

How Situational Crime Prevention Contributes to Social Welfare

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Abstract Situational crime prevention has been met with considerable scepticism from academic criminologists primarily for its indifference to social welfare. It has been seen as contributing to a law-and-order agenda with its focus on making public places secure for business and as supplanting social welfare policies as means of responding to crime. But situational crime prevention contributes more to social welfare than sceptics allow and its advocates (may) believe. Situational crime prevention has enjoyed its fullest and robust expression, not in the free-market, neo-liberal environment of America, but within the leading welfare states of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This essay considers the politics of the situational approach, the alleged benefits of social crime prevention, criminalisation of social policy, unplanned social welfare benefits, assumptions about the role of business, and concerns about privacy, surveillance and control. The discussion centres on the European experience: the UK, France, The Netherlands and the Nordic countries.

Keywords Crime prevention · Criminalisation of social policy · Business · Surveillance · Safety policy · Accidental social welfare

British criminologists have given situational crime prevention to the world. During the 1970s, the Home Office initiated a series of crime prevention studies focused on opportunity reduction.¹ The research reported in the *Home Office Research Studies* invented situational crime prevention as a national strategy in the UK and led to government initiatives in Europe and North America. In recent years, situational

¹ Mayhew et al. (1976), Clarke and Mayhew (1980).

crime prevention has metamorphosed into ‘crime science’; this has expanded the range of problems and techniques, and extended the influence of the situational approach.² While there are those who celebrate this British contribution to crime prevention, there are many who feel that an apology is in order. Situational crime prevention has received considerable scepticism from criminologists at home and abroad, primarily for its indifference to social welfare.

Situational crime prevention is said to be consistent with a wider shift toward free market capitalism and the retreat from welfare provision.³ It contributes to a wider law-and-order agenda with its focus on making public spaces secure for business⁴ and has supplanted social welfare policies as a means of responding to crime.⁵ Situational crime prevention presents a superficial, short-sighted approach to crime in its emphasis on locks, surveillance cameras, and street lighting; it decreases the risk of criminal victimisation for those who can afford security technologies at the expense of those who cannot.⁶ Situational crime prevention aggravates the social tensions and worsens the economic equalities that lead to crime in the first place; the ‘moral vision’ is limited to indifferent, individual, self-interested action.⁷

Locks, lights, and cameras seems a world away from social policy concerns, but situational crime prevention contributes more to social welfare than has been acknowledged. My discussion focuses on the European experience, particularly the United Kingdom, but also France, The Netherlands, and the Nordic countries. It is theoretically informed by an understanding of the importance of unintended consequences in social affairs emphasised by Karl Popper, although I do not develop this idea here because it appears elsewhere.⁸ Rather, I take unintended consequences as the starting point to explore its implications for social welfare in the context of crime prevention. Specifically, this essay discusses: the politics of situational crime prevention, the alleged benefits of social crime prevention, criminalisation of social policy, unplanned social welfare benefits, assumptions about the role of business, and concerns about surveillance, privacy, and control.

The Politics of Situational Crime Prevention

There has been an effort to develop a science of crime prevention. The advocates of research-driven policy seek to build an ideology-free platform on which to plan, implement, and evaluate crime reduction strategies.⁹ Situational crime prevention makes use of scientific inquiry; the recent characterisation of these strategies as

² Smith and Tilley (2007), Pease (2005), Clarke (2004).

³ Garland (1996, 2000), Parnaby (2006).

⁴ White and Sutton (1995), Wakefield (2000).

⁵ Dixon (2006).

⁶ Levan (2005), Carmen and Robinson (2000).

⁷ Hayward (2007), Hope and Karstedt (2003), Kleinig (2000).

⁸ Knepper (2005, 2007a, b).

⁹ Catalano (2007), Welsh and Farrington (2005).

‘crime science’ reflects this commitment.¹⁰ But the logic of situational interventions has never relied on scientific objectivity for its persuasiveness in quite the same way as the appeal to ‘evidence-based’ policy. And, from the beginning, it has been politicised. It has been politicised because of the way it originated and because the originators have encouraged this politicisation.

Situational crime prevention originated with a series of crime reduction projects conducted during the 1970s by researchers at the UKs Home Office.¹¹ Ronald Clarke, who became head of the Research and Planning Unit in 1982, promoted simple, practical ways of reducing opportunity for specific criminal activities. Situational interventions made use of practical wisdom and straightforward evaluation models to investigate the time, place and circumstances surrounding crime.¹² The Home Office Crime Prevention Unit appeared in 1983. Although this unit did not focus exclusively on situational approaches, a number of researchers attached to the CPU, led by Gloria Laycock, pursued situational crime prevention projects. Home Office researchers took the message to other parts of the world with Clarke and others finding their way to American universities. Recently, a number of those formerly associated with the CPU have re-organised around the Jill Dando Centre for Crime Science at University College London.¹³

