# IRK FERENC: THE FOUNDATIONS OF SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION

## 1. On the conceptual issues of crime prevention

Throughout the decades whole libraries of literature have been written on the conceptual issues of crime prevention and the elements of content behind them. Most of this literature has become part of the curriculum by now although neither the development of theories nor the practical working out of details has been finished yet. The different international organisations and work meetings keep this topic on the agenda constantly.

The line of thought expanded in the draft of the working session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in the year 2002 in Vienna belongs to this literature and it can be regarded as of guidance for the further discussions.[1] Section D) in paragraphs 19-34. discusses the most important elements of responsible crime prevention. This shows that that prevention has three target areas of equal importance: the (potential) perpetrator, the crime situation and the community. The view in the community that it is not enough to prevent crime but it is equally important to reduce fear of crime and to increase the feeling of security among the public has strengthened in recent years.[2] The Draft expressly discusses the responsibility of the governments in creating the organisational and financial conditions of crime prevention. The expert committee also emphasised the necessity of international cooperation in crime prevention and it expects help from the developed countries for the developing countries and those in the period of transition.

International experience shows that efficiency of measures against crime can be increased in many ways. One of them is to take steps not only against actions that infringe the criminal law, but against those actions that violate public order in the wide sense and deter people who follow norms while attract people who violate norms.[3] This fact in itself indicates that it is not the right approach to draw a rigid line between crimes and offences of criminal law (the so-called double formation offences). On the one hand, most of these offences can soon lead to crimes and on the other hand it is often quite accidental how these crimes and their perpetrators are categorised. In the case of some of the antisocial actions the line is drawn not on the basis of professional but political arguments. (Just think of the issues of the limit in the value of property damage, prostitution, drug abuse or graffiti.)

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[1] Prevention of Crime Report of the meeting of the Group of Experts on Crime Prevention. Draft. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Eleventh session Vienna, 16-25 April 2002 Item 4 on the provisional agenda United Nations Economic and Social Council E/CN 15/2002/4 31, January 2002

[2] This realisation is not new in itself even in Hungary. A lot of basic research László Korinek serves as good proof of this, together with his monographs based on this research and several other research reports.

[3] A good example of this is the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) in Britain, which in Section 1. of Chapter 37 together discusses crimes and unlawful actions as well as the strategy against them in detail. See: http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980037.htm The same is confirmed by Mariann *Kránitz*: A bűnözés „előszobája". (Egy szabálysértési kutatás tapasztalatai.) – *The Pathway to Crime (Lessons from Research on Offences)* In: Kriminológiai Tanulmányok 39. kötet – *Studies in Criminology Vol 39* – (2002) pp. 179-211; also *Kránitz*, M.: Józsefváros – adalékok egy kerület szabálysértési természetrajzához. *Józsefváros – Additional Facts to the Map of Offences in a District* In: Kriminológiai Tanulmányok 40. kötet *Studies in Criminology Vol 40* (2003) pp. 72-97.

The other instrument, – which is associated with the former and supplements it in a favourable case – is the distribution of prevention activities between the state administration and the public. There are several methods of it, and their common characteristic feature is that the government has to facilitate these efforts, which are usually outside the domain of criminal policy. Several forms of assistance are possible, ranging from legislative and organisational activities and the provision of funds to such instruments of prevention policy as participating in the planning and the creating of the residential environment.

By now it is a generally accepted view – at least among the competent professionals – that the instruments of criminal policy are not adequate for effective crime prevention, although we cannot do without them. There are even views according to which the instruments of criminal policy – including criminal law – do not aim at prevention only serve its purposes as well as a kind of side effect.

In Hungary efforts for crime prevention in an organised form go back to several decades.[4] A law on crime prevention was on the agenda already in the period before the change in the political system. This was necessary mainly because of a noticeable registered rise in the number of crimes that was observable from the 1980s on. It is known that this law has not been passed yet until the present day. From the middle of the 1990s on, these were the years when the number of crimes reached a peak; there has been increased activity in the legislative processes that aim at increasing public security and reducing crime. The government that came to power in 2002 declared as its aim to manage crime prevention more regularly than before and to pass a law to that effect. A forerunner of this law could be a government decision on this issue[5] and a parliamentary decision on the topic. The text of the latter was only known in the form of a draft at the time this study was prepared.[6]

A panel of Hungarian criminology experts[7] agreed on the following definition as the result of their working discussions that took place in June and July of 2002 in the course of the preparatory work of the draft of the crime prevention law:

*Crime prevention* involves all the governmental and non-governmental interventions against crime and the fear of crime. In more detail: crime prevention is the system of strategies and instruments suitable for influencing the social and individual causes of crime and the conditions of committing crimes[8]

This means that addressing crime prevention can be considered as accomplished if all the strategies and instruments that belong to the above group of concepts will be used in the

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[4] For more detail see: *Irk, F.:* Közbiztonság és bűnmegelőzés. *Public Security and Crime Prevention* In: Belügyi Szemle Vol. 2001/9. pp. 18-30. and the sources listed there.

