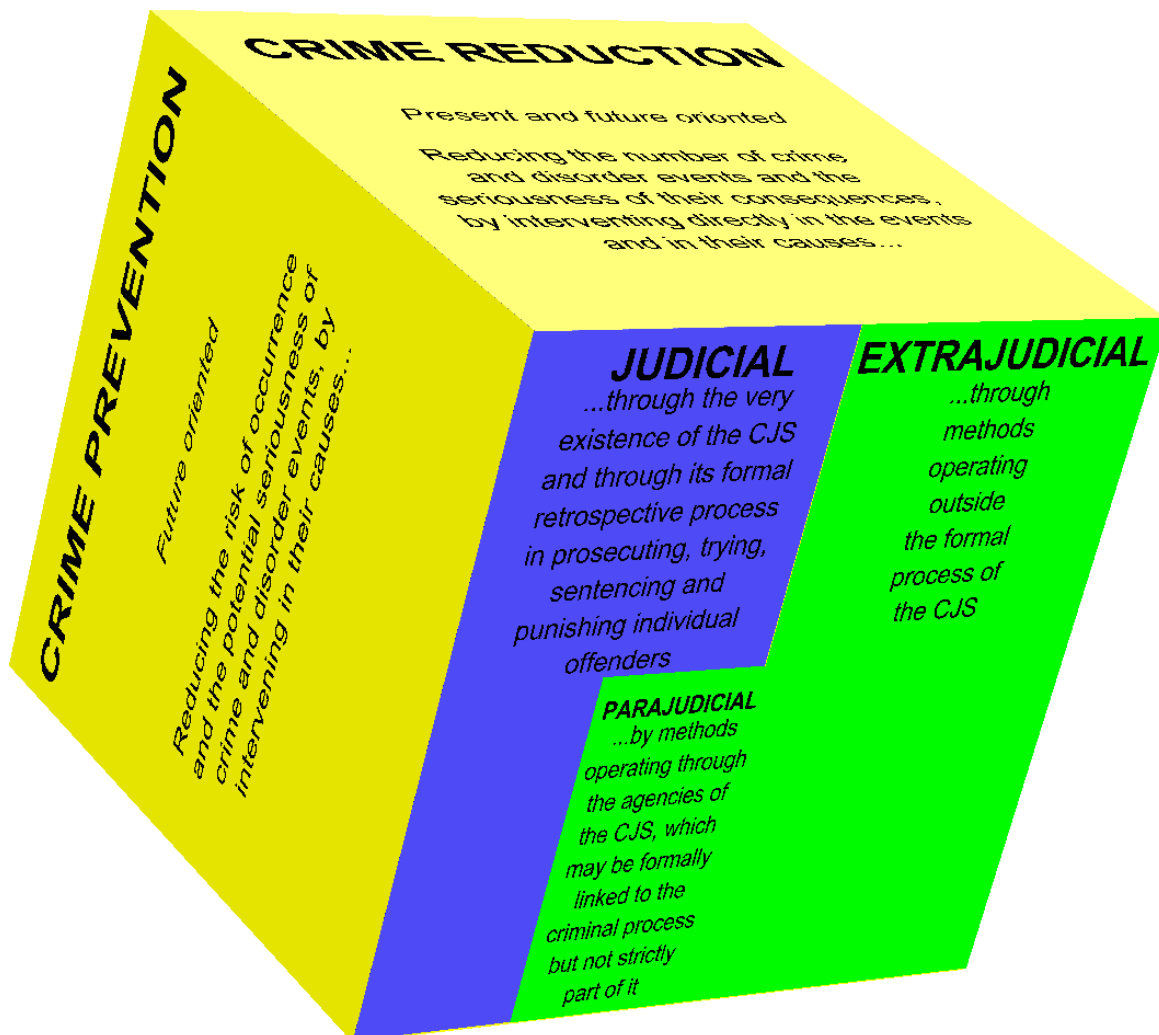


Figure 6 Crime Reduction and prevention