

# Designing Products against Crime

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### INTRODUCTION

Consider these examples of 'bad' crime preventive design:

- Distinctive earphones telling criminals 'here's an expensive music player'
- The player itself having little or no inbuilt security so it will play promiscuously for anyone who possesses it, legitimate or otherwise
- Frustrating to use ticket machines which may provoke retaliatory vandalism
- Syringes which can be re-used, facilitating cross-infection between drug addicts
- A range of banknotes whose denominations are so similar in appearance that people unfamiliar with them can easily be short-changed

Consider, too, these 'good' designs from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design:

- The 'Karrysafe' bag range (Gamman and Hughes 2003) including this backpack (Figure 1), designed to look stylish whilst resisting a range of perpetrator techniques including slashing (by anti-rip material), grabbing (by reinforced handle) and 'dipping' (by replacing the normal flap or clasp top with a Velcro roll-top, which requires two hands to open and makes a noise when doing so)
- The 'Stop Thief' café chair (Figure 2, with Karrysafe handbag), following a classic style, with notches cut to enable bags to be secured beneath the knees, 'locked' in place by the user's legs, located where thieves find it risky to reach and users will be alert.
- The 'Puma Bike' (Figure 3) folding bicycle whose down-tube is replaced by a tensioned steel cable, which can be unlocked and passed round a stand to secure the bike; cutting the cable to release the bike destroys the bike's integrity and hence its use or resale value.
- The 'CaMden' bicycle stand (Figure 4) that forces people to lock their bikes to it in a secure way, i.e. with both wheels and the frame attached.

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- The 'Grippa' clip (Figure 5), for securing bags to bar tables, designed to match bar décor, and easy and safe to use for customers, hard to release for thieves.

[Figures 1-5 about here]

Bad designs can sometimes lead to good – vehicle security has greatly improved over the last 20 years and vehicle crime has markedly fallen (Sallybanks and Brown 1999; Webb 2005)). In both good and bad instances, of course, the design is not the only contributor to raised or lowered crime risk, but adds to, or interacts with, other social and physical influences, such as the kinds of place in which it is exposed to crime hazards, and the lifestyle of the people who carry the products. One-dimensional 'Design determinism' is not advocated here.

Design Against Crime (DAC, also known as designing out crime) uses the tools, processes and products of design to work in partnership with agencies, companies, individuals and communities to prevent all kinds of criminal events – including antisocial behaviour, drug abuse/dealing and terrorism – and to promote quality of life and sustainable living through enhanced community safety. It does so through designs that are 'fit for purpose' and contextually appropriate in all other respects.

The term 'products' has a wide sense in which it encompasses 'anything that has been designed' – places, systems, communications and so on. This chapter however focuses on the design of 'movable' or freestanding products in two dimensions (like banknotes or street signs) or three (such as cellphones or handbags/purses).

The review begins with some history. The next part discusses the nature of design; the following one covers the role of products in crime, risk factors identifying which products feature in crime, and how product design can prevent crime. The part after reviews two kinds of challenge posed by design against crime: how to make the *designs* work and keep working in diverse contexts and changing circumstances; and how to make the *designers* (and the design decision-makers who call the tune) work on DAC in terms of their awareness, motivation and capacity. A brief review of issues of impact evidence precedes the conclusion.

In this chapter various practical conceptual frameworks are introduced or referred to. Up-to-date information on these is maintained at [www.designagainstcrime.com](http://www.designagainstcrime.com) – click on *crimeframeworks*. In many cases, further detail on the issues discussed here can be found in Ekblom (2005a) and other papers listed in the bibliography.

## **HISTORY ANCIENT AND MODERN**

Designing products against crime has a long history closely intertwined with technological progress and commodity prices – well-illustrated by the evolution of money. Shortly after the Greeks introduced silver coinage in c600 BC, someone produced a silver-plated bronze forgery (James and Thorpe 1994). The anti-counterfeit design feature of apparently accidental micro-marks on coins is of equal antiquity. The

potential harm from undermining the currency, for example by clipping the edge from hammered silver coins, provoked harsh punishment but technological/design interventions such as milled edges may have had greater impact. Interestingly, monetary design has long incorporated self-evident 'help the user' security features culminating in today's foil strips as well as arcane 'help the bank' ones.

Changes in material composition have also made coins more secure – silver was removed to repay British wartime debts to the USA; inflation removed much of the remaining symbolic value relative to the risk, cost and effort of counterfeiting. However, as commodity prices fluctuate, even bronze coins' intrinsic value can outstrip their symbolic value making them targets for melting down in their turn.

Other 'historically hot' products have included jewellery and clothing, motor vehicles and more recently, consumer electronics. Like legitimate demand, criminal demand follows fashion (there is even a clothing brand called Criminal, doubtless sought by wearers of Police sunglasses). This applies to phones as much as to fancy trainers. Both legitimate and criminal demand for a new product peak, then diminish with market saturation when everyone owns one (Felson 1997; Pease 2001) – until, that is, fashion-changes revive both by imparting artificial scarcity value to the latest model. This is good for neither crime prevention nor sustainability.

Preventing vehicle crime through design has come far since early ordinances required drivers to leave cars unlocked should they have to be moved. Specific interventions on steering column locks (Mayhew et al.1976) and speculative ideas on 'crime-free cars' (Ekblom 1979) led in the UK to research on the practicalities of mass-market vehicle security (Southall and Ekblom 1985) and, through publication of a car theft index (Houghton 1992), successful attempts to name and shame lax manufacturers whilst awakening and guiding consumer choice. To this was added pressure from insurers who started to increase premiums for insecure models.

