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# Crime Prevention as Urban Security

Adam Crawford, Susan Donkin and Christine A. Weirich

## Introduction

Crime prevention, community safety and urban security have expanded considerably over the last 30-40 years as interconnected fields of scholarly interest, policy development and professional practice. They now constitute a loosely defined domain where divergent disciplines and organisational interests coalesce, as exemplified by the focus in research and policy on city-level municipal authorities as the multi-stakeholder delivery mechanisms for joined-up approaches to the prevention of crime, harm and vulnerability (Tilley 2009).

It is not the purpose of this chapter to provide an encyclopaedic overview of this broad and rich vein of intellectual enquiry and organisational learning, nor to offer a definitive review of 'what works' in crime prevention practice (see Sherman *et al.* 2002; Weisburd *et al.* 2017). Here, we explore and assess some key developments and learning over time, and consider implications for future directions. While the focus is largely on the British experience, we also situate the journey travelled by the UK<sup>1</sup> in a wider European context. This complements and extends the subject matter of earlier editions of the Oxford Handbook, with insights into some of the divergent policy pathways, institutional arrangements and strategic choices that inform urban security practices elsewhere in Europe. To this end, we draw on an international review of literature conducted as part of an EU Horizon 2020 research project IcARUS – 'Innovative Approaches to Urban Security' – supplemented by interviews with key international experts who have been at the forefront of shaping the knowledge base and invested in the application of research in practices (Crawford *et al.* 2022). Interview material is used selectively throughout the chapter to illustrate some of the arguments and viewpoints presented.<sup>2</sup>

We begin by tracing the historic emergence of the modern 'preventive turn', its evolution and institutionalisation within the UK, across successive waves of development. In doing so, we highlight three broad periods of change which are characterised as: the 'early years' of innovation and experimentation (from the late 1970s to the early 1990s); the period marked by 'expansion and elaboration' informed by infrastructure building and the opening up of crime prevention to incorporate wider features of community safety and perceptions of insecurity (the late 1990s to 2010); and 'fragmentation and retrenchment' marked by austerity and the rise of vulnerability as an organising focus for service provision (2010 to the present). We then situate the British context in a wider European comparative frame, by exploring a number of differences and similarities in approach and delivery. In the final part of the chapter we consider some of the recurring challenges that feature both across time and across jurisdictions. In particular, we focus on the question of institutional responsibility for prevention given the inter-organisational dimensions of partnership working and

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<sup>1</sup> The focus is largely on England and Wales as different policy and legal frameworks exist in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> All the interview data cited in this chapter are drawn from the IcARUS Review (Crawford *et al.* 2022), which also includes details of interviewees and methods; available at <https://www.icarus-innovation.eu/d2-1-the-changing-face-of-urban-security-research-a-review-of-accumulated-learning/>

relations between the knowledge base and policy/practice. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on emerging fault-lines and possible future challenges.

## The British Preventive Turn

### The early years

For many commentators, the period from the mid-1970s to the late-1980s marked a watershed in crime control and policing (Feeley and Simon 1992; Garland 1996). With recorded crime rates increasing dramatically from the 1960s onwards, growing strains were exposed across the institutions of criminal justice, both with regard to their legitimacy and effectiveness. Most notably, this expressed itself in a loss of faith in the 'rehabilitative ideal', which had informed institutions of criminal justice either directly or indirectly across the Twentieth Century (Garland 1985). This new-found pessimism was starkly evoked in Martinson's (1974) infamous phrase 'nothing works' which captured the *zeitgeist* of the era. The subsequent politicisation of crime in the UK – signalled in the 1979 Thatcher election campaign and victory - was fuelled by the growth of social movements that championed the previously ignored victims of crime. Previously, crime control had been largely shielded from the gaze of political criticism by a broad consensus that it was best served by 'expert' judgement rather than public opinion (Loader 2006). As faith in the traditional criminal justice establishment waned, policy-makers began to look elsewhere for solutions (Home Office 1977). Furthermore, in light of the economic crisis, governments began to search for fiscal savings and cost efficiencies as established modes of crime control came to be seen as representing a significant financial burden upon the public purse.

Importantly for our purposes, this period saw the (re-)emergence of interest in crime prevention as a focus of policy concern and intellectual enquiry. Where the criminal justice system had come to rely on reactive and largely punitive 'tertiary' preventive interventions alone, greater emphasis was now to be given to interventions that sought to prevent offending in the first place; either through 'primary' prevention - directed at general populations (and places) to address potentially criminogenic factors before the onset of the problem – or via 'secondary' prevention involving work with people (or places) identified as 'at risk' because of some pre-dispositional factor. This was the lesson powerfully made by Brantingham and Faust (1976) in their article 'A conceptual model of crime prevention', which drew on analogies from healthcare. Consequently, crime prevention largely came to be defined in contrast to the traditional institutions of criminal justice. In this vein, van Dijk (1990: 205) envisaged crime prevention as encompassing: 'the total of all policies, measures and techniques, outside the boundaries of the criminal justice system, aiming at the reduction of the various kinds of damage caused by acts defined as criminal by the state'. This suggested, not simply a shift in institutional focus, but also, a more instrumental and future-oriented mentality concerned with anticipating future harms in place of the normative concern with reordering the past by 'doing justice' through traditional criminal justice processes.

However, the potential of this major conceptual 'shift in paradigm' (Tuck 1988) – when seen from the vantage point of over forty years history – has