[5] The 1002/2003. (I. 8.) Government Decree on the governmental tasks required for enhancing the efficiency of crime prevention

[6] See Nemzeti bűnmegelőzési stratégia. Országgyűlési határozati javaslat (Tervezet) *National Crime Prevention Strategy. Proposal for a Parliamentary Decree (draft)* December 2002; also: *Proposal for the Government on the Parliamentary Decree on the National Strategy of Crime Prevention in the Society.* Ministry of Justice. March 2003 (MJ draft)

[7] The members of the panel were *Géza Finszter, Katalin Gönczöl, Ferenc Irk, Klára Kerezsi.* In the initial phase of the work *Antal Korinek* and later *András Hegedűs* also took part.

[8] This definition practically agrees with detailed definition of the decision the Council of the European Union made on 28 May 2001, cited by the MJ draft. Considering that this draft does not have its own definition, we can presume that it accepts the EU-concept in its entirety. I would also like to note that although the MJ draft uses the term "crime prevention in the society" it does not define its meaning. As we will see later, the standard literature on the subject categorises it as a subcategory of crime prevention. I would also like to note that it follows from this that the last MJ draft abandoned the concept that was declared in the title of the previous draft: the management of crime prevention as a whole.

area we know today. Within this – in view of the increasing role of the cost factors among the aspects of social usefulness in post-modern societies like ours – those strategies and instruments are expected to have a priority the efficiency of which can be measured and also in the case of which the yield of the investment can be proven.[9]

## 2. The rational (realistic) and irrational (unrealistic) elements of prevention

After the National Crime Prevention Council was set up in 1995, crime prevention was dealt with at different levels and through a scientific approach. In 1997 the National Crime Prevention Programme was created under the auspices of the National Institute of Criminology. It is to be noted that it is still the only coherent work of reference discussing all the important areas of crime prevention with a balanced approach, and through the years it provided a lot of help for professionals involved in practice as well. In 2003 the government made a decision[10] to deal with crime prevention in a more organised way than before. The Ministry of Justice prepared the draft of a parliamentary decree on crime prevention.[11] There are plans to pass a crime prevention law in 2003 although it will probably be passed only later. In the past three decades many times it has been decided on but the idea failed to materialise.

Let us make it clear at the beginning: *crime prevention is not the same as social crime prevention*, the latter is hardly known in international literature.[12] The "community-based crime prevention" used in international literature is not the same as communal crime prevention, let alone social crime prevention. International professionals consider primary, secondary and tertiary prevention as an organic whole because the elements of these are

[9] It is obvious that the measuring of the efficiency of crime prevention leaves a lot to be desired all over the world. A consequence of it may be that certain prevention activities – mainly those subsidised by the government – are going on although they are ineffective while some other, efficient methods are not used. Another consequence is that it does not come to light that a prevention activity that is obviously successful in one place is not suitable to achieve the aims in a different environment. For more detail, see: *Lab*, S.P.: Crime Prevention: Where Have We Been and Which Way Should We Go? In: *Lab*, S.P. (Ed. by): Crime Prevention at a Crossroads. Anderson Publishing Co. Cincinnati 1997. Pp. 12-13.

[10] The 1002/2003. (I. 8.) Government Decree on the governmental tasks required for enhancing the efficiency of crime prevention. It is worth mentioning that this government decree mentions the necessity of the implementation of the National Crime Prevention Programme in the first place among the specific tasks 3. a) subsection. In section 9 of the Action Programme, an Appendix to the Government Decree (on the creation of information system of criminal geography) creates the institutional foundation for situational crime prevention for the first time in Hungary, which is also supported by the list of tasks creating a possibility for a realistic assessment of the criminal situation in section 6 and 7 of the Action Programme. This government decree intends to comprehend crime prevention as a whole. So it is really unfortunate that the authors of the MJ draft, which was written later, do not seem to follow this path.

[11] It is worth noting the path of the above-mentioned, which can be clearly seen even in the selection of the title. While the first draft of the working material bears the title of "National Crime Prevention Strategy", the second draft is entitled "On the National Strategy of Social Crime Prevention". However, in the outlook of the two materials there is more in common than what the selection of the titles suggests. Still, both – otherwise high quality – proposals take away from the content of the generally accepted and internationally recognised definition of crime prevention prepared by the team (which accepted even outsiders).

