



**CRIME**

**Tenth  
United Nations Congress  
on the Prevention of Crime  
and the Treatment of  
Offenders**

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Agenda item 5

**Effective crime prevention: keeping pace with new  
Developments**

**Effective Crime Prevention: Keeping Pace with New  
Developments; Abstract of Research Paper commissioned by the  
UK Home Office, Paul Ekblom (UK)**

**Statements submitted by experts\***

**Note by the Secretariat**

1. In its resolution 53/110 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of the workshops to be held within the framework of the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and invited Member States, non-governmental organizations and other relevant entities to support financially, organizationally and technically the preparations for the workshops, including the preparation and circulation of relevant background material.
2. In its resolution 54/125 of 17 December 1999, the General Assembly encouraged Governments to make preparations for the Tenth Congress, including by establishing national preparatory committees, with a view to contributing to a focused and productive discussion of the topics and to participating actively in the organization of and follow-up to the workshops, the submission of national position papers on different agenda items and the encouragement of contributions from the academic community and relevant scientific institutions. In the same resolution, the Assembly called upon the specialized agencies and other relevant United Nations bodies and institutes and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate effectively in the Tenth Congress and to contribute to the formulation of regional and international measures aimed at preventing crime and ensuring justice.
3. Pursuant to rule 60 of the provisional rules of procedure for United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders (A/CONF.187/2), written statements related to the work of the Congress submitted by the designated representatives, individual experts or observers are to be distributed by the secretariat to all delegations in the quantities and in the languages in which the statements are made available to the secretariat for distribution, provided that a statement submitted on behalf of a non-governmental organization is on a subject in which it has a special competence.

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# Home Office

BUILDING A SAFE, JUST  
AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

## 10<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

Abstracts of research papers commissioned by UK Home Office

1. Effective crime prevention – keeping pace with new developments

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**10<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders**  
**Agenda Item: Effective crime prevention – keeping pace with new developments**

Abstracts of relevant research papers commissioned by the UK Home Office

Paul Ekblom (1997). **Gearing up against Crime: a Dynamic Framework to Help Designers Keep up with the Adaptive Criminal in a Changing World.** *International Journal of Risk, Security and Crime Prevention*, October, Vol 2/4:249-265.  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/risk.pdf>

This paper is a first, exploratory, attempt at providing some background, and a framework, to help designers more systematically incorporate crime prevention in their remit. The scope includes design of technological items, environments, systems and services. With all these products this is design against misappropriation, damage and misuse in the furtherance of crime; and design of products explicitly intended for the furtherance of prevention. The intention is to stimulate designers, commissioners of design and those like criminologists who conduct research that informs design in two ways: 1) shifting perspective from user to misuser to aid the day-to-day process of incorporating the preventive function in specific design tasks; and 2) in the more strategic process of helping crime prevention evolve as fast as crime in a world of adaptable criminals and changing opportunities, many of which stem from the permeation of society by IT. This involves setting up the infrastructure to speed up the feeding of information on crime and prevention to designers, and to promote the durability of preventive techniques. For the one certain thing in prevention is the obsolescence, sooner or later, of any individual measure.

David Mann and Mike Sutton (1998). **>>NETCRIME: More Change in the Organization of Thieving.** *British Journal of Criminology* Vol 38, No 2: 201-229.

This paper considers criminal activities in the publicly accessible areas of the Internet known as newsgroups. It presents findings from a small-scale exploratory study of two Internet newsgroups and proposes a model of their structure. Members of both newsgroups disseminated information and products to those who might wish to commit crimes. One newsgroup focused upon hacking encrypted satellite television services and the other was a locksmithing group with members interested in picking locks and understanding more about safes and other security devices. The Internet is a particularly effective medium for criminal recruitment and the dissemination of criminal techniques. Whilst it is possible that it will bring an increase in crime and create new problems for those concerned with crime control and criminality prevention, it is too early to tell whether the Internet or high technology crime will cause major problems for those concerned with law and order in the future. However, with the expansion of the Net, various NetCrimes may become high volume crimes. If this happens, existing approaches for dealing with and seeking to understand the reasons for high volume crime will have to be widened and new ones developed to meet the challenge of crimes facilitated by, or taking place in, a radically different environment.

Perhaps the most important theme to emerge from this study is the susceptibility of high-technology devices, such as smart-cards, to ingenious or systematic hacking attempts. Moreover, once 'cracked', rapid dissemination via the Internet of a new security breach can, in a matter of hours, render obsolete previously crime proof systems.

Mike Sutton (1998). **Handling stolen goods and theft: A market reduction approach.** *Home Office Research Study 178*. London: Home Office.

This report explores the effects of the market for stolen goods on levels of acquisitive crime. It examines the possibility of reducing demand and supply in criminal markets as a new method of crime control. The study is based upon information obtained from the British Crime Survey and in-depth interviews with thieves and other handlers of stolen goods. It examines the nature and extent of the stolen goods problem and reveals commonly used and successful methods of selling stolen goods. The study, which deals with offender motivation as well as the vulnerability of victims' possessions, found that markets for stolen goods have considerable influence upon decisions to begin, and to continue, stealing. The Market Reduction Approach, proposed in this study, aims to reduce stolen goods markets by discouraging people from dealing in them. It incorporates crime prevention methods designed to reduce opportunities for crime, whilst tackling an important underlying 'social cause' of theft.