The advocates of situational approaches gave the impression they were uninterested in theories about the aetiology of crime and research in criminology that had no obvious implications for intervention. Clarke specifically described his project as an alternative to ‘dispositional’ theories of crime prevention. He challenged the idea that no real improvements could be made in reducing crime without alleviating ‘root causes’. Going back to these sorts of causes was less effective than exploring the occurrences of criminal events at particular times and places. He advocated a ‘choice model’, insisting that it was useful to view criminality less as the product of deep social, economic and psychological causes than as the choices of individuals.¹⁴ Clarke has acknowledged only a ‘superficial fit’ between situational crime prevention and conservative values (such as reducing the size of government and the importance of individual responsibility). But he continues to describe it as a ‘radically different approach’ to crime reduction than schemes aimed at improving social welfare.¹⁵

Situational crime prevention is taken for a conservative policy but this is more a case of guilt by association than premeditation. It was never one of Thatcher’s political convictions although it became linked with Thatcherism. (Although there is a philosophical connexion. F.A. Hayek, Thatcher’s economic advisor, descended from the Austrian School of economics, and situational crime prevention shares some key theoretical assumptions with Austrian economics: methodological individualism, spontaneous ordering, etc.)¹⁶ Situational crime prevention became linked with

¹⁰ Knepper (2007a, pp. 10–11).

¹¹ Mayhew et al. (1976), Clarke and Mayhew (1980).

¹² Clarke (1980).

¹³ Smith and Tilley (2007), Pease (2005), Clarke (2004).

¹⁴ Clarke (1980).

¹⁵ Clarke (2000, p. 108).

¹⁶ Knepper (2007b).

conservative government generally and Thatcherism in particular. In 1985, Mrs Thatcher endorsed situational methods when she chaired the first crime prevention seminar at 10 Downing Street. One of the items on the agenda was pre-payment coin meters for gas and electricity which had been the targets of burglars on high-crime council estates. Thatcher's Home Office had turned its back, Michael King said, on any form of theorizing about the motivations of criminal behaviour and pursued a 'practical pragmatism' consistent with weakening any causal connections that might exist in the public's mind about crime and social conditions. Through its emphasis on 'technological anti-crime products' and 'ownership, property and possessions' in anti-crime campaigns, the government reinforced key aspects of Thatcher's Britain. As the Tory government dismantled the welfare state, increasing financial insecurity, it touted situational crime prevention measures to emphasize the need for self-protection.¹⁷

That same year, Alice Coleman published her assault on British housing policy, *Utopia on Trial*.¹⁸ (Coleman was not a member of the Home Office group nor was her work representative of this group in an important sense. In insisting that architecture represented the chief source of crime on estates, she made a claim about criminality, in the dispositional sense, rather than criminal activity, in the sense of time, place, and circumstances. My point is that reaction to Coleman's work spilled over to include situational crime prevention.) She attributed malaise and crime in council housing areas to the mistaken vision of community embodied in high-rise architecture. One of the chief design features was to free up ground space for communal activities by concentrating residents in multi-story tower blocks. Coleman insisted that these communal areas were extremely criminogenic; the first generation of tenants was law-abiding, but children born in council flats became criminal as a consequence of 'design disadvantage'. She presented her findings in a courtroom format, in which she played the crown prosecutor, charging those responsible for high-rise design with bringing about conditions conducive to crime: graffiti, vandalism, and excrement. Coleman put the welfare state on trial and pronounced it guilty of crimes against the people. When Margaret Thatcher allocated £50 million for projects implementing safe-design principles, situational crime prevention (or Coleman's version of it) became associated with Thatcherism in substance as well as symbol.

In America, situational crime prevention does not evoke Thatcherism, but leading advocates have distanced themselves from the welfare state. Marcus Felson has done his best to antagonise welfare supporters, going so far as to insist on the 'welfare state fallacy'. He discounts the claim that the USA has one of the highest crime rates in the world because it refuses to deliver more than a minimalist welfare state. America certainly offers less in the way of social rights than European welfare states, but this does not translate into higher crime. The welfare state neither encourages nor discourages crime—'crime variations in industrial nations have nothing to do with the welfare state'.¹⁹ Felson points out that according to

¹⁷ King (1989).

¹⁸ Coleman (1995).

¹⁹ Felson (2002, p. 12).

international victimisation surveys, the USA does *not* have a higher crime rate than European nations. He cites the work of van Kesteren, Mayhew and Nieuwbeerta,²⁰ who coordinated crime victimisation surveys in seventeen industrial countries, and found the USA to rank eleventh in overall victimisation. Countries with generous welfare benefits—The Netherlands and Sweden—were found to have *higher* overall criminal victimisation rates than the USA. Marcus Felson and Ronald Clarke insist that social crime prevention schemes lack crime prevention properties. These schemes succeed politically, however, because they serve as a means of enlarging the welfare state under the pretence of preventing crime. Those with ‘political ambitions’ wrap themselves in the ‘emotional appeal’ of contributing to social welfare, and ‘no doubt social prevention will be milked in this way for years to come’.²¹

Had the originators offered situational crime prevention as a strategy consistent with, rather than a radical alternative to, welfarist crime prevention, it *might have* received a different reception. Then again, the political climate of these years may have made this impossible and the critical response inevitable. Yet situational and social crime prevention strategies do share a common goal: efforts to forestall crime outside conventional criminal justice strategies of police and prisons. They represent different routes for reaching the same destination, and when taken together with other strategies, comprise a triangulated approach.²² In this sense, the conflict between advocates and critics of situational crime prevention has been overstated. Not unlike football fans who applaud displays of skill only when performed by the team they support.