More strategic interest in designing products against crime lagged behind the emergence of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. That changed in the late 1990s in the UK at least, with initiatives under the national Crime Reduction Programme. These included:

- Research into the state of design against crime (Design Council 2000), and subsequent case studies and guidance materials building on that (2003)
- Student design competitions through the Royal Society of Arts
- An interest in products in the UK Foresight Programme's Crime Prevention Panel (Department of Trade and Industry 2001).

Around the same time Clarke (1999) published the seminal 'hot products' concept (described below) identifying which were at greatest risk of theft. However, strategic UK work was halted soon after as government funds were drained to control a street crime panic. Ironically, although the crime wave was heightened by insecure product and

system design of cellphones, the solution was an expensive and unsustainable boost of police overtime.

Research on cellphone vulnerability and security nevertheless continued in the UK (Harrington and Mayhew 2001), USA (Clarke et al. 2001); and Australia on product design more generally (Lester 2001). And 'practice-led' design studies began to emerge in the UK under an initiative led by Lorraine Gamman (e.g. Gamman and Pascoe 2004) at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. The European Commission, which had introduced a directive requiring member states to legislate for compulsory factory-fitted vehicle immobilisers from 1998, showed renewed interest in 'crime proofing' of domestic electronic products (such as music players), funding Project MARC (Armitage and Pease 2007; Ekblom and Sidebottom 2007) to pursue an approach to security rating suggested by Clarke and Newman (2005a). The UK Home Office has now incorporated DAC within its national crime reduction/safety strategy (Home Office 2007:33-37) and in 2007 inaugurated a Design and Technology Alliance involving designers, industrialists and academics, to take this forward.

### **Products and crime – the future**

Major trends towards shifting value from outright ownership of products to leasing of serviced products may cause further changes in the role of products in crime, whether an outright reduction or a link to identity and service theft. 'Pervasive computing' (processor chips embedded in virtually any product), plus wireless connections of products to the internet for access to services, upgrades etc, offer enormous scope for 'piggybacking' security functions at little manufacturing cost, much as immobiliser functions have hitched a ride in vehicle engine management computers. Another trend with crime implications is 'mass-customising', where products are personalised via computer control of the production line. Which thief would risk being caught with personalised products when frisked by police on the street? Who would want to buy a stolen phone with someone else's partner's picture indelibly embedded in it?

## **DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS**

### **What is design?**

The full scope of **design** is enormous, potentially embracing all human productive and artistic activity in every medium. Focusing on the applied side, design is a generic *process* of creating some new or improved product which:

- Is materially possible to make (eg it doesn't fall apart, obeys the laws of science and respects the behaviour of its constituent materials)
- Is fit, or fitter than predecessors, for some specified primary purpose
- Does not significantly interfere with other purposes or with wider requirements of social and economic life and the environment, including in cost terms

Under this broad definition (adapted from Booch 1993) lies enormous variety among processes or approaches to design. At one end of the scale, say, we could envisage someone jamming a nail into a window frame to hastily secure it; at the other, a complex and sophisticated vehicle immobiliser system developed over years by large professional teams whose work has to be integrated by explicit managerial processes.

The *purpose* of the designed product can vary from utilitarian to aesthetic and the conveyance of image, lifestyle and value. Playful and subversive designs are also possible. A creative crime prevention example was one entry to the Royal Society of Arts' Student Design Award, which disguised the real openings in a rucksack with false, and deterrent, ones revealing apparent dirty underwear. The classic principle of 'form following function' can at times be supplanted by 'form following emotion'. In crime, of course, emotions are not always positive, hence (using Wortley's (2001) two-stage 'precipitation' model of situational prevention) a poster may provoke vandalism, or a knife prompt aggression.

### **Broadening horizons – drawing on design in the crime preventive process**

Previously designers have been urged to '*think thief*' about their products (Ekblom 1995, 1997; Design Council 2003). The emphasis here is more on encouraging crime preventers, and students of prevention, to '*draw on design*' both practically and conceptually. Mapping out the nature and diversity of design is important, too, because crime preventers often have quite limited assumptions about what design means. Many will be familiar with the built-environment interventions advocated by the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) movement, and with the design of locks, bolts and other security fittings. Both of these demonstrate the obvious relationship between DAC and Situational Crime Prevention. However, DAC is far more than a set of products or buildings, important though they are. Understanding and applying the design *process*, the designer's way of capturing requirements and formulating and solving problems, can greatly benefit all crime prevention practitioners.

## **PRODUCTS AND CRIME**

### **How products feature in crime**

Unsurprisingly, products can feature in crime in myriad ways. Practical approaches must be systematic. Two linked frameworks can aid this (see *crimeframeworks*). The Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity (Ekblom 2001), a more detailed equivalent of the Crime Triangle (Clarke and Eck 2003), can be used to define the broad types of role played by products in causing criminal events in general. Products can be:

- Targets
- Target enclosures (eg houses, cars, containers, packaging or handbags)
- Environments (with products, eg the designed interior of trains, bus shelters or phone boxes)

- Resources for offending (eg tools, weapons – see Ekblom and Tilley 2000; Gill 2005), equivalent to ‘facilitators’ (Clarke and Eck 2003).

