## Guest Editor's introduction

**Paul Ekblom**

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a familiar field of practice, particularly in English-speaking and Northern European nations, but now emerging too in countries such as Italy and France which have traditionally followed more community- and offender-oriented paths in crime prevention; and in Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Middle East. Although worthy of support, CPTED does have some serious limitations, which may limit its theoretical and empirical sharpness, practical relevance and its lasting adoption; and may even introduce harmful side-effects. So 'old hands' and 'new hands' alike need to proceed with some caution.

The idea behind this thematic issue of EJCPR is to support the *concept* of CPTED, and to respect the *practical experience* that has built up over the years, but to subject *the language, the methodology, the theory, the detailed evidence and the working practice* to constructive criticism. The intention, too, is to indicate directions in which CPTED should

update and evolve as a practical but rigorous and evidence-based discipline. (Evidence of impact on crime of CPTED *programmes* is not covered here although equally important to the future of the approach.)

In this introduction I will very briefly define and describe the basic principles of CPTED, as they are now; identify some of the main problems and limitations of CPTED; suggest some strategic ways in which CPTED and its component concepts could evolve and improve; look ahead to the papers in this issue which take things forward in quite diverse ways; and finish with a proposed *re*definition of CPTED. Ideally the debate will not stop with this issue but continue elsewhere, contributing to a much-needed reinvigoration of the field.

**CPTED definition**

The closest thing to an 'official' definition of CPTED was given by the late Tim Crowe of the US National Institute for Crime Prevention. CPTED is

> *The proper design and effective use of the built environment, that can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life. …The goal of CPTED is to reduce opportunities for crime that may be inherent in the design of structures or in the design of neighborhoods (2000: 46).*

**CPTED principles**

The main principles of CPTED are variously labelled and described in different texts, but the following, drawing on the major review of the field by Cozens et al. (2005), is typical:

- *Defensible space* is about designing buildings/enclosures to help occupants, owners and users keep criminals out.

- *Access control* is more specifically about actively keeping certain people out of buildings/enclosures, and the structures, procedures and technologies to achieve this, whilst admitting those people with a right to be there.

- *Territoriality* covers the human motivation to control space, who enters it and what people do within it.  Good designs increase this motivation (although territoriality can have a negative side, with gang turf for example ).

- *Surveillance* concerns how design and technology can help people acting as crime preventers, whether police, employees, owners or general public, to see or hear suspicious people or criminal behaviour, and take some appropriate action.

- *Target hardening* is about making physical structures like walls, windows and doors resistant to attack and penetration by criminals.

- *Image* covers the appearance of a building, place or neighbourhood, not just aesthetics but relating also to social reputation and stigma of the place and its inhabitants. These factors can increase crime levels or feelings of insecurity, and harm economic regeneration.  *Maintenance* contributes to appearance, obviously, but also to issues like effectiveness of security systems.

- *Activity support* is a more dynamic, yet more nebulous concept. It concerns the beneficial effect of having significant numbers of people in, or passing through, a particular place, who are doing routine, honest activities like shopping or dining.

The rationale is that by their presence and behaviour they will deny offenders some opportunities to commit crime.

CPTED has diverse roots in architecture, planning, situational crime prevention, military design and more. It has tended to evolve through a succession of 'schools' (Jacobs, Newman, Jeffrey, Coleman, Poyner, Hillier, Saville, not necessarily in that order) introducing some sweeping changes of emphasis and direction more typical of the design and architecture world (think Bauhaus) than criminology.

**Some limitations of CPTED**

CPTED's limitations are familiar to practitioners as well as academics. They variously include a lack of clarity on the scope of the approach (for example how far it should go into community/social interventions (Saville and Cleveland, 2003a, 2003b) and the scale (micro-detail of the design of bike stands, say, to the layout of whole housing estates); the flexibility and responsiveness to context and to adaptive offenders (Ekblom,1997); an isolation from intellectual roots and research in what should be its source disciplines including planning, design, architecture, policing, criminology and risk management; a lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity (Cozens et al., 2005); an excessive focus on a 'vulnerability-led' approach (Gamman and Thorpe, 2007) at the expense of the user-centred orientation pervasive in the design domain; an excessive concern with end products as opposed to the process of design; and an inadequate process model (Kitchen and Schneider, 2006).