Social Crime Prevention and the Welfare State

Situational crime prevention has been subject to considerable interrogation. In addition to concerns about efficacy and displacement, criminologists have expressed considerable scepticism about its rationale and aims. Sceptics have detected in the ‘micro-preventative strategies’ of situational methods the influence of wider political, economic, and cultural agendas.²³ Social crime prevention, on the other hand, has not been interrogated in quite the same way.²⁴ With few exceptions, criminologists have been reluctant to examine social crime prevention with the same scrutiny as situational crime prevention. Adam Crawford says that in assessments of French social crime prevention, British criminologists seem to have lost their ‘critical faculties’ while crossing the English Channel.²⁵

The French, or Bonnemaïson model, has for two decades or so been the paradigm of social crime prevention in Europe. It originated following the election of François

²⁰ van Kesteren et al. (2001).

²¹ Felson and Clarke (1997, p. 206).

²² Brantingham et al. (2005, p. 273).

²³ Hayward (2007).

²⁴ Boutellier (2001), Knepper (2007a).

²⁵ Crawford (2000).

Mitterand's government in May 1981. During their years in opposition, the left had criticised the government for relying on repressive crime control measures intended to capitalise politically on fear of crime. When collective violence (near riots, auto-racing and fire-setting) broke out in Lyons and other French cities that summer, the socialists were forced to declare their own crime policy. The Mitterand government saw collective violence as symptomatic of 'social exclusion'; riots had occurred among those groups that had been excluded from French life and participation in key social, educational, cultural and political institutions. The government established a commission, chaired by Gilbert Bonnemaïson, the socialist mayor of Epinay-Sur-Seine, and the commission issued its report *Face à la Délinquance: Prévention, Répression and Solidarité*, 'Dealing with Delinquency: Prevention, Repression and Solidarity', in 1982. The Bonnemaïson commission found the traditional criminal justice approach to be inadequate for responding to crime given its social causes, including changes in family life, segregated housing, breakdown in community life, and the absence of leisure activities for young people.²⁶

The commission spelled out a programme of action framed around welfare provision; their report outlined a longer-term response to find solutions to underlying problems of unemployment and social isolation among young people. The interventions took place outside the criminal justice system; they were intended to prevent vulnerable youth from entering the criminal justice system by offering those involved in criminal activities the opportunity to participate in legitimate pastimes, including sports, school, and recreation. The Bonnemaïson report led the government to set up the National Council for the Prevention of Crime (in 1983) as a means of coordinating local councils, at the regional and city levels, who undertook prevention activities. The exact menu of programmes depended on local perception of 'the youth problem'; some local committees targeted drug addicts and early school-leavers, others sought to provide broad-based services for all children and young people.²⁷

The French model received a favourable reception across Europe although it failed to reduce crime. Crawford points out that British commentators on the French situation forget to mention that crime rates have increased significantly in France since the 1980s. The social welfare efforts outlined in the Bonnemaïson report also failed to stop outbreaks of riots in various French cities in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2005, riots broke out in African and Arab areas of several French cities, including Paris, Toulouse, Strasbourg, and Nantes. Persistent crime and episodes of collective violence have in fact led some public housing authorities to concede the suitability of situational methods and initiate experiments in 'crime prevention through environmental design'. Beginning in the 1990s, situational techniques have become common in distressed social housing areas within France.²⁸

But the most interesting criticism Crawford makes has to do with the ways in which social crime prevention reinforces aspects of French politics. Presumably, the French effort was about enlarging the welfare state, about extending the benefits of

²⁶ Liège (1991).

²⁷ Bonnemaïson (1992).

²⁸ Levan (2004).

citizenship to all. The Bonnemaïson report viewed exclusion of certain groups, particularly youth, immigrants, and the unemployed, as the central problem in French society. In response, the state would promote integration by which these groups would be brought into solidarity with French citizens. Yet in targeting recent immigrants from North Africa, it was really about imposing a dominant conception of French nationhood. The conception of ‘solidarity’, like that of ‘citizen’, does not recognise divergent cultural identities. All French people are presumed to work toward fulfilment of national goals, despite ethnic, religious, cultural or other differences. The inclusion effort was ‘blind to social difference and the reality of cultural pluralism in France’; it represented another means for French penal law to colonise new areas of social life. In addition to the question about whether the Bonnemaïson model worked as means of crime reduction, there are larger questions about the ‘integration’ as a goal: *Integration into what? Integration on what terms?*²⁹

The point is, social crime prevention schemes are also subject to wider political, cultural and social agendas.³⁰ While criminologists who are keen to encourage more reliance on social welfare in response to crime are less accustomed to digging into the politics of these programmes than they are the politics of crime policies advocating greater use of police and prisons, there are ulterior motives and deeper agendas to be unearthed. Some welfare states offer more generous welfare benefits than others, but all states have reasons, other than generosity, for providing the services they do. Further, it is worth asking whether crime reduction is an appropriate agenda for delivering welfare services.