The ‘Misdeeds and Security’ framework (Ekblom 2005b) describes how products feature as object, subject, tool or setting for particular *kinds* of criminal behaviour. Products can be:

- Misappropriated (stolen for themselves, their parts or materials)
- Mistreated (damaged, destroyed)
- Mishandled (counterfeited, copied, sold when stolen, or smuggled)
- Misused
- Misbehaved with

Criminal Misuse or Misbehavior could implicate cordless drills as a tools for burglary, cellphones for drug-dealing or illicitly photographing young swimmers, laser pointers as weapons, aerosol paint cans spraying graffiti on walls, computer programs controlling re-chipping of stolen phones, jewellery as props in confidence tricks.

Combining the frameworks generates permutations which can be used to organise what we know and (by providing boxes to fill) anticipate new risks. For example, targets of crime can be Misappropriated, Mistreated or Mishandled. Enclosures can be Mistreated by being broken into or carried off for their contents. Some products are heavily implicated in crime. Table 1 shows combined analysis of the roles played by motor vehicles.

Nature of crime risk to motor vehicle and its human/material contents (from Misdeeds and Security framework)	Motor vehicle as causal ingredient of crime (from Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity framework)			
	Target of crime	Target enclosure	Environment of crime	Resource/facilitator for crime
Misappropriation	Theft of car for resale	Theft from car	Pickpocketing in bus	Theft of car for misuse/misbehaviour
Mistreatment	Vandalised car	Damage to achieve entry; assassination of passengers	Assault/sexual assault in bus	Damage during misuse
Misuse	See ‘Resource’ >	See ‘Resource’ >	See ‘Resource’ >	Getaway car, ram-raiding, drug dealing, car bomb
Mishandling	‘Ringing’ of car identity, smuggling, counterfeit spares	Delivery scams, falsifying weight of load carried by truck	Car burnt out to destroy DNA evidence	Avoidance of paying speeding fines etc by cloned number plate

Misbehaviour	Obscene messages in dirt on vehicle paintwork	Illegal use of cellphone when driving	Rowdy behaviour/ consumption of drugs in taxi	Joyriding, speeding, drink driving
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Table 1. The motor vehicle as criminogenic product

### **Risk factors – which products feature in crime?**

Not all classes of product are at equal risk of involvement in crime. Domestic consumer electronics items are at greater risk than domestic 'white goods' (washing machines etc). Likewise within a single class, not all makes and models are at equal risk, as the UK Car Theft Index (Home Office 2004) reveals. The 'classic' risk factor approach within situational crime prevention is Clarke's (1999) 'hot products', which covers theft. According to this model, based on a mix of statistical and theoretical analysis, the risk of theft is raised if the product is CRAVED:

- Concealable (by the offender)
- Removable
- Available (lots of such targets about in accessible places)
- Valuable
- Enjoyable and
- Disposable (via resale)

The best example is the cellphone. The value of CRAVED is in guiding the targeting of preventive effort: it is only reasonable to ask manufacturers to build additional security into a particular new product if it is likely, on sound research grounds, to be at high risk of theft.

A recent study (Armitage and Pease 2007) sought to incorporate CRAVED into a practical system of crime proofing. The aim, following proposals by Clarke and Newman (2005a), was to encourage manufacturers of domestic electronic products judged to be at high risk of theft, to bestow upon them commensurately high security. Various difficulties were encountered however, especially in development of a rating system for security. Ekblom and Sidebottom (2007) have attempted to learn from these experiences by evolving a wider suite of definitions of risk and security, and a range of different languages (eg technical, mechanistic, functional). They also drew on Cornish's (1994) concept of *crime scripts* to argue that designers need to consider the different risks to the product at different stages of the theft process (seek, see, take, escape, realise value). While concealability of a cellphone at the escape stage aids the thief, the same property at the seek/see stages helps the legitimate owner, who doesn't want the thief to spot it. Product design must envisage, and address, the whole sequence and any such design conflicts within it.

### **How does it work? How product design can prevent crime**

Product security uses design and technology to reduce the risk of criminal events. Risk divides into *probability* of criminal events, and various kinds of *harm* from those events to the product, the owner or others (see *crime frameworks*). The focus here is on probability.

Reducing the probability of crime by product design may work either by making the products objectively harder, riskier or less rewarding for the offender to exploit, or making them *perceived* as such by the offender – this is standard situational prevention. Obviously real resistance is more durable: offenders will eventually see through any pretence. However, the ‘semiotics’, or capacity to convey meaning, of design makes a significant additional contribution. Giving an objectively-resistant product a robust appearance can confer the additional advantage of deterring or discouraging criminal *attempts*, and any damage they may cause (Whitehead et al. 2008) Think also of the winking red light indicating, faintly menacingly, an armed vehicle alarm. This strategy is used in nature by wasps which supplement stings with warning coloration (Ekblom 1997, 1999; Felson 2006).

There are four broad ways of objectively securing products against crime: designing them to be inherently secure, adding on security products, securing the immediate situation in which other products or people are at risk, and making remoter interventions.

### ***Designing inherently secure products***

Products designed to be inherently secure will incorporate specific ‘security adaptations’ – components, structural features or materials whose explicit purpose is to confer the security. Using the labels which are the ‘Security’ counterpart of ‘Misdeeds’, they may be:

- Secured against Misappropriation
  - Spatially fragmented – eg computers whose terminals are cheap with the main processing done in a secure or remote location; or in-car entertainment systems whose components are distributed throughout the vehicle requiring more time, effort and knowledge to extract as a saleable set.
  - Less distinctive or prompting targets to offenders at the ‘seeking and seeing’ stages of crime scripts, eg in-car entertainment systems that are camouflaged by a flap that descends when the vehicle is locked.
  - More distinctive to law enforcers at the ‘using and selling’ stages of crime scripts, countering the anonymity of mass production and increasing risk to offender and secondary purchaser. Perhaps incorporating deliberately traceable features such as ‘property marking’ (Sutton et al. 2001). Advanced equivalents exist including incorporating multi-layered paint spots with unique, registered colour sequences into the material of the product.