[12] We can mention *Knutsson* as an exception, according to who "crime prevention measures are often divided into two groups: social and situational prevention" (See: *Bottoms*, A. (1990) Crime prevention facing the 1990s. Policing and Society 1:90). The aim of *social prevention* is to change the different social trends and circumstances in relation to crime. (See: *Gladstone*, F.(1980) Co-ordinating crime prevention efforts. Home Office Research Study No. 62. London HMSO) See: *Knutsson*, J.: The Swedish Experience of Situational Crime Prevention. Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention Vol. 7 No. 2 (1998) Pp. 189-212.

mutually dependant and can supplement each other in certain cases."[13] The approach that – in its use of the terms and mostly concerning the content as well – deals with social crime prevention as if it was the same as crime prevention or at least suggests this through its terms is mistaken. It is mistaken because in contrast to the internationally accepted use of this concept it narrows prevention down to primary prevention. While this gives ample opportunity to outline lofty ideas it is short of ideas that can be used *in the short term as well* and *can yield measurable results* for the daily practice – especially for the prevention initiatives that are attached to *the local level*.

That is why it seems useful to give an overview of the relationship between the realistic and unrealistic elements of prevention. The experiments that have been in progress for several decades – and not the least the failures of these experiments – can help the organisations and institutions that are balanced and *undertake responsibility* for prevention to find the right proportions.

When can we regard an idea as useful? In order for this – considering our present situation – they have to meet at least the following conditions:

1. It should bring the whole area that has a role in reducing crime within the sphere of influence of crime prevention. *This means that it should constitute a whole within the system of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention,* within which the *focus points* can be identified. (e.g. there should be a right balance between the responses given to national, regional and local challenges.)

2. Considering that crime prevention is always *a response* to the challenges of crime it is especially important to know what the phenomenon itself is like. The instruments of crime prevention against crime as a mass phenomenon are limited. This statement is also proved by the failures of crime prevention in the past decades. Coming to know the phenomena affecting the individual crimes can help to find opportunities for more effective crime prevention but this nearly always relies on conclusions that can be deduced and abstracted from a series of examination of individual phenomena. In other words: it is not possible to fight against crime in general. We can take a stand against different kinds of crimes (and "social disorders") that can be grouped according to certain criteria, such as the drug-related crime of young people, crime against property, crime against life and traffic crimes.[14] Maybe if put an emphasis on one or the other we

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[13] The essence of the three types of prevention can be summarised in the following: *primary prevention* takes hold of crime at its root by making the norms clear and thereby stabilising an awareness of the law (positive general prevention) and – in an ideal case – it eliminates the deeper causes of crime (e.g. socialisation deficit or socio-cultural weaknesses), furthermore, it makes law-abiding attractive by rewarding it. *Secondary prevention* fights against crime on the surface level, mainly through the instruments of deterring and negative general prevention. It keeps the endangered and the attacking persons away from crime by changing the structure of crime opportunities or by increasing the attraction of behaviour that follows norms. *Tertiary prevention* focuses on the perpetrators, relying on the instruments of punishment, treatment and re-socialisation in order to prevent them from committing crimes again See *Kube, E · Systematische Kriminalprävention* BKA Forschungsreihe Sonderband 1987. 9-12. pp. The studies that have been published since then also follow the same system with only minor changes.

[14] Section 7 of the MJ draft seems to conform to this view when it asserts categorisation according to priorities and areas of intervention – but for some reason, not overall but only selecting some of the most important, using a division that is incoherent from a systematic point of view, with some overlapping and with different foundations. So, for example, it seems to be a lack that no mention is made of violent crime as a whole (including violence in public places) but only of violence within the family. In the same way, crime against property, which irritates the population the most, is not included among the most important tasks either. There is a problem of coherence concerning the former already but especially when no mention is made of measures in problem areas posing a grave danger to society such as organised crime, business crime, black market and corruption or crime on the roads.

will make an impression of fighting against crime as a whole. If we put crime against property in the centre we take action against "great masses" and "the fear of many". If, however, we put a stress on curbing violence in the streets we emphasise overcoming "great fear".

3. This approach, however, involves serious danger as it may seem that if we concentrate on these phenomena that intensely irritate the citizens for one reason or other (and therefore put a pressure on prevention organisations) we take an action against the crimes that are definitely and really are the most dangerous to society. (We will talk about the success of these actions later.) The danger posed to society and its subjective perception, however, does not necessarily coincide (very often they do not coincide at all). Some prevention campaigners forget about this and they think that if they concentrate on the crimes that irritate the community they have done everything to reduce crime. Crimes like organised crime, Internet crime and intellectual crime in general have no place in their thinking (or at least in the centre of it). Therefore effective crime prevention *must have deviance posing a serious threat to society as their starting point*,[13] and categorising must be done in view of this.

4. In a society that is sensitive to costs crime prevention must propose measures in the case of which the sums invested have a return, moreover, the efficiency of the investment can be measured with suitable methods and so it can be adequately proven.[14] This is something that is expected increasingly often by the organisations that provide the funds. What is more, it is getting impossible to have an idea approved if a sufficiently high rate of return in the short term cannot be proved as probable in advance. Only programmes that accept these principles can fit into the category of *rational crime prevention*.