Criminalisation of Social Policy

In assessing the virtues of social versus situational approaches the tendency is to contrast alternative sets of ambitions rather than historical experiences. Social crime prevention seeks to expand the welfare state by incorporating crime reduction in its remit, and programmes to address the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, youth from deprived backgrounds, and families in need are meant to reduce the reliance on conventional crime policies of police and prisons. But how is it that directing social welfare for purposes of crime reduction leads to enhanced welfare provision? ‘Criminalisation of social policy’ suggests that making crime reduction a goal of social welfare policy undermines the welfare state.³¹

Daniel Gilling and Adrian Barton warn that linking social welfare policy with crime reduction is a risky strategy for policymaking. Social welfare measures have been judged according to criteria of need and the wider concept of social justice. Crime reduction measures tend to be justified in terms of fear of crime and reducing victimisation. Making crime reduction a goal of social welfare tends to blur the objective, leading to the criminalisation of social policy in which welfarist values

²⁹ Crawford (2000, p. 27).

³⁰ Sutton and Cherney (2002).

³¹ Pearson (1983, pp. 238–239), Blagg et al. (1988, p. 206).

become secondary to crime reduction objectives.³² Advancing the welfare state on the argument that this will reduce levels of crime risks legitimising welfare policies not on their own merits, but on their anticipated impact as a matter of crime policy. This is dangerous politically because it suggests that crime reduction is a more important reason, or perhaps the primary reason, for the welfare state. When seen as a grand crime prevention strategy, the welfare state has been regarded as a failure.

This can be seen in the Nordic countries. In Denmark, the authorities have for the first time in decades announced plans to increase prison capacity and add to the ranks of the police. Flemming Balvig explains this change with reference to the 'second existential revolution'. The basic assumption of the first revolution that welfare provision would result in less crime was not confirmed: in Denmark registered crime was higher at the end of the twentieth century than it was at the end of the Second World War. This realisation led to the second existential revolution, to rethinking the response to crime: 'How can we explain crime, if it is not caused by poverty, bad living conditions, lack of education etc.?'³³ Risto Saarinen adds support for Balvig's thesis from a curious source: sales of crime fiction. In Sweden, where the social democrats have also expressed the desire for conventional crime control, the best selling novels during the past 10 years or so have been detective fiction. Henning Mankell's stories the police detective Wallander have proved astonishingly popular (15 million sales world-wide). Saarinen thinks the popularity of such literary fare reflects Scandinavian anxieties about the 'surplus of evil' in welfare states, the inability of social policy to bring an end to intentional victimisation. The stories speak to worries people want politicians to acknowledge: the presence of criminal motivation in a society where everyone has nice clothing, healthy food, and a comfortable home.³⁴

Another recent example can be seen in the Dutch experience with safety policy. The Netherlands had been known, in the decades since the Second World War, as a place of tolerance and mild criminal penalties. This is no longer the case. The decline of tolerance began in the 1990s, when it was decided that 'crime prevention' had become too narrow to encompass what the government was actually interested in achieving. In addition to crime, the public felt less safe, or unsafe, about a number of issues related to the move away the traditional organisation of Dutch society along religious lines. The 'depillarization' of Dutch society saw the breakdown of the different religious 'pillars' (mainly Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and social democrat) through which basic social institutions had functioned. Politicians began talking about *integral veiligheidsbeledi*, 'integral safety policy', as the goal, as if fear of criminal victimisation meant the same thing as feeling less secure. Safety policy came to include a broader and more ambiguous set of anxieties, including Muslim immigrants, drug addicts, and beggars. Although this broader conception of crime prevention was meant to refer to interventions outside

³² Gilling and Barton (1997, p. 77).

³³ Balvig (2004, p. 182).

³⁴ Saarinen (2003).

the realm of criminal justice, it led to adoption of crime control policies reflecting a less tolerant and more punitive outlook.³⁵

Hans Boutellier outlines the paradox of safety policy and the attempt to incorporate crime reduction into a welfare rationale. Criminal law has been traditionally regarded as the ultimate sanction, restricted to offences defined by legal codes. When the threat to society becomes ‘unsafety’ or ‘insecurity’, such problems no longer have legal boundaries within conventional conceptions of criminal law. All of the inconveniences of modern life can be brought under the logic of threats to security and safety. Crime reduction projects reference a vague and elastic problem in which suspicion becomes extended to a wider range of persons. This situation, Boutellier explains, brought about an increased demand for what had been the ultimate response. When criminal sanctions are defined as a means of achieving safety, and rather than as means of the state imposing its punitive power on citizens who violate its laws, there is a greater tendency for the use of sanctions.³⁶ An analogy might be made with reference to a kitchen. As every cook knows, a dull knife is more dangerous than a sharp knife. A sharp knife can be handled strategically, because its edge cuts what it is meant to be cut. A dull knife requires more pressure, and because of this, is more likely to slip.