- Discriminating in allowing access to their value. This can include mechanical lockability, password operation, or intelligent systems that recognise they are not in the location they are meant to be, and shut down.
- Building on the last example, actively enhancing risk to offenders, and aiding recovery of loot, by sending tracking signals or internet messages to some system designed to receive and act on them.
- Safeguarded against Mistreatment
  - Non-provocative, eg street signs that avoid couching regulations in confrontational terms.
  - Physically resistant or resilient, such as laminated glass, street furniture that pops back into shape after being kicked in, or graffiti-resistant surfaces. Note that targets can be *softened* as well as hardened – a swivel on old-fashioned pocket watch fastenings prevented thieves applying force to snap them off, a technique used today to protect vehicle fuel caps (when locked, they spin free of the screwthread).
- Scam-proofed against Mishandling
  - Indicative of loss or tampering. Examples include paint cans whose lids reveal they have been opened, by rupture of a thin membrane, preventing them being returned, refilled with water, for refund (Design Council 2003: Case Studies).
  - Resistant to interception of information – e.g. fold-over airline baggage labels that conceal holidaymakers' addresses from professional burglars' touts.
  - Resistant to fraud. Ticket machines on the London Underground were modified (Clarke 1997) so the last coin in became the first coin out in the eject mechanism. This frustrated offenders' fraudulent trick of putting a low-value 'slug' into the slot and ejecting a high-value coin in exchange. Security designs on official documents such as certificates of ownership or importation are made difficult to copy (ref – Burrows and Ekblom 1986).
- Shielded against Misuse or Misbehaviour
  - Resistant: once-only syringes; beer glasses made from plastic that cannot be 'weaponised' (Design Council 2003: Case Studies); guns that fire only for the registered owner through a fingerprint scanner in the grip; colour photocopiers that recognise, and refuse, attempts to copy banknotes; waste bins that reveal their contents – including hidden bombs – or deflect blast upwards.
  - Indicative: food or medicine containers with sealed or pop-up lids, a design response to the infamous Tylenol painkiller case where poison was substituted for medicine (Clarke and Newman 2005b); emergency alarms on trains which activate an appropriate CCTV camera.

- Non-provocative: sound insulation which prevents earphones annoying fellow travellers, thereby avoiding the occasionally serious conflict.

Inherent security, at one extreme, is an intrinsic property of a product: the massive inertia of some home-cinema televisions makes them unlikely loot for opportunist burglars (see Cohen and Felson 1979). This could hardly be accredited to deliberate design as the weight is simply a by-product of other considerations such as the requirement to use plasma screens. However, future displays could perhaps be rolled up and carried off under the arm. Reliance on intrinsic security features should then be supplanted by designed-in security adaptations.

In the middle of the range inherent security can be achieved via simple and clever system design, such as the lighting tubes on London Underground trains which use a different voltage from domestic supply. This makes them unattractive to (moderately intelligent) thieves. At the other extreme are specialised security components, like holographic labels for brand protection of vodka (Design Council 2000); or the integration of the immobiliser function into, say, a vehicle engine management computer.

### ***Adding on security products***

Products which themselves are insecure can be protected by dedicated add-on security products, often fitted after a crime problem has become apparent.

- Laptops can be secured against theft by low-tech anchor-cables, or high-tech wireless sensors (transmitter incorporated in laptop, sensor in owner's pocket, which protests if the computer is moved).
- Add-on car alarms or steering-wheel locks can protect vehicles.
- Grilles and screens can safeguard street furniture against vandal damage.
- Expensive consumer items liable to counterfeiting and can be Scam-proofed by hard- or expensive-to-copy packaging eg using codes that only appear when body warmth is applied (Design Council 2000). However, the international nature of product piracy means factories in places like China are well-appointed to copy even these – the practice has been both low-risk and suited to mass-market sales.

Security add-ons may not provide the best solution to security, as the final part of the chapter discusses.

### ***Securing the immediate situation in which products are at risk***

Otherwise insecure products can be kept in situations which have been made secure. This may involve the use of additional products, or environmental design, with little recourse to human intervention:

- Security products such as safes provide secure enclosures for storage; cages, e.g. for computer projectors in school classrooms, enable secure use.

- Physical or electronic access control methods can prevent unauthorised people from reaching the target products.
- Items readily to hand, which can be misused as an impromptu resource for crime, can be restricted. For example, designing lockable rubbish hoppers so they cannot be used as a temporary stash for stolen goods; securing 'emergency escape hammers' misused to break car windows, behind a screen sufficiently monitored to deter offenders; designing litterbins so empty bottles cannot be extracted for use in fights.

