

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Paul Ekblom

Ekblom, P. (2012). 'Introduction' in P. Ekblom (Ed.), *Design Against Crime: Crime Proofing Everyday Objects*. Crime Prevention Studies 27. Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner.

In 2005 Ron Clarke and Graeme Newman edited Volume 18 in this series, *Designing Out Crime from Products and Systems*. This reported on the fruits of a wave of mainly research-based activity, much of which had occurred under enlightened initiatives of the UK government, associated with the national Crime Reduction Programme (1998-2003) and particularly encouraged and supported by Ken Pease (e.g. 2001).

Sadly, that enlightenment was short-lived, as Pease notes in his Foreword to this volume, and a fallow period followed. (Design against crime in the *built environment*, as opposed to that of products, continued to progress though recently severely faltering in the UK with a wave of retirements of expert police design advisers, some of them enforced departures due to severe cuts in public funding.) Within the design world, which had been engaged by that activity, the drying up of funds led to a petering out of institutional interest. Within UK government research, interest largely ceased (and that meant among other things a temporary enforced end to my involvement with the field). The precipitating factor was a huge moral panic about street crime whose warning signs from its own statisticians the government had ignored. The response, cooked up in the COBRA room at 10 Downing Street where all such national (and political) emergencies are handled, centred on a massive boost to police overtime.<sup>1</sup> This sucked funds away from other activities, including the final stage of the design against crime initiative (1. Research; 2. Guidance material for designers; 3. Take the message to industry). Among projects starved of funds were an interest in crime-free laptops, and crime-free mobile phones – theft of which was the main source of the panic. Brits don't only *do* irony better than our American cousins; we need to, because we often foolishly generate the *reasons* for that irony.

But the seeds had been sown within academia, and nourished partly by a funding stream from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, partly by European Union funding on crime proofing of products (see Chapter 4) and partly by sheer enthusiasm of individuals, work continued. Research centres and groups dedicated to design against crime, designing out crime and design out crime have sprung up. These include the Design Against Crime Research Centre at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, within the University of the Arts, London; the Design Against Crime Solution Centre (Salford University and Greater Manchester Police). Joining these British groups we now have the Designing Out Crime Research Centre at the University of Technology Sydney, and the Design Out Crime Research Centre, Curtin University, Perth. More generic Crime Science centres, too, have made major contributions to the field, in particular the UCL Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science, and the Applied Criminology Centre, Huddersfield University.

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<sup>1</sup> Although other interventions were developed and studied – see Tilley et al. (2004).

In 2007, the UK government again awoke to support the product design approach through the setting up of the Design and Technology Alliance against Crime,<sup>2</sup> which over some three years generated a series of products and case studies.<sup>3</sup> The power of tangible, practical products to tell their own story and to convince people, even politicians, of the validity of the design against crime approach, can't be stressed enough (indeed two such products grace the front of Volume 18). Hands-on physical design (and graphic illustration (Gamman and Pascoe 2004)) of simple ideas trump abstract research studies in climate-setting (Ekblom 2011a) for crime prevention and design against crime. But in some cases design is its own enemy because the best designs look so easy and simple rather than ingenious, intricate and emitting a sweat of obvious hard work. As Chapter 9 reveals, this is illusory: even the most elementary and self-evident of ideas requires an enormous amount of research, and design and trial effort, to get it fit-for-purpose and with a hope of becoming a marketable product in the real world.

But hard-nosed evaluation evidence based on practical, realised interventions remains a vital follow-through to convince government, industry, buyers and users, and this volume contains both statements of evaluation principle and practice (Chapter 3), good examples of such evaluations with real products (Chapters 6 and 10) and indications of the difficulties encountered in attempting them. Chapter 9 was in part a salvage exercise from the wreckage of an ambitious planned 'research, design and evaluate' project of table clips to prevent bag theft in bars. This went wrong because, during the course of the project, the host bar company (along with many others) encountered the financial crisis of 2008 and terminated its involvement in the evaluation, after some 2000 clips had been manufactured and some 14 action bars and 13 controls had been carefully selected and observations undertaken.