Accidental Social Welfare

The advocates of situational crime prevention insist their approach to crime has nothing to do with the welfare state and critics have taken them at their word. Social crime prevention is about provision of welfare benefits, addressing social needs, and the like, while situational crime prevention is about reducing criminal opportunity, improving physical security, and so on. Situational crime prevention *intends* to contribute nothing to the welfare state and in this (advocates and critics seem to agree) it is completely effective. Except that the idea of unintended consequences in social affairs suggests the possibility of accidental social welfare.

Situational crime prevention contributes to traditional social welfare. Traditionally, the British welfare state has five policy arenas corresponding to social needs identified by Sir William Beveridge. The Beveridge Report (1942) called for a war on the ‘five giant evils’ of want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness and established social security, education, housing, health, and employment as the pillars of the welfare state. In promoting attention to the practical needs for safety at schools and hospitals, situational approaches support welfare. This contribution can be most clearly seen in efforts concerning housing, an area of considerable work.³⁷ Until situational crime prevention came along, criminologists had taken little interest in housing policy and housing-based prevention. This changed with the work of Barry Poyner. He has shown how the design of housing, and other aspects of the built environment, influence crime rates by affording or denying opportunities

³⁵ Swaaningen (2005).

³⁶ Boutellier (2001, p. 367).

³⁷ Wilson (1980), Cozens et al. (2002), Holzman et al. (2001), Schneider and Kitchen (2007).

for criminal activities.³⁸ Poyner's work, not to mention Coleman's, pointed to the possibility of seeing housing policy as a framework for crime prevention analysis.³⁹

Improving council housing along the lines of situational crime prevention is essential for sustainable crime reduction. Kelly, Caputo and Jamieson propose that community-based crime prevention is more appropriate because it is 'sustainable' in disadvantaged communities whereas situational crime prevention is not. The Canadian strategy of 'crime prevention through social development' provides a long-term approach to crime reduction because it addresses the root causes of crime by investing in individuals, families, and communities.⁴⁰ But Cozens, Hillier and Prescott suggest that improving safety features of council housing is essential for sustainable interventions. Sustainable economic development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Council estates that become shabby after a limited period of time sponsor criminality in the design and promote a 'tinderbox' environment. They point out that in Britain, the architects of housing policy have given little thought to these issues. There has been no legal requirement to incorporate any specific security provisions in the design of new homes, and consequently, security features have been left entirely at the discretion of property developers. (The government has since then raised the profile of planning for crime prevention with publication of *Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention* by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Office.)⁴¹

Situational crime prevention also contributes to a modified or expanded welfare state. Michael Cahill proposes that the welfare state needs to be relevant to the world in which people actually live rather than the world the Beveridge state was meant to address. In the post-industrial era, national economies are increasingly shaped by a worldwide market place. The 'new social policy' should include communication, information, transportation, work and leisure policies in addition to health, personal social services, housing, education, employment and social security.⁴² Public transportation, for example, represents a primary social activity, if not an essential policy area needed for the exercise of citizenship. It is a vital social right in the sense that it is necessary for the exercise of others. Access to the health service, and to education and employment possibilities, depend on transportation links established by bus, tram and train. At the same time, these transportation links are only effective if they are secure and safe. Where fear of crime inhibits travel, the exercise of social rights is diminished.

Transportation has been a priority for research in situational crime prevention, and in this way, the advocates of a narrow focus on crime reduction have been engaged in the broader project of enhancing the welfare state. Numerous studies have appeared around reduction of victimisation and increasing confidence in the

³⁸ Poyner (1983, 2005), Poyner and Webb (1991).

³⁹ Bottoms and Wiles (1988, pp. 85–86).

⁴⁰ Kelly et al. (2005).

⁴¹ Cozens et al. (1999), Schneider and Kitchen (2007, pp. 80–82), Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004).