Often, however, designs are intended to work with human crime preventers and against crime promoters. The requirement to mobilise preventers may either be an on-cost of bad design, as with cars so vulnerable to theft they need guarding, realistic admission of product design's limitations in particular circumstances, or positive exploitation of the human element:

- Some products, whose main function does not concern prevention, can be modified to alert and empower people in various kinds of crime preventer role. Guardians of targets can be aided in protecting their own bags in bars by the 'Stop Thief' chairs and table clips illustrated above. These can be called 'securing products'.
- Other products can constrain or influence people from unintentionally acting as crime promoters (those who do not commit the central offence being considered but who, perhaps through inaction, make it more likely). The M-shaped bike stand illustrated above forces cyclists to lock their bike securely (both wheels and the frame) rather than relying on a single lock in the middle of the crossbar, which leaves the wheels removable and the frame liable to misuse in the service of its own misappropriation – as a lever to snap the lock. User-friendly electronic locks on car doors remove obstacles of effort to securing the vehicle when parking.
- Inherently insecure products can be designed to compensate by prompting securing behaviour by their guardians. Vehicles nowadays give various (often intensely annoying) audio reminders eg to remove the key on leaving the car. As inbuilt intelligence increases in hot products such as music players, one can anticipate the incorporation of the same nag-functions. This is because they may be a cheaper solution to getting manufacturers off the moral/legal hook for theft prevention and deflecting responsibility onto the owner, than is incorporating inherent security.
- But human preventers can be unreliable. Some security functions have been designed to remove people from the loop: the car radio aerial built into the window glass, does not require the driver to telescope it shut on leaving the vehicle. Removing human intermediaries more generally is not always beneficial. As Pease (2001) notes, the arrival of digital photography removed the employee-based surveillance from photographic development services which once kept paedophilic activities in check. And if circumstances change, the flexibility of human guardianship may be lacking.

- Preventers' presence, alertness, motivation, empowerment and direction could all fit within the design of some *integrated security system* (Tilley 2005). A familiar example is a retail security environment with an interior designed for surveillance, and where products or their packaging are fitted with tags which, if not neutralised by sales staff, activate detectors at the exit, bring security guards running, and provide legal evidence of ownership for the court.

### ***Securing products by remoter interventions***

Vulnerable and valuable products can also be protected by actions beyond the immediate crime situation:

- Making it hard to obtain specialist tools used to remove a target product. Unfortunately, this goes against modern trends to hire out virtually anything, no questions asked. However, concerns about terrorist misuse of everyday items (like fertiliser) have begun to prompt a counter-trend of registration and identification.
- Limiting knowledge of where the target products can be found and what their vulnerabilities are. Again this is counter to contemporary trends except for very high value, dangerous or 'critical infrastructure' products.
- Restricting the activities of deliberate crime promoters such as fences via a range of interventions including property marking and registration, tracking devices etc. Specific laws have been enacted (eg in UK) forbidding re-coding of stolen cellphones, or even possession of requisite equipment.
- The last can be part of a wider market-reduction approach to crime prevention (Sutton et al. 2001), where various actions on or through buyers, sellers, second-hand shops etc are explicitly combined with product identification techniques (which themselves could involve product or packaging design) and registration systems.

Together, the approaches described in this 'how does it work?' section exemplify most of the 25 techniques of situational crime prevention (Clarke and Eck 2003). Underlying these techniques they engage the familiar 'rational choice' mechanisms of increasing effort, cost, time and risk of harm to offender, and reducing reward. In some cases however the situational influences are directed towards changing, not the offender's behaviour but that of preventers/promoters. But besides treating humans as 'active agents' in all these ways, design may also act through methods that are more 'causal', such as those which *provoke* criminal motivation (Wortley 2001).

### **THE CHALLENGES OF DESIGN AGAINST CRIME**

Someone designing coffee machines must address manufacturing and shipping considerations, changing fashion, changing values (eg sustainability), evolving technology, the products of competitors and much more. Those designing products additionally to be crime resistant must squeeze in yet another, distinctive, set of

requirements. Worse, they must cope with, or preferably anticipate, adaptive adversaries who may develop countermoves against the resistance.

### **Designs fit-for-purpose: Troublesome Tradeoffs**

Despite public concern about crime, when it comes to everyday priorities of consumers, crime prevention is often way down the list. People want a car that is stylish, high performance, economical, safe, cheap – and by the way, that does not get stolen or broken into. A major challenge, therefore, is how to design products that are secure without jeopardising their main purpose or interfering with many other criteria. Designers must consider how incorporation of security interacts with a product's manufacture, safe and economic delivery through the supply chain, marketing, installation and ultimate disposal. Recognising, and reconciling, the range of potentially competing and conflicting requirements at (and between) all these stages is the heart of the industrial designer's skill. Several such 'troublesome tradeoffs' are particularly significant. While presented in a product design context here, they can apply to all kinds of crime prevention intervention or problem-oriented policing solution.

- **Aesthetics** A familiar negative image of DAC is the 'fortress society'. Originally applied to built environments (blockhouses, heavy shutters), this could equally cover movable products: hideous armoured computer cases, ugly moneybelts, or chains on music players signalling 'uncool' risk-aversion. Crude fortification can happen, of course, through thoughtless commissioning and bad or compartmentalised design. But as seen, for example, perfectly aesthetic handbags can be designed which are secure in diverse ways against dipping and slashing (Gamman and Hughes 2003), and window-embedded car radio aerials can be designed without obvious protective engineering features.
- **Legal and ethical issues** Designers against crime must also consider whether their proposal violates privacy or unacceptably constrains freedom. One example is a mobile phone which reports on someone's movements without their awareness or free consent. Communicating lack of trust may also be an issue, as in over-intrusive anti-shoplifting devices.
- **Sustainability** Crime prevention requirements sit alongside environmental/energy considerations. One approach to preventing shoplifting of small, pocketable goods is to put them in a big package; this consumes materials and energy. One item to receive this treatment (Design Council 2000) was a small torch, but cleverly, the packaging material came from surplus plastic from manufacturing the product itself.
- **Nuisance** is another tradeoff in the quality of the social environment. Whereas designing insecure cars may export costs of *crime* onto victims and the rest of society (Roman and Farrell 2002; Hardie and Hobbs 2005), poorly-designed car alarms export the costs of crime *prevention*.