5. Complex crime prevention (as we have seen) has as its starting point not only the subjective perception of the community but also an outside expert view concerning the seriousness of the different crimes and sets the priorities according to this. When selecting the focus points, however, it also examines what kind of benefits and in what time the different interventions have – consider the time and the costs they require. If things turn out well (that is, if the right focus points are selected), the demand of the community can be the same as the professional priority. The right application of *secondary prevention* can help in this. Here, the actual crime is in the centre, together with the circumstances. The crime and its environment, the crime and the people involved are in the fo-

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which affects the nearly 10 million population as a whole. All this shows that the strategy focuses – according to what it says in the appendix – only on certain problem areas that can be best interpreted and dealt with from a criminal-sociological point of view and neglects the others.

[13] even if this concept seems to be banished from criminal law.

[14] It is emphasised by *Volkmann*, H-R.: Kriminalprävention benötigt (mehr) Evaluation. Die Kriminalprävention 4/2001. 129-133. pp., also: *Obergfell-Fuchs*, J.: Kommunale Kriminalprävention in Freiburg. http://www.iuscrim.mpg.de/forsch/krim/obergfell1.html. ; *Feltes*, Th.: Die kriminologische Regionalanalyse als Einstieg in die Evaluation polizeilicher Massnahmen. http://www.felix-verlag.de/feltes/doc/Evaluation.doc ; *Springall*, L.: Crime Prevention Victoria; on secondment from Home Office, United Kingdom. Australian Institute of Criminology 2002.; [PEGnet] Seminar on Crime Prevention Evaluation in the UK. 2002. http://maillists.uwa.edu.au/pipermail/pegnet/2002q3/000061.html. ; Understanding Public Car Parks. Crime and CCTV: Evaluation Lessons from Safer Cities. http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/cctv2.htm. : *Smith*, D.G. / *Gregson*, M. / *Morgan*, J.: Between the Lines: an Evaluation of the Secured Car Park Award Scheme. Home Office Research, Development and Statistical Department. March 2003. By the way, the search engine has found 68,900 sources in the English language and 678 in German.

cus of attention. In this case we obviously leave the realm of illusions and great dreams to enter daily reality, having set the down-to-earth goal *to prevent specific individual crimes*. This is the only realistic approach for criminological thinking based on the criminal law.

I do not mean to say by the above argument that I do not appreciate the importance of either the primary approach based on modifying the path of socialisation or the tertiary approach aimed at changing the interests and the values (of the perpetrators). Both have their place in prevention. However, in the first case it would be naïve to suppose that *the representatives of cost-sensitive communities* (whether the central or the local government) will put the programmes of creating social beings who conform to the expectations of the society more readily and have more chance to fit in. which have been worked out by criminologists and experts of social policy in great detail but have not been verified so far (because they are not verifiable). There is somewhat more hope for the interventions aimed at the helping people who have become perpetrators to fit in with the society again. There is no doubt, however, that this is actually not prevention but putting an end to a kind of (criminal) carrier that is disapproved of by the mainstream of the society.

How about, then, focusing on the situation as the prevention institutes do all over the world, which have been operating more or less successfully for decades and are still developing? If we do not only want people to learn to live together with crime but want them to have a chance to avoid it, probably we have no other choice than giving a priority to this approach (in the future as well). There is, however, a significant difference: this should be learnt and put into practice in a much more organised way and at a higher level.

In the following I would like to elaborate on that.

### 3. On situational crime prevention

The basic principle of situational crime prevention is that crime can be reduced mainly through reducing the number crime opportunities. Therefore *the main task of secondary prevention* is to change the structure of crime opportunities, which can best achieved by forming the elements in the environment in such a way as to divert more or less rationally thinking potential perpetrators from their original intentions."[17] A concentrated reduction of crime opportunities results in a more intense reduction in crime as a whole.[18] The essential elements of the structure are the following: the target object, the criminal energy required for committing the crime, the access to the targeted object or the instrument of the perpetra-

[17] See: *Clarke*, R.V.: Situational Crime Prevention: Its Theoretical Basis and Practical Scope. In: *Tonry*, M. – *Morris*, N. (eds ): Crime und Justice: An Annual Review of Research. Vol. 4 (1983) University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Cited by: *Smith*, M.: Regulating opportunities: multiple Roles for civil remedies in situational crime prevention. Crime Prevention Studies Vol. 9 (1998), pp. 67-88. (P. 71); also in *Kube* (1987) ibid. p. 19. Smith mentions that concerning the topic a forerunner of this paper is *Jeffery*, C.R.: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, which was published in 1971 (and in 1977 again) as well as *Newman*, O.: Defensible Space, which was published in 1972 and is still considered a basic work.