Paul Ekblom (1999). **Can We Make Crime Prevention Adaptive by Learning from Other Evolutionary Struggles?** *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention*, 1999, Vol. 8 No.1: 27-51. Stockholm, Sweden: National Council for Crime Prevention.  
<http://www.brottsforebygganderadet.se/extra/studies/>

Crime prevention faces a perpetual struggle to keep up with changing opportunities for crime and adaptable offenders. To avoid obsolescence, it has to become adaptive itself. The task of keeping prevention up to date resembles other 'evolutionary struggles' such as biological co-evolution between predator and prey (eg continually sharper teeth versus continually tougher hide), or military arms races (eg more powerful guns versus heavier armour). These are both examples of protracted co-evolution of conflicting parties against a background of incidental disturbances which from time to time give the edge to offenders or to defenders. The disturbances in question originate from natural processes or human ones (such as the arrival of new technology). This paper explores the lessons for crime prevention which might be drawn from the other struggles at several levels: technology/ engineering, generic new methods

of prevention and strategic concepts in prevention. An extremely wide range of possible lessons is identified which can take crime prevention a long way up the learning curve, but caution and consolidation are advised. Some ways of achieving this consolidation through systematic mapping are considered but not yet attempted.

Michael Levi and Jim Handley (1998). **The Prevention of Plastic and Cheque Fraud Revisited.** *Home Office Research Study 182.* London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors182.pdf>

In 1991 fraud involving cheque and credit cards stood at a high of £165 million. In that year, a Home Office funded study, led by Professor Levi, identified a range of preventive strategies. Most of these were subsequently implemented by the banking industry and other stakeholders. By 1996, plastic fraud had fallen to £97 million; the picture was even better when allowing for the large increase in card usage over this period. The research reported here describes the implementation of the 1991 report's recommendations, assesses the contribution of the preventive measures to the subsequent fall in fraud, and looks to future risks and how to prevent them.

Ronald V Clarke (1999). **Hot Products: Understanding, Anticipating and Reducing Demand for Stolen Goods.** *Police Research Series Paper 112.* London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/prgpubs/fprs112.pdf>

This report focuses attention on the so-called 'hot products' that are most likely to be taken by thieves. A better understanding of which products are 'hot', and why, could help businesses protect themselves from theft and also help the police advise them. Earlier research into hot spots of crime and repeat victimisation has led new thinking in the field of crime reduction, and there is every reason to expect the same from this research. Some strategies will centre on police work; others relate to the wider field of action covered by the national Crime Reduction Programme – in particular on product design. This report is the first to review comprehensively what is known about hot products and what further research is needed to assist policy and practice. The key attributes that make products hot are summarised by the acronym CRAVED – Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable, and Disposable.

Paul Ekblom and Nick Tilley (2000, forthcoming). **Going Equipped: Criminology, Situational Crime Prevention and the Resourceful Offender.** *British Journal of Criminology, Vol 40 No 3.*

In showing more interest in the crime event than the offender, situational crime prevention has tended to be at the margins of mainstream academic criminology. Yet offenders can only exploit potential crime opportunities if they have the resources to take advantage of them. To understand how crime patterns are generated, situational crime prevention must also consider offender resources and their distribution and social-technical change. Resources have been central to much traditional offender-centred criminology but mainly for understanding

what motivates offending. Consideration of crime resource needs, availability, development, distribution and change provides a potential bridge between traditional offender-centred criminology and situational crime prevention. **Restricting resources for offending** offers an important, but so far neglected, approach to prevention.

### See also

The **UK Foresight Programme** aims to look ahead to technological and social change over the coming 20 years to foster wealth creation, quality of life and sustainability. Within Foresight, a Crime Prevention Panel, sponsored by the national Crime Reduction Programme, has the task of anticipating new crime threats and new crime prevention possibilities that the future may bring. A **consultation document** (March 2000) and wider background papers are available in the Crime Prevention section of the Foresight Knowledge Pool at <http://www.foresight.gov.uk/servlet/Menu?id=334>. A full report will be available from November 2000.

Michelle Rogerson, Paul Ekblom and Ken Pease (2000, in press). **Crime Reduction and the Benefit of Foresight.** Chapter in Pease, K., Ballintyne, S. and McLaren, V., eds., *Key Issues in Crime Prevention, Crime Reduction and Community Safety.* [provisional title] London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

There is a strong relationship between technological and social innovation, and crime. Typically innovations go through three phases: design with indifference to crime consequences; the reaping of a 'crime harvest'; recognition of criminal consequences, leading to withdrawal of the innovation or application of a retrofitted solution. Using foresight it is possible to break the cycle of innovations and crime, by anticipating future crime threats and incorporating crime prevention in the design and implementation of innovation. The first round of the UK Foresight programme (see above) largely ignored the fundamental impact that crime has upon industry, economic growth and quality of life. The second round includes a crime prevention panel. This paper sets out some issues for the panel to consider, and details methods through which the Foresight panel could foster awareness, in industry, the science base and elsewhere, of the causes of crime and opportunities for prevention; disseminate know-how on 'thinking thief', and motivate preventive activity.

The UK Department of Trade and Industry is, with other agencies, sponsoring challenge awards under the LINK Programme, for **Management of Information.** This supports collaborative and communication technologies, products and systems for countering fraud, improving security and safeguarding privacy. Website: [www.dti-mi.org.uk](http://www.dti-mi.org.uk)

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at [CJSmithphd@comcast.net](mailto:CJSmithphd@comcast.net) or Emil Wandzilak at [emil.wandzilak@unodc.org](mailto:emil.wandzilak@unodc.org).