- **Safety** With efforts to stop drink-driving or restrict weapon use, safety and crime prevention are on the same side (intelligent cars can recognise and act on drink-diminished skills and intelligent weapons fire only for their registered owner). However safety (and failsafe) considerations can collide with security. Nobody wants a crime-proof car that occupants cannot be rescued from. But creative leaps can serve both safety *and* crime prevention. The bottom run of some fire escape stairs are drawn up from street level, sliding down under the weight of fleeing occupants.
- **Convenience** Design against crime must be simultaneously *user-friendly whilst abuser-unfriendly* (Ekblom 2005). Elaborate security procedures, forgettable passwords and awkward locks rapidly destroy a product's allure. They will also conflict with *inclusive design* (see [www.designcouncil.org.uk/en/About-Design/Design-Techniques/Inclusive-design/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/en/About-Design/Design-Techniques/Inclusive-design/)) which aims to make products and places readily and unobtrusively usable by the elderly or disabled. Indeed, difficult security features may well be bypassed. Who has not seen a seedy advertisement on a street stall for unblocking of cellphones?
- **Cost** Every additional feature in a product imposes extra cost on the design process and manufacture. In fiercely competitive sectors like automotive design or consumer electronics even additional pence may be unacceptable. But some security features only require thought at the design stage. An example is the road sign for the River Uck, which (as can be imagined) is quite provocative of graffiti. Presumably after wearying experience, the local council devised the sign shown in Figure 6 to deny writing-space for the offending extra letter.

[Figure 6 about here]

Ingenuity apart, the earlier crime considerations are raised in the design process, the easier to optimise troublesome tradeoffs. Security features will be less obtrusive, hence more aesthetic and less vulnerable to counterattack; operation may be more user-friendly; constraints on design freedom less, and costs reduced.

Sometimes, new technology can relax these tradeoffs. In cars, the arrival of cheap, reliable miniature electric motors allowed the discriminant function of locks to be physically detached from the actuator devices that latch the doors, removing size, space and reliability constraints on the design of door security. But technology and engineering must yield to wider design requirements. Superficial, 'bolt-on-drop-off' techno-fixes or clunky, awkward engineering solutions like heavy grilles are unfortunately encountered and spoil the reputation of DAC (Ekblom 2005).

### Anticipating risk

Continual arrival on the market of new, naively insecure products generates what Pease (2001) calls *crime harvests*, followed by hasty retrospective efforts to cope with the crime and clumsily patch the damage by remedial design. The classic example has been

with cellphones (Clarke et al. 2001). Although older leaks are now plugged, arguably the early vulnerabilities enabled the establishment of a crime market, with criminal expertise, criminal service providers, and criminal networks. Advances in technology also produce a steady stream of new resources for crime, like cordless drills, or pocketable 12V batteries (which can be misused to energise car door locks). Previously secure items become vulnerable overnight.

Anticipation could avoid many of these problems. Clarke's (1999) 'hot products' concept was conceived to predict which new products could be prone to theft. And to match the largely empirical identification of risk factors underlying CRAVED, the more theoretical approach of Routine Activities Theory (Cohen and Felson 1979; Felson 1997; Pease 1997) and the Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity (Eckblom 2002, 2005b; see *crimeframeworks*) can be applied.

### **Offenders fight back**

As every discussion of displacement acknowledges, offenders are adaptable: potentially able to circumvent crime prevention methods by changing location, target or (most relevant to DAC) tactics. The word *potentially* is significant, because reviews of the more conventional kinds of displacement over the shorter term (eg Hesseling 1994) show it is rare or only partial. In DAC however, the wider picture of offender adaptation is not so clear, although quantitative evidence is lacking. Offenders can respond to crime-resistant design at several levels:

- Making tactical countermoves in situ – spraying quick-setting foam in car alarms to deaden the sound.
- Turning crime prevention devices to their own advantage – anti shoplifting mirrors work both ways; communal CCTV in blocks of flats has been misused by residents to spot which neighbours are going out, prior to burgling their flat.
- Turning designer themselves and developing tools as described above; perhaps doing sophisticated reverse engineering of locks to understand and defeat the mechanism.

Crime prevention is a kind of arms race (Eckblom 1997, 1999) between crime preventers and adaptive offenders who innovate, exploit change and enjoy the obsolescence of familiar crime prevention methods. A good illustration (Shover 1996) is the unfolding history of safes and safe-crackers. A more recent one concerns credit-card fraud (Levi and Handley 1998) where the game shifts from one *modus operandi* (such as theft and misuse of card) to another (e.g. 'card not present', as with Internet purchases) as each successive loophole is closed.

In the longer term, crime levels depend on which side is innovating, and mainstreaming their innovations, faster than the other. And offender innovation is accelerating. Previously techniques were often learned in prison, but guides on making bombs or picking locks now regularly appear on the Internet. Preventers can however catch up by

learning from other 'evolutionary struggles' including military, predator versus prey, antibiotic versus bacteria and pest versus pest control. Ekblom (1997, 1999, 2005; see also Felson 2006) explores these issues in depth.