[18] For more detail, see: *Felson*, M. – *Clarke*, R.: Opportunity Makes the Thief – Practical theory for crime prevention. Paper 98 der Police Research Series der Policing & Reducing Crime Unit des Research, Development and Statistical Directorate des Britischen Home Office London 1998 (See a review of it in: H. *Kaetzsche* in Die Kriminalpravention vol. 3/1999. pp. 116-117.)

tion, the risk of crime detection (including the probability of being sentenced and the extent of the sanction and other social costs).[19]

Situational crime prevention basically grew out of the opportunity theory, which has been known in criminology for a long time and which attaches greater importance to the detection of the social background of criminal activity than to the personality traits of the perpetrator. It is a novelty, however, that in the macro-structure of the opportunity theory it gained primary importance to examine how the situational characteristics can be identified and how an opportunity can be provided to change them.[20] This gained importance mainly because of the realization that *often the situation can be changed more readily and faster than human behaviour.* This is true mainly about the constructed environment.[21]

Situational crime prevention characteristically depends on the area, which means that it does not put a certain kind of crime in its focus but attaches importance to several factors among the conditions of crime perpetration, mainly to the location (area) and the time. The *aim* of this form of crime prevention is reducing the quantity and the quality of crime as well as adjusting the victimisation anxiety depending on the area to the emergency situations that exist now or can be expected in the future.[22] From another angle, the most important goals of situational crime prevention[23] are the following:

• making it more difficult to commit a crime,
• increasing the risk of detection and exposure by witnesses,
• decreasing the profitability of the crime,
• making it more difficult for the perpetrators to justify themselves and to find excuses later.

If follows from the above that crime prevention is mainly police-oriented and consequently it stresses the practical opportunities that help to reduce the risk of becoming a victim. This strategy focuses on how the perpetration of crimes can be prevented or curbed, including influencing the behaviour of the perpetrator, knowing the opportunities concerning time, space, social and physical circumstances.[24] In the centre of attention there are those hot spots where crime is frequent as in some neighbourhoods, certain types of public insti-

[19] *Kube* (1987) ibid. p. 19.

[20] Sharyn, L. – *Anten*, R.: The role of civil sanctions in social control: a socio-legal examination. Crime Prevention Studies Vol. 9 (1998), pp. 21-43 (31. p.)

[21] See *Monahan-Klassen*, cited by *Kube* (1987) p. 30. According to other opinions creating the constructed environment in a way to facilitate security still belongs to primary prevention. See: *Northoff*, R. (Hg.): Handbuch der Kriminalprävention. Nomos, Baden-Baden 1997. 3. Primäre, an der Wurzel ansetzende, Prävention. 3.3.1. Wohnumfeld und Stadtplanung, especially pp. 8-37. According to this view the difference between primary and secondary prevention is that the latter focuses less on the framework conditions and more on the interaction trends that lead to the crime. This is the basic reason why Anglo-Saxon literature identifies secondary prevention with situational prevention. See: *Northoff* ibid. 4. Sekundäre, risikoorientierte, Prävention. 4.1. Verminderung des Täterrisikos p. 1.

[22] *Kube* (1987) ibid. p. 317.

[23] *Clarke*, R.V.: Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies. Harrow and Heston Albany, 1997. p. 16. see also: *Riedel*, Cl.: Situationsbezogene Kriminalprävention. Lang, Frankfurt am Main etc. 2003. p. 77.

[24] This is discussed in detail in the so-called SARA-model. (This is the abbreviation of Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment.) For an early introduction see e.g. *Eck*, J.E. – *Spelman*, W.: Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News. National Institute of Justice. Washington 1987. Cited by: *Smith*, M.: Regulating opportunities: multiple Roles for civil remedies in situational crime prevention. Crime Prevention Studies Vol. 9 (1998), pp. 67-88. (Pp. 72-73)

tutions as well as public areas, parks, shopping centres, public transport vehicles and their environment, central business districts.[25]

### 3.1. Safety on the roads, for example

The kind of prevention described above is known in many walks of life. It is no accident, however, that situational prevention has become widespread mainly in road traffic. The primary reason for this is that driving is actually a series of conflicts to be overcome by identifying the possibility of a conflict in due time and finding a suitable solution to prevent accidents from happening. In other words a driver drives his or her vehicle from the departure point to the destination through a series of defensive actions against the attacks of other drivers. In the meantime, of course, he or she also causes conflicts (or "attacks" other drivers), which either he or she or other drivers have to cope with. For a long time it was thought that knowledge of the law and a right level of abilities to comply with the law is enough to achieve security. However, as the use of cars continued to spread, experts soon realised that the public was not ready to defend themselves against the rapidly increasing number of emergency situations. As a consequence several people who keep the rules also suffer harm or even death. Therefore it is not enough if drivers do not infringe the law it is also necessary to notice an (intentional or unintentional) infringement of the law by others in due time and to find a way to defend themselves (and others) against these infringements. In other words they should have the ability to recognise an emergency situation in due time, they should be ready to prevent the threatening consequences and they should know what opportunities are available. These techniques are called defensive driving and they are taught in theory and in practice as well, at least "in better places".[26] If the drivers are not taught these techniques they will learn it in everyday practice, learning from their own example, or from the example of other drivers, in 6-10 years, while they drive 60-100,000 kilometres. If they are really lucky, they will not even have an accident during this time.