Whatever the precise reasons for that jilting (see Ekblom 2011c), it is clear that the system of incentivisation for design against crime remains inadequate, as Pease emphasises in his Foreword. The UK Home Office's in-house economists undertook an excellent study of incentivisation of crime reduction behaviour in the civil world in general, with a case study of design against crime.<sup>4</sup> But while the intellect was willing, the finance and political will was weak, and apart from a passing interest in the 'polluter pays' approach to making companies responsible for the 'crime externalities' of their products which led to various significant changes in mobile/cellphone service design, attention to the approach once again faded out; this time perhaps as part of a general fading out of interest in crime prevention.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/Security/Design-out-crime/The-Alliance/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/Security/Design-out-crime/The-Alliance/). Accessed 28.05.11.

<sup>3</sup> [www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/security/design-out-crime/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/security/design-out-crime/). Accessed 28.05.11.

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<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/changing-behaviour.html> accessed 28.05.11.

<sup>5</sup> See Ekblom (2008c) and [www.efus.eu/en/policies/national/united-kingdom/public/2021](http://www.efus.eu/en/policies/national/united-kingdom/public/2021). Accessed 22.05.11.

As part of maintaining an enlightened and sustained interest in crime prevention and design, governments need to establish a climate and a system of incentives and consumer expectation hostile to criminogenic products, supportive of criminocclusive ones. Clarke and Newman have long pursued this line (e.g. 2005b), whether through conventional pursuit of policy or pressure applied through its own agency as a major procurer of goods and services. In Chapter 5 of this Volume Newman presents a highly significant model based on 'carbon cap and trade' from the climate change field, another instance where free markets fail to deliver collective good unless they are deliberately tweaked. A regime of proofing and regulation is another necessary part of the picture and Armitage (Chapter 4) describes an attempt to develop the basis of this with domestic/personal electronic products like mobile phones. But this is challenging, as the chapter reveals; so far, the only successful model is arguably that of motor vehicles.

Inherent rather than government-manufactured self-interest can sometimes motivate companies to adopt designs of products that are secure, or securing (in the terminology of Chapter 2). Securing products incorporate a protective function within a design that serves other, more dominant, purposes. In this vein Chapter 8 focuses on packaging, which apart from its many other purposes, may prevent counterfeiting. Good to know if you have a headache or fly on a plane whose vital parts have been replaced by spares during the course of its working life.

Design itself is changing. Notorious to outsiders for spawning new fashions and radical, sweeping manifestos, design has become variously user-centred, participatory (co-design), socially responsible and inclusive. Teaching and learning is part of this and despite earlier suspicion students seem to engage enthusiastically with the crime topic.<sup>6</sup> Design-related PhDs are currently in progress. Inclusivity is illustrated in Chapter 10 which addresses security needs of elderly shoppers, but is also relevant when designers seek to ensure their locks, anti-tamper caps and so forth don't form an annoying or even insuperable obstacle for weak or arthritic fingers. Intensive stakeholder analysis and careful address of diverse requirements and constraints is illustrated in the counter-terrorism bin in Chapter 7. In the Design Against Crime Research Centre, Adam Thorpe is developing a broader context for addressing crime and much more, namely Socially Responsive Design, which 'takes as its primary driver social issues, its main consideration social impact, and its main objective social change'.<sup>7</sup>

Design, and design-against-crime, methodology is also under development and features in several chapters, ranging from explicit design-against-crime rationales (Chapter 2), to proofing and testing (Chapter 4) and evaluation (Chapters 3, 6, 10) ... and the continued evolution of guidance materials e.g. from the UK Design Council, the Design Against Crime Research Centre and now even the COPS guide series.<sup>8</sup> Chapter 7 critically explores links

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<sup>6</sup> See e.g. [www.designagainstcrime.com/project/students/](http://www.designagainstcrime.com/project/students/). Accessed 22.05.11.

<sup>7</sup> From the Design Against Crime website [www.designagainstcrime.com/methodology-resources/socially-responsive-design/](http://www.designagainstcrime.com/methodology-resources/socially-responsive-design/). Accessed 22.05.11.

<sup>8</sup> Respectively [www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/Security/Design-out-crime/Design-out-crime-guide/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/Security/Design-out-crime/Design-out-crime-guide/), [www.designagainstcrime.com/about-us/contact-](http://www.designagainstcrime.com/about-us/contact-)

between processes within crime prevention such as SARA and CPTED, and design processes. Chapter 11 continues to mine the seminal Hot Products risk factors approach introduced by Clarke (1999), now a major pillar of design against crime (leading for example to the work described in Chapter 4) and indeed maintains the tradition of spectacular acronyms (AT CUT PRICES) in addressing special issues raised by fast moving consumer items.