### **Involving designers in DAC**

Few crime prevention interventions in the 'civil' world of work, leisure, travel and shopping are directly implemented by police and other professional crime preventers. Usually, the professionals aim to get other people or institutions to take responsibility for implementing and sometimes designing the intervention. This is the sphere of *involvement*. Involvement in turn has three main aspects – *climate-setting*, *partnership* (as between government and insurance companies, well-developed in the Netherlands (see [www.theccv.eu](http://www.theccv.eu)) and *mobilisation*. The first two are touched on below, but mobilisation is the key. One generic framework for mobilising crime preventers, CLAIMED (see [crimeframeworks](#)), sets out the following steps for mobilisation:

- **C**larify the crime prevention tasks or roles that need doing, eg implementing the intervention itself; alleviating constraints; and supplying enablers.
- **L**ocate the individuals or organisations best-placed to undertake them, including designers, manufacturers, marketers and consumers. Then
- **A**lert them that their product could be causing crime, or that they could help stop unrelated crimes;
- **I**nform them in detail of the risks;
- **M**otivate them;
- **E**mpower them; and where appropriate,
- **D**irect them.

This process can be done locally or nationally; by government, police or other institutions with an interest in crime prevention. Let's assume by this point that we have clarified the crime prevention tasks and roles, and located the designers and design decision-makers we wish to mobilise. What exactly do we do next?

### ***Alerting designers, clients and customers to the role of design in crime***

The cultural and political focus on the offender as problem, and 'cops, courts and corrections' as solution, has allowed designers and the manufacturers that commission them to get away with statements like 'don't blame my design, but the people who use it'; and the media, politicians and the public to go along with this complicity with crime. The first stage in getting designers and design decision-makers to 'think thief', is to give them the right mindset. This is best done with a range of 'why didn't I think of that?' illustrations like those that opened this chapter.

Individual examples may have localised effects. Strategically it is important to establish a pervasive public climate of expectation that designers and manufacturers will have



responsibility for addressing crime through effective product design, as has happened with vehicle security (Webb 2005).

### ***Informing designers through intelligence on risk and design***

For governments and insurers to act directly against insecure designs, or to get manufacturers, retailers and service providers to do likewise in a way that is efficient and proportionate to harm, it is necessary to know which products are insecure, to what degree, and why. Such evidence is also needed to inform the detail of design itself. There are three main approaches to obtaining it.

- *Deriving comparative risk rates* requires combining two kinds of information: the numbers of different makes and models (preferably by year, as production details change quite rapidly) *exposed to crime*, say, theft; and the numbers *actually stolen*. This is to index out a simple effect of numbers at risk – the more music players on the streets, the more would likely get stolen irrespective of design.

This approach was successfully used to generate the UK Car Theft Index (eg Home Office 2004), intended to mobilise consumer pressure to encourage manufacturers to increase security levels. Vehicles, however, may be a special case – it was relatively straightforward to get the datasets on exposure (number of cars of each make and model on the road) and crime (from police records of this highly-reported offence). It is hard to envisage any equivalent index for, say, laptops being easy to produce and reliable, although there may be scope with cellphones if manufacturers/service providers are pressed to pool data. However, the situation may improve as products increasingly incorporate web-enabled electronics, and automated registration of ownership grows.

- *Attack testing* of products uses the tools and perpetrator techniques that offenders employ currently or are likely to adopt in the near future. The Association of British Insurers does just this for automobiles. Models rated insecure are assigned to a higher insurance premium band – as can be imagined, this concentrates the minds of the manufacturers because of its influence on consumer purchasing choice. Apart from on vehicles and financial systems, attack testing remains rare.
- *Systematic scrutiny of design and construction* of the products themselves seeks to identify vulnerabilities and assess whether security is commensurate with risk; and thence to assign a security rating. Such certification has been done with houses and other buildings (as with the UK Secured By Design scheme, and the equivalent Dutch Police Safe Housing). But attempts to develop ways for rating the security of movable products have yet to reach a practicable state, as experience with consumer electronics recently showed (Armitage and Pease 2007; Ekblom and Sidebottom 2007).

Both attack testing and systematic scrutiny draw on various kinds of background research. This can include literally picking up the pieces of some stolen product and looking at them forensically to see how the offender overcame any resistance; obtaining descriptions of perpetrator techniques from crime reports (sadly, rarely

well-documented); interviewing product-servicing people; and interviewing offenders to explicitly obtain this 'preventive intelligence'.

### ***Motivating designers and others to take on crime***

Much has been written on the problem of 'incentivising' crime prevention in general (eg Home Office 2006). Motivation of designers has been attempted through various awards (eg the Royal Society of Arts Student Design Awards, now Design Directions) and simply by stimulating them with the challenges of the task outlined above. But converting student enthusiasm into sustained interest and career commitment requires that for designers, crime pays; and that they see their crime resistant designs consistently welcomed and put into production. The attention thus turns to design decision-makers.

Motivation of manufacturers to make their products secure can be achieved by hard or soft incentives including an image of corporate social responsibility, naming and shaming, 'polluter-pays' taxes (Roman and Farrell 2002), awakening consumer expectations and pressures and imposing insurance costs, and legislation (Design Council 2000; Clarke and Newman 2005). Hardie and Hobbs (2005), and Webb (2005) give good descriptions of how a combination of many of these pressures led to radical improvements in car security.

But none of the supply-side motivators are 'intrinsic' to the core profit motive of manufacturers and will always remain precarious. The closer the desire to incorporate crime resistance can be aligned to this 'natural' motivation, the more consistently, sustainably and creatively the task will be done. The general answer is to look towards demand-side motivation. However, while encouraging consumers to preferentially buy secure products is theoretically plausible (Design Council 2000) it has yet to convincingly demonstrate effective influence on choice, let alone showing that those choices go on to induce manufacturers to reduce crime.