⁴² Cahill (1994).

security of busses and trains.⁴³ An early study described an effort on behalf of the Dutch public transport system to reduce fare-dodging and vandalism on the metro and bus systems. The project involved the hiring of 1,200 young people to act as ‘safety, information and control’ officials in public transportation in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam. While the project was not an unqualified success, a large percentage of staff believed the information officers contributed to a reduction in fare-dodging, incidents of vandalism, and improved information services.⁴⁴ In America, situational crime prevention has been credited with reducing the amount of crime on the subway system in Washington, DC (the Metro). Design features incorporate situational techniques (target hardening, access control, controlling facilitators, natural surveillance etc.) which have led to lower crime statistics than those for systems in Atlanta, Boston and Chicago (without such features).⁴⁵

Whether the advocates of situational crime prevention have pursued improvements in social housing and public transportation with the intention of advancing the welfare state is not the point. The point is that they have supported delivery of welfare policies more than they themselves, and their critics, have acknowledged. It is important to separate ambitions from effects of welfare state policies. There is a tendency to conceive of benefits to human well-being in a welfare state society as planned and deliberate; unless benefits are articulated in policy documents, they do not exist. But ironic and unforeseeable events occur in history. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the British welfare state itself which came about in the aftermath of the Second World War. The management of war led to awareness of the management of peace and specifically, the collective provision of essential services. The welfare state represents an unanticipated outcome of the war.

Critics of situational crime prevention have pointed to a number of unintended outcomes brought about by situational interventions, and while the tendency is to equate unintended effects with negative outcomes, there is no theoretical reason for seeing them in this way. Unintended effects of situational crime prevention can be negative, such as the displacement of crime, or positive, such as enhanced welfare provision. The social welfare effects of situational crime prevention can be conceptualised within a broader understanding of ‘diffusion of benefit’.⁴⁶ Diffusion of benefit may be understood as the spread of a beneficial effect on an intervention beyond the places, the individuals identified, or the crimes that were the original focus. The benefits need not be conceptualised as only those have to do with crime reduction.

The Business of Crime Reduction

Criminologists have been suspicious of situational crime prevention, not only because of its political associations, but also because of its ties to business. There

⁴³ Cozens et al. (2004), Smith and Cornish (2006), Smith and Clarke (2000), Newton et al. (2004).

⁴⁴ Andel (1989).

⁴⁵ Vigne (1997).

⁴⁶ Clarke and Weisburd (1994), Bowers and Johnson (2003).

are some applications of situational techniques in highly visible settings, such as Disney World, and this image has influenced views about the role of business in crime prevention.

The security arrangements within Disney World have been described as a diffuse and invisible system in which ‘everyone and everything’ engages in policing. The architecture, the staff members, robotic figures, and animated images influence, regulate and manipulate behaviour of visitors, beginning in the car park and extending to every aspect of their stay. Disney World has been identified not only as a sophisticated expression of situational techniques, but as a window for looking into the social order emerging in post-industrial cities.⁴⁷ ‘Disneyisation’ has been used to describe the process of crime prevention underway in British cities, centred around electronic surveillance. In this scheme, the state makes way for business and commercial interests to ensure safe shopping and security for commerce. As an appraisal of city governance, this critique raises important questions about how public spaces are governed, about who should be entitled to use them, and for what purposes.⁴⁸ But when taken as a example of the relationship between business and crime prevention, this critique gives the impression that situational crime prevention emanates from America, suits corporate interests, and supplants the welfare state. This impression need to be examined.

The advocates of situational crime prevention have, to some extent, encouraged this impression with the idea that their strategies are good for business. Clarke argues that criminologists should turn away from their traditional reluctance to include business and industry within their remit.⁴⁹ Discussion about the extent to which crime prevention *should* engage with private business needs to take into account the extent to which business is *already* engaged in public criminal justice. For-profit corporations provide an array of products and services to conventional criminal justice from electronic tags to crockery in prisons.⁵⁰ Never-the-less, Clarke does make the important point that, as obvious as it might appear, there is no strong link between situational crime prevention and market economies. Situational crime prevention has not flowered in the United States, the champion of free market economics and neo-liberal political ideology. In fact, it has been slow to develop. In the land where ‘the invisible hand’ of capitalism is given the greatest freedom of movement, politicians have been reluctant to engage situational techniques.⁵¹ The practise of city-centre surveillance by CCTV is virtually unknown in American cities.

Situational crime prevention has enjoyed its most full and robust expression in the world’s leading welfare states. In the 1970s, the Nordic countries established government agencies to pursue national crime prevention strategies. Denmark established its national council in 1971, followed by Sweden in 1973, Norway in 1975 and Finland in 1989. From the beginning, community-based crime prevention

⁴⁷ Shearing (1998, pp. 28–30), Shearing and Stenning (1992, pp. 300–304).

⁴⁸ Coleman and Sim (1998), Coleman (2004, pp. 108, 114).

⁴⁹ Clarke (2004, pp. 60–61).

⁵⁰ Lilly and Knepper (1992), Nellis (2009).