**Strategic evolution of CPTED**

Many of these limitations are further discussed in Ekblom (2006, in preparation), where I also suggest a strategy for improvement and updating. CPTED should:

- Develop a clear social dimension;

- Become more evidence-based and theory-based;

- Become more adaptive and flexible;

- Become more scale-sensitive and context-sensitive, and handle emergence;

- Creatively balance values and priorities within crime and safety, and between safety and other values so-called 'troublesome tradeoffs';

- Become more professional, in terms of expertise, discipline, quality assurance and ethics;

- Develop a good process-model for capturing, refining, transferring and applying know-how;

- Become more futures-oriented – relating both to changes in the social and physical world, and to making best use of advances in technology;

- Develop tighter language and concepts that are internally consistent and fit to connect with other literatures.

**The papers in this issue**

The papers that follow take this strategy forward in diverse ways. My own focuses on the conceptual, seeking to develop a suite of *definitions in depth*, relating the core concepts of CPTED to various frameworks and discourses developed for crime prevention and design against crime, and more generally exploring ways in which CPTED could become richer and more subtle, and better-integrated with other crime prevention approaches. It also considers the 'dark side' of the environment, covering offenders' countermoves to prevention and their own counter-exploitation of space, buildings and what they contain.

By contrast, Armitage, Monchuk and Rogerson centre on the empirical, yet their approach is equally vital to the health and evolution of CPTED. Reporting on recent research for the UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, they seek to strengthen and update the evidence base on the impact of design on a range of crime types, focusing on housing developments acclaimed for their innovative design and award winning architecture. In a comprehensive data collection exercise, the specific design features of thousands of homes, based on key elements of CPTED, were collated and assessed against police recorded crime data. The methodology was innovative and painstaking (literally – the team conducted many observations in freezing weather). This not only provided an excellent dataset for analysis, but also highlighted the need both for greater conceptual clarity within CPTED and for crime-risk assessments to be based on the careful operationalisation and measurement of CPTED factors. To this end they developed innovative data collection tools which applied (appropriately enough) to innovative contemporary housing developments – simultaneously hitting several of the points for strategic improvement listed above.

Clancey addresses yet another strategic angle – research into the *process* of CPTED, appropriately enough drawing on his dual experience as a researcher and practitioner/consultant. In particular, he reports on the utility of guidelines introduced in New South Wales to ensure that proposed developments/redevelopments of the built environment reflect key CPTED principles, via crime risk assessment. Considering four diverse assessments in depth, he questions their relevance and quality, and raises issues about the  relationship between the clients (i.e. developers) commissioning the reports and the findings of the 'independent' consultants.

Reynalds brings the empirical and the conceptual together in a particularly powerful and focused way. She argues that the effectiveness of CPTED should be judged in terms of the extent to which it is successful in facilitating opportunities for active guardianship of places – especially surveillance. Combining both observations and interviews with residents (both undertaken in the Netherlands), she examines how opportunities for surveillance are affected, not simply by the design of the physical environment, but also by the context in which the opportunities exist. She then uses these results to reflect on inherent conflicts and points of neglect in the relationship between the components of surveillance, territoriality and image/maintenance, as a means of airing some of the conceptual and practical weaknesses that may serve to limit the existing CPTED model.

**Redefining CPTED?**

I have elsewhere (Ekblom, 2006, in preparation) proposed a redefinition in depth of CPTED addressing the range of strategic issues addressed above and, arguably, connecting with the points raised and findings presented in the papers of this issue. CPTED is:

- Reducing the possibility, probability and harm from criminal and related events, and enhancing the quality of life through community safety,

- Through the processes of planning and design of the environment,

- On a range of scales and types of place, from individual buildings and interiors to wider landscapes, neighbourhoods and cities,

- To produce designs that are 'fit for purpose', contextually appropriate in all other respects and not 'vulnerability led',

- Whilst achieving a balance between

  - the efficiency of avoiding crime problems *before* construction

  - and the *adaptability* of tackling them through subsequent management and maintenance.

The emphasis is on process, so the definition is deliberately not confined to any particular products or kinds of intervention.

The other important thing to note is that in a definition in depth such as this, each of the subsidiary concepts (such as community safety) should have, its own definition, in a mutually-consistent suite. Many of these subsidiary concepts are already defined in www.designagainstcrime.com > crimeframeworks and most recently, Ekblom (2011).

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