Government intervention remains a vital corrective to 'market failures'. Clarke and Newman (2005) assess various roles governments could undertake to support modification of criminogenic products, including acting as socially-responsible large-scale procurers for their own needs, managing incentives and ensuring a level playing-field so socially-responsible manufacturers do not lose out.

### ***Empowering designers to make products crime resistant***

Compared with the CPTED field, guidance for product designers has been sparse – but that is changing. The earlier Design Council guidance is increasingly being supplemented. With the founding of the DAC Research Centre in 2005 Central Saint Martins College has produced a range of materials in various media ([www.designagainstcrime.com](http://www.designagainstcrime.com)), including *Know the Enemy*, an animated guide to perpetrator techniques for stealing cycles. Work to develop more sophisticated guidance on prevention of bike crime through more secure bikes and parking facilities is currently under way and will be available on [www.bikeoff.org](http://www.bikeoff.org). Other British institutions have entered the field, including Loughborough University which has been developing

ways of assessing security features of cellphones (Whitehead et al. 2008); and the UK-Italian team of Project MARC (Armitage and Pease 2007) as already mentioned have taken forward the security rating process.

### ***Directing designers – standards***

Standards are an important implementation tool for government policy; but rigid requirements may make designs difficult to adapt to individual contexts and slow to adapt to change. And variety of preventive methods is important in running arms races. Enhancing design freedom is therefore vital in tackling crime. The paradox can be resolved if performance standards are used rather than technical or construction standards... and if those performance standards are future-proofed. For example, a vehicle security specification would not be for 'hardened steel lock surrounds', but for 'locks which resist offenders, armed with the latest tools, for at least five minutes'. Such criteria are preferred by the UK Loss Prevention Certification Board, and the European CEN standards organisation.

### **DAC – evidence of Impact**

Assessment and feedback from studio tests, field trials, user and service engineer experience and ultimately sales, profitability and market leadership are of course an inherent part of the evolutionary process that is product design. In evaluation and cost-effectiveness terms normally applied to crime prevention, however, there is unfortunately little hard evidence to report that relates to product design as opposed to 'target-hardening' and other situational approaches in general (see for example Clarke 1997; Ekblom 1998; and Welsh and Farrington 2000). Such evidence as exists is often characterised by weak research designs; formally evaluated products are summarised in Clarke and Newman (2005b, Table 4). Circumstantial evidence (Sallybanks and Brown 1999; Webb 2005) points to the contribution of vehicle security technology towards the substantial and sustained reduction of theft of cars in the UK in recent years. British Crime Survey figures (Home Office 2007b: Table 2.01) show theft of vehicles reduced by 65% from 1995 to 2006-7 following the design of improved security into the vehicle. Other evidence is anecdotal but (as Clarke and Newman 2005b, note) almost entirely self-evident. For example, remedial plastic housing was recently put on the end beams of train carriages, to stop boys riding there, at mortal peril. The most superficial glance reveals there is now simply nowhere for them to stand.

One research project currently under way (at Central Saint Martins College, evaluated by the Jill Dando Institute and mainly funded by UK Arts and Humanities Research Council) is, however, attempting a rigorous field evaluation of second-generation anti-theft clips to secure customers' bags to bar tables. The more such hard evidence can be obtained, the better DAC will fare in securing sustained funding and attention from government. The evidence may also help convince consumers to prefer products so designed and manufacturers to include security in their requirements capture.

## Conclusion

The study and practice of designing products against crime lets us view the familiar with fresh eyes. It also leads to unfamiliar territory. DAC as a whole is simultaneously a relatively narrow domain of intervention within Situational Prevention, and a broad approach that can contribute to every kind of intervention and indeed to every stage of the preventive process.

DAC interventions can never be the complete answer to crime (although hard evidence either way is sorely-needed). Implementation, too, is a major issue – how to mobilise producers and users to make the crime-resistant choice, and to realise it well. However, DAC will continue to help reduce all kinds of crime in ways which complement place management or offender-oriented interventions. The boundaries of its competence will surely undergo some drastic shifts as new technology and, especially, inbuilt or ambient, web-based intelligence make their presence felt in everyday products and the systems and places they are embedded in.

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## Questions

- Repeat Table 1, substituting cellphones for motor vehicles.
- Suggest design solutions for the criminal activities listed in each of the cells of Table 1, for motor vehicles or for cellphones.
- Can governments forecast specific risks to specific products reliably enough to insist manufacturers address them?
- Fashion – complicit in crime, or an innocent bystander?
- Think up some potential new crime risks associated with products that derive from technological innovation or social change. Use the Misdeeds and Security framework to help structure your list.
- How might you use design/technology to resolve the conflict between wanting to conceal a hot product at the 'seek/see' stages of theft whilst making it obvious at the 'take/escape' stages?
- Are there any of the 25 techniques of situational crime prevention to which design of products or places cannot contribute? Are there any DAC approaches which fall outside the 25 techniques?
- If you were a criminal, how might you misuse a cordless drill?
- Give some reasons why crime preventers struggle to keep up their side of the arms race with criminals.
- Are insurers and government always natural partners in preventing crime?
- If you were a product manufacturer, what might make you renounce the prospect of extra sales from the replacement of victims' losses through crime?

- If you were a creative designer, faced with crime-science frameworks and the requirement for research evidence to guide you in designing against crime, would you feel stifled or stimulated?
- 'Design Against Crime as a whole ... is simultaneously a relatively narrow domain of intervention within Situational Crime Prevention, and a broad approach that can contribute to every kind of intervention and indeed to every stage of the preventive process.' Discuss.

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