⁵¹ Clarke (1980, p. 109).

has not been assigned the same significance it has been given in other countries, nor has social crime prevention as such. Nordic crime prevention strategies have been described as ‘focusing in a one-sided manner on situational crime prevention’.⁵² There are two reasons for this. First, the origins of crime prevention policy can be tracked to alcohol policy. Drink driving has been a focus since the 1950s and many criminologists have a background in alcohol research. Thus, the crime problem has been seen as a matter of facilitators, and particularly, one facilitator. Second, Scandinavian criminology included an elaboration of opportunity; almost all of the reports of the Criminological Institute in Finland examined crime trends in relation to opportunity structure. There is, never-the-less, a Nordic interpretation. Rather than walls to limit threats from the outside, there is a sense that public space should be open to all, and intensive use of public space provides the best means of natural surveillance.⁵³

The ‘crime prevention through environmental design’ movement began in the Nordic region in the 1970s. In the 1980s, Denmark’s crime prevention council introduced a crime-reduction ‘checklist’ for urban planners, followed by the Norwegian crime prevention council several years later. After some initial apprehension, Scandinavian academics have, it would appear, sided with the crime prevention councils. ‘The Scandinavian way’ of architectural crime prevention seeks to avoid creating buildings with fortress-like barriers and access control systems. Rather than wrapping a house in a steel fence, the approach would be to build the house around a garden; the house acts as a fence but sends a different social signal. The Scandinavian way also makes use of ‘symbolic measures’ at public buildings. Music, lighting, and architecture can be used to encourage use of public spaces for their intended purposes. Good strategies blend science and art. The Copenhagen Railway Station, Hovedbanegården, has relied on the broadcast of opera music (rather than the police) to keep homeless people and drug dealers from settling around one of the entrances.⁵⁴

The Nordic model confirms that situational crime prevention is compatible with the welfare state. Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland have pursued situational crime prevention as a response to crime while building up the provision of social welfare as a response to need. The Nordic countries do not need to adopt social crime prevention projects along the lines of the Bonnemaison model because the kinds of educational opportunities afforded in these programmes are already provided as part of the routine provision of the welfare state. And, in providing universal, as opposed to targeted, welfare provision, the Nordic model avoids the problem of stigmatisation and labelling of disadvantaged groups. Without the distraction of adding crime to its rationale, the welfare state can focus on universal welfare provision while crime prevention agencies, using limited strategies, can get on with addressing specific crime problems. Crime prevention and welfare provision may work best when pursued along parallel, but separate, pathways.⁵⁵

⁵² Takala (2004, p. 139), Aromaa and Takala (2005).

⁵³ Takala (2004, pp. 140–141).

⁵⁴ Midtveit (2005, p. 32).

⁵⁵ Knepper (2007a).

Is it possible to implement crime prevention policies that serve the interests of *both* business and welfare? To incorporate the concerns of business and welfare within the same policy framework? It is a question worth asking, and it can be answered, at least in the abstract, by reflecting on what is meant by welfare. If the goal of crime prevention becomes the promotion of *well-being*, rather than provision of government services, then one can see how a policy can be both. Anthony Hall and James Midgley explain that social welfare policy has been conventionally conceived as social welfare services of one kind or another, or as safety nets to alleviate immediate crises. They propose a wider definition: 'social policy in a much broader sense as encompassing any planned or concerted action that affects people's lives and livelihoods'.⁵⁶ They describe a social policy for economic development involving the state, civil society, the business sector, and inter-development agencies. Situational crime prevention may promote economic development, particularly when utilised by small businesses.⁵⁷

Surveillance, Privacy and Control

Finally, a comment about surveillance, privacy and control. In Britain, the national symbol of situational crime prevention is the CCTV camera. During the 1990s, the government expended as much as two-thirds of its annual budget for crime prevention on a national CCTV surveillance grid. This development has been seen as a turn toward surveillance, and a retreat from community, in the national attitude toward crime.⁵⁸ Roy Coleman argues that these systems signal the move away from a welfare model and towards social control within city governance. In Liverpool, the desire to create a secure city centre as part of regeneration and renewal has given licence to a mean-spirited regulation of the city's economically marginalised: travellers, young people, unlicensed street traders, rough sleepers, and unwelcome buskers. The distinction between public and private space has become blurred as the city council cedes increased authority to the elite responsible for this commercialised urbanism. CCTV should be understood as part of a social control project with far-reaching consequences for the meaning of public space and state power in the post-welfare era.⁵⁹

Britain certainly has a lot of CCTV surveillance systems. The first major expansion of CCTV in city-centres occurred in 1993 following a widely publicised murder by two 10-year-old boys and an IRA attack on Bishopgate. A large-scale CCTV system 'went live' in Liverpool the following year, and within two decades, such cameras became ubiquitous in British cities. Based on a London sample, some 41% of businesses operate a CCTV system. When added to the number of camera systems operating in public institutions across the United Kingdom, this means that there are some 4.2 million systems, or one surveillance camera for every fourteen

⁵⁶ Hall and Midgely (2004, p. 6).

⁵⁷ Burrows and Hopkins (2005, pp. 486–515).

⁵⁸ Hope and Karstedt (2003).