The essence of these techniques is to *recognise* the possibility of *conflicts in due time* using the ominous signs and to find a successful *way out* of the situation by comparing the situation with a pattern in the back of one's mind that one learnt earlier and one can use in emergency situations. People who have these skills can have the suitable wall of defence for driving. Most drivers more or less have these skills depending on several factors. Those who do not have them are not suitable to drive no matter how well they can technically control the vehicle.

People in traffic are strongly influenced by their environment, and depending on it they make a *decision that is adequate to the situation* in a higher or lower percentage of the cases. It is a fact that has been acknowledged for decades and proven several times in the area of road safety that *it is much more efficient, easier and cheaper to adjust the environment to the human attitudes and to make it suitable for the characteristic qualities of the majority of people than insisting on trying to make people adapt to the environment.* There are several examples of this that are known to everyone – although it may be only the specialists who are aware of them: white signs on the surface of the road helping drivers to find

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[25] See: *Sharyn – Anleu* ibid. Pp. 31-32

[26] In Hungary integrated further training has not yet been introduced. Certain theoretical parts are taught in the basic training of drivers (when it is still too early), while the practical parts can be learnt by practicing on "slippery road" on an optional basis.

their way, the changing size of letters on traffic signs, depending on the typical speed (e.g. smaller letters in towns, larger letters on motorways) or the roundabouts that have replaced dangerous intersections.

In the context of road traffic it is natural that *conflicts have to be solved in the triangle of people – vehicles – environment*, where vehicles mostly have a role only in mitigating the "primary consequences". The conflicts must be solved among as favourable conditions of the environment as possible – conditions that facilitate the compliance to norms and the resistance to the infringement on norms and also provide incentives for behaviour in compliance with the law. By good environment we also mean constructed environment that discourages people from infringing the norms.

The above mentioned type of prevention is even more necessary because most of the instances of infringement of the law that are punishable because according to the legislator they result in very serious harm to the society, are hardly considered to be offences by a large part of the society. It is so because the public is under *two kinds of influences* at the same time. The business lobby makes the economy attractive on the one hand, but it pays no attention to the unfavourable consequences of enjoying it on the other. Although there is increasingly more talk on safety, new cars still have higher and higher performance, accelerating power and maximum speed. There is fierce competition between the manufacturers for the buyers. This has resulted in high-speed cars with good safety features – but unfortunately mainly for the car owners and their passengers who can afford to pay not only for the speed but for the safety that goes with it. (While human qualities have not changed in the past decades: we can act and make decisions without mistakes only at a speed of 20-30 km/h – at least with a great probability it is so.) It is easy to see that the more wealthy one is the more one is able to buy a higher level of safety. The propaganda suggests that if you spend a lot on your car you can drive fast, you can be careless, modern technology will save you. It is not mentioned that the safety of the other drivers changes in reciprocal measure to the increase in one's own safety. Those participants in traffic who do not travel in motor vehicles – first of all pedestrians – start to receive attention only very slowly. They have never posed a danger to motorists although – or rather because of this – most of the victims are pedestrians. The temptation is strong. Why do people buy cars that can make a high speed? Surely not just to plod along the roads. There is an irrational belief as well: although a lot of people cause or suffer accidents some people tend to think that they will be exceptions although they follow the same pattern of behaviour as those who get involved in accidents.

The reaction of the government could be to use its authority to discipline those who display dangerous behaviour. A limited impact of "zero tolerance" can be clearly observed at the different traffic offences (too). At the time when motor vehicles were not yet so widespread, there was an openly declared principle, one that is not even mentioned now because it is obvious for everyone that it would be impossible to keep: no offence should remain unpunished as far as possible and really no offence should remain unpunished if it is seen by the police. Now, when infringing norms is common, it would be hopeless to try to enforce this principle.

That is why the above mentioned principle, which does not aim at improving people against their bad inclinations but offers an environment that makes people who are otherwise "determined" to break norms comply with these norms on their free will, has become widespread in road traffic in order to address the problem of the increasing number of acci-

dents that result in lasting disability or death and braches of norms that affect the injured person and their environment especially sensitively.