Design against crime is very much a practical, doing, making, testing and improving activity. But as Schön (1995) maintains, practice should be *reflective*. That reflectiveness should moreover be *collective*. Capturing, articulating and refining knowledge of design against crime (as in this Volume as a whole, and in Chapter 2 in particular) is not an exercise in stamp-collecting. It plays an important role in *building innovative capacity* among designers for designing against crime (AHRC 2008). Such capacity is a strategic necessity, for several reasons.

- Both crime prevention and design each cover extremely diverse problems and solutions. Crime and related problems range widely from theft of luggage at airports to graffiti to violent assault; crime prevention from physical methods involving locks and bolts to social ones involving guardianship, to combinations of both such as youth shelters for young people to safely hang out in, without conflicting with other users of public space. Design addresses products, places, information, procedures and systems and extends into social innovation; it draws on graphical, material, industrial and communication skills and connects with entrepreneurship and marketing. Such diversity makes for the excitement and the challenge of the design against crime field but by the same token can lead towards confusion, for practitioners and researchers of either discipline.
- Crime prevention has to be customised to context to succeed (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Ekblom 2002, 2005), meaning that the design effort does not just have to be made once (for example, designing a 'universal alley-gate' to block burglars' access to the rear of homes) but adjusted or re-created many times over. It is therefore far more efficient to empower designers of all kinds and in all circumstances to undertake this work well, than to maintain a centralised, scarce elite which keeps the expertise to itself. Indeed, there are significant benefits to so-called 'open innovation' (Chesbrough 2003; Thorpe et al. 2009).
- We live in a Heraclitean world of flux where new technology, social change and offenders who are adaptive and innovative themselves render our store of 'what works' knowledge a wasting asset (Ekblom 1997, 1999, 2005a, 2011a). *Developing* innovative capacity to design against crime and then transferring it to designers in general is part of the core mission of the Design Against Crime Research Centre.<sup>9</sup>
- Finally, a focus on capacity is especially important as a means of countering the tendency, in my experience, for crime prevention practitioners to equate 'design' with designed end *products* to be operationally deployed rather than the design *process* in which they should be participating with their unique perspectives and problem-specific knowledge. In this, I have personally made a rather interesting journey, as I have entered the design against crime world, from getting designers to 'think thief' (Ekblom 1995, 1997) to getting more conventional crime prevention practitioners in the police and elsewhere to 'draw on design' (e.g. Ekblom 2011a,b) in all their research, thinking, planning, development and improvement of interventions.

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us/#websites, and COPS guides #52 on Bicycle Theft and #60 on Personal Property in Cafes and Bars, at [www.popcenter.org/problems/](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/). All accessed 22.05.11.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.designagainstcrime.com/about-us/aims-philosophy/](http://www.designagainstcrime.com/about-us/aims-philosophy/). Accessed 28.05.11.

Design against crime is increasingly a subject of interest in conventional criminological circles though as Pease says in his Foreword, not always in a positive manner. But one positive indicator is the inclusion of a chapter on the subject, not just in the (slightly incestuous, it must be said) world of situational crime prevention and problem-oriented policing but in a handbook of mainstream criminology (e.g. Ekblom 2011g).

The most fundamental issue raised, perhaps, is whether design against crime is evolving from a *multidisciplinary* field, where crime scientists/criminologists and designers work alongside one another, intermittently sharing ideas and exchanging perspectives, towards a state of true *interdisciplinarity*, where a new and integrated way of looking at research, theory and practice emerges. I will revisit this in the conclusion.

Finally, it's worth recalling the main points Clarke and Newman made in their editors' introduction of the 2005 volume on products and crime (pp2-6), with amendments to reflect the current state of play, where different, six years on:

1. Products play an important part in crime
2. Modifying criminogenic products can be highly effective
3. Most products have been modified for commercial reasons
4. Manufacturers have been reluctant to change products in the public interest
5. Design professionals have an ~~unexploited~~ role in product change [that is beginning to be exploited]
6. Governments ~~have rarely taken~~ [intermittently take] the initiative in promoting product change
7. Governments must [still] develop research and development capacities in order to take a more active role in modifying criminogenic products [although exceptions include the State of New South Wales in funding the Designing Out Crime Research Centre at the University of Technology Sydney].