⁵⁹ Coleman (2003, 2004).

people.⁶⁰ (In May 2008, a pop music group from Manchester, ‘The Get Out Clause’, released its new music video, filmed entirely by CCTV cameras. They performed their music throughout the city, then acquired the grainy black-and-white images of themselves from system operators.) These cameras, and the strategies of surveillance within situational crime prevention, raise significant questions about privacy and control. Felson suggests that ‘natural social control’, that is, surveillance maintained by passers-by, neighbours, and intimates, is more desirable than ‘unnatural social control’ carried out by the police, prosecutors and so on. The activities of the police do have legal constraints agreed by a process within democratic government. Courts can look into people’s lives for reasons that are known, or knowable.⁶¹

Does CCTV represent a tectonic shift from a welfare model to a surveillance model, or do welfare and CCTV represent different forms of surveillance (over marginalised populations)? The electronic gadgetry of twenty-first century surveillance feels like a new form of social control, but the social technology put into place a century ago to monitor welfare provision is a form of social control as well. The first social welfare legislation emerged in 1908 and 1911 when the Liberal government introduced pension and national insurance schemes. Then, as now, benefits were tied to status. To be included under the Pensions Act, a person had to have been a ‘resident’ in the UK for 20 years. These provisions set into place a ‘vast system of central record keeping’ to test the eligibility of claims and prevent fraud.⁶²

The personal social services bring a substantial amount of control over the lives of marginalised and vulnerable people. To obtain assistance, clients must reveal details of their personal, financial, and emotional lives to an agent of government who expects ‘cooperation’ in return. Social workers insist on changes in attitudes, behaviours and values, most often in exchange for advice rather than cash. The majority of clients do not contact social service authorities willingly but are referred by courts or other welfare agencies; many experience the ‘care’ extended as humiliation and degradation they are not anxious to repeat.⁶³ Kerstin Svensson describes the practise of social work as the exercise of ‘caring power’, a form of power that ‘carries help and control in the same actions’. This exercise requires the appearance of willing clients and voluntary agreement. Social workers strive for maintaining the appearance of cooperation (through continuous documentation) in order to avoid revealing the structure of coercion on which social work interventions are based.⁶⁴

Further, the welfare state does not occupy a space outside the ‘surveillance society’, it operates as one institution within the surveillance society. Computer technologies are utilised for case management by social service departments and present a means of protecting children from abuse, deprivation, and insecurity. But

⁶⁰ Norris and McCahill (2006, p. 102).

⁶¹ Knepper (2003).

⁶² Higgs (2001).

⁶³ Jones and Novak (1999 p. 84).

⁶⁴ Svensson (2003).

such systems also represent the basis for surveillance and social regulation.⁶⁵ Social work with children and families operates an ‘electronic eye’ powered by electronic databases for identifying, profiling, and tracking particular children. The desire to ‘keep children from falling through the net’ has justified a vast information-gathering and information-sharing network that had originally been scotched when first proposed (in 1998) as a ‘nightmare’ given its potential for misuse.⁶⁶ But as Sue Penna points out, the potential for use is more worrisome than its misuse. Welfare projects are embedded in political projects, projects that are concerned with managing what is politically defined as ‘desirable social development’. Welfare policies represent technologies of governance, used to normalise visions of the good society.⁶⁷ The combination of electronic technology and case-management embodies a vast system of surveillance with the power to drill down deep into the core of personhood.

Conclusions

From the beginning, situational crime prevention acquired a reputation for indifference to social welfare. It had been invented by researchers at Thatcher’s Home Office and seemed to take on qualities of Anglo-American ‘criminologies of everyday life’. When set against the social crime prevention programme of the Mitterand government in France, it took on the appearance of individualist, class-based, business-oriented policy. Situational crime prevention embodied crime prevention for the upper and middle classes and government policies fashioned to appease them. Many academic criminologists concluded that it had nothing to offer the welfare state.

When seen against developments in the Nordic countries, a different image emerges. The Scandinavian way in situational crime prevention represents an alternative to criminal justice and an obligation of the welfare state along with housing, health services, and so on. Social welfare is seen as something universal and crime prevention something targeted and limited. This mitigates against the dilemmas of mixing crime reduction and social welfare goals into syncretistic policy responses; great strides toward ‘law and order’ policies have been taken in the quest for ambiguous social welfare values such as ‘safety’ and ‘community’. If the Home Office project was seen as the British version, along with the Scandinavian way, it would not have acquired its anti-welfare reputation. But of course it has not been seen against the Nordic model.

Never-the-less, situational crime prevention contributes more to social welfare than sceptics allow and its advocates (may) believe. In seeking to reduce criminal victimisation in council housing, it has spotlighted the crime effects of non-crime policies and improved the welfare state. In seeking to reduce criminal victimisation on public transport, it has enhanced the welfare state. Wider political, cultural and social agendas operate in crime prevention policy—in social crime prevention as

⁶⁵ Garrett (2004, 2005).

⁶⁶ Garrett (2004, p. 62).

⁶⁷ Penna (2005).

well as situational crime prevention. Social crime prevention advertises welfare values but serves up a dog's dinner of cultural imperialism and nationalism along with crime reduction and social welfare. So, which contributes to social welfare? A policy which claims to be about social welfare, but is really about other things. Or, a policy which claims not be about welfare, but does have some specific welfare benefits?

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