### 3.2. Public security, for example

Most of the people who cause road accidents are not criminals. Not even those who cause serious damage because of their carelessness. Although they break norms more or less seriously throughout their life – just like everybody else – they keep themselves away from those acts on the basis of which most people distance themselves from criminals. (Although it is worth mentioning again that we know of several – and an increasing number of – instances of breaking norms that are sometimes categorised as serious crimes by the legislators but a lot of people do not commit them only because they do not have the chance to or a lot of (or even) most people actually commit them. It is so because they are indifferent about moral issues or their attitudes go against the official view. As examples it is enough to mention the kind of intellectual crime like the theft of computer software or the different ways of damaging the environment and also the not so intellectual crimes committed by the active and passive participants of the black economy.

The two statements we have made earlier also hold true here:

• The business lobby makes the economy attractive and does not care what unfavourable impacts the enjoyment of it entails. Behaviour that is ruled by interests is often in conflict with the requirements of the law.

• The principle of "zero tolerance" is practically impossible to apply.

We can conclude that *the most effective means of crime prevention is not the consistent enforcement of compliance to norms* in an increasingly wider range of crimes, any more – this true for now and even more so for the future.

Among the crimes the ones that are most irritating for the public are the situational crimes, the ones that are related to place and time; especially those that are unexpected and therefore mean an especially serious challenge for the individuals who are not prepared for an attack.

I think that it would be difficult not to notice the similarity between the characteristics of traffic offences and the other, situational, crimes. If there is a similarity, then it would be obvious to adapt the means and methods that have proved successful in traffic to other crimes as well.[27] For what difference is there between the astonishment of an experienced motorist and a new home owner, when neither of them finds "an emergency exit" from the attack. It has also been known for a long time that there are some people in both of these areas who are especially unlucky. They are involved in accidents or become victims of crimes again and again. In both areas there is a high number of "born victims" and we also know about people who are in one or the other role alternately. Now, however, we do not deal with them. We would like to mention those perpetrators who make a calculation of the costs and benefits (or the advantages and disadvantages) before they decide whether they should commit a crime and also those potential victims who are attacked by these people – or if the circumstances are not favourable for the perpetrators – are just allowed to "run away".

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[27] Kube encourages to do so when he says that these prevention programmes must influence the interaction between people on the one hand, and people and their environment on the other. See: *Kube* (1987) p. 318.

Let us notice that it is *a kind of* prevention strategy to try and socialise the potential perpetrators (the young blood of future criminals) together with their families as well as their school, residential and school environment. It is an important effort that is aimed at the future, essential, although the outcome is doubtful in view of the many attempts, successes and especially failures of the past centuries. *Situational crime prevention* is a *different kind of* prevention strategy, which has a range of instruments limited to situational crimes (although its methods and instruments go far beyond that) that are able to achieve measurable successes (or failures) in the short term. It is by no accident that the police work and experiments with this method all over the world so we can call it *crime prevention directed by the police* (or police crime prevention, in short). It also lies behind he fact that where this method is applied at a high level, forming the environment is included in some ways in the competence of the police.

The relationship between *the design of the environment and crime prevention* does not have a long history. Nevertheless, it is used at a high level in the United States, in Canada and in Australia and is being introduced – as a relatively independent area of crime prevention – also in Europe, especially in Great-Britain, in Holland and in the Scandinavian countries. Since the second half of the 90s on it has been receiving more attention in Germany as well.

Certain elements of this approach have become rooted in Hungary, too. Mostly the Neighbours for Each Other Movement belong here. This, however, is only a part of a complex system, and it has also been imported from Canada.[*] Opportunities of improving security, such as better public lighting or public areas arranged in way to allow more supervision and the demand for more cleanliness and a fast removal of graffiti, are included in the different proposals. These haphazard groups of ideas, although not useless, are far from being adequate. It would be important to take the planning of the environment aimed at crime prevention as a uniform system and to apply it at least in future architectural planning (including the reconstruction of housing estates, which can hardly be postponed now and other fundamental changes in the residential environment).

## 4. Instead of a summary

Above I have tried to argue that *besides* the complicated and expensive intervention programmes that involve a lot of participants and require long-term political and governmental intervention on a large scale, there is also a need for measures that can prove either a success or a failure in a shorter term, thereby making it possible to intervene in a relatively short time. Some of these require the launch of measures that become timely in order to reduce crime in cities – and especially in housing estates.

In general we can say that in the future situational crime prevention will provide a lot of opportunities that have not yet been used for professionals involved in prevention, especially for policemen, who are determined to work in this area because of their profession and their specific knowledge as well.[*] When detecting crimes, the police in Hungary should also pay

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[*] We would like to thank Sándor *Kopácsy*, the first president of the National Public Security and Crime Prevention Public Foundation, who came home from several decades of exile in Canada at the time when the transition started and brought home this instrument as a present.

[*] International practice – from Canada to Australia and from the United States to Sweden and to Germany – is uniform in making the *police* the sole organisation responsible for all the areas of secondary prevention. See *Kube* (1988) pp. 271.and the following for older literature, and the Internet publications in connection to the realisation of

more attention to the weaknesses or failures in the actual physical environment and the circumstances that typically make it easier to commit a crime, and after drawing the right conclusions this can help to avoid the occurrence of new crimes. It is especially true for the constructed environment and the behaviour of the participants of crimes.

The solution is dealing with the situations and thereby prevention. If it is not possible reducing the consequences still remains an option. The most important tasks follow from this: preparing the participants in the situations partly for the probable (possible) consequences of certain behaviour, partly – in case of an attack – for a response that is adequate to the situation. Through this

• the potential victims must learn about the characteristics of the transition between safe and risky (dangerous) behaviour,

• they must learn a counter-strategy and make it an intrinsic skill of their own,

• they need training sessions to learn the concrete application in practice and to maintain these skills so that they can use them routinely.

The impact of the (different kinds of) environment on the motivation and the decision must also be detected and suitably abstracted. It involves collecting the typically attractive and deterring elements and coming to know the way they work. Both the Hungarian and the foreign criminal experts – including the psychologists, the sociologists and the urban planning specialists working in this field – has a wide range of practical experience, which, however, has not been systematised.[30] The situation is similar in the other countries of the Central-European region, too.

The most important items of the potential strategy:

• Tactical advice of a general character, which may start from a concrete case but can be generalised.

• Preparatory training based on the preceding principle but embedded in situational exercises for the right target groups.

• Spectacular environmental interventions to secure a defensible space, mainly in residential areas and around their infrastructure facilities and in the vicinity of shopping centres.

For all this we have to start from the following:[31]

• Analysing the question.

• Defining and selecting the special problems related to criminality and the environment.

• Developing well-established hypotheses based on the preceding and   strategies built on these.

the CPTED programmes more recently. See also: Kriminalprävention aus Sicht der Polizei eine Aufgabe auch für Architekten und Stadtplaner? In:

http //www e-doca net/Resources/Articles/Kriminalpravention_eine_Aufgabe_fur_Stadtplaner_Internetvers.pdf
It is typical for city planners, architects and policemen to cooperate. It has more than 30 years of tradition in Great Britain. for example

[30] See: *Felson*, M – *Clarke*, R. Opportunity Makes the Thief – Practical theory for crime prevention. Paper 98 der Police Research Series der Policing & Reucing Crime Unit des Research, Development and Statistical Directorate des Britischen Home Office London 1998 (A review by: H. *Koetzsrhe* in Die Kriminalprävention vol. 3/1999. 116-117. pp.); also: Situational Crime Prevention aspects taken from "situational crime prevention: successful case studies" by professor Ronald Clarke, dean at the School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers, New Jersey State University. Available on the Internet.

[31] *Kube* (1987) p. 319.

- The deduction of certain measures and measure packages from the preceding (including the resources and the schedule).
- The implementation of the measures.
- The implementation and the evaluation of the programme.

Finally I compare some of the different and similar features of the two areas of prevention that can be considered as important:

| Situational prevention | Social crime prevention |
|---|---|
| *The intervention is different because* | |
| it is sure | it is unsure |
| it is cheap | it is expensive |
| it is risk-oriented | it is independent of risks |
| it is concrete | it is abstract |
| it has short-term impacts | it has medium- and long-term impacts |
| There is a direct connection between the elements of the system so their relationship and their mutual impacts can be surveyed relatively easily. | There is no direct connection between the elements of the system so their relationship and their mutual impacts can be surveyed with difficulty or not at all. |
| goal: transforming the environment | goal: transforming the society |
| The target group is known, can be identified. | The target group cannot be defined so it cannot be identified and defined more precisely; it has a changing composition. |
| Its impact can be measured. | Its impact can be measured only indirectly or not at all. |
| The outcome is predictable in the short term. | The outcome can be predicted only with difficulty in the medium and long term, it is unsure. |
| Few elements of uncertainty | Many elements of uncertainty |
| Fear (of violence, burglary) can be abolished immediately or in a short time; if not, the system can repair itself. | Fear can be abolished (perhaps) only when the system starts operating after a long time. |
| Mostly free of irrational elements | Rich in irrational elements |
| *The intervention is similar because* | |
| It is definitely justified | It is definitely justified |
| It is not really or not at all suitable for combating organised crime. | It is not really or not at all suitable for combating organised crime. |
| It is not suitable for preventing office (intellectual) crime. | It is not suitable for preventing office (intellectual) crime. |

Setting up a system of situational crime prevention is going to be an exciting task in Hungary in the near future. In this paper I have tried to define the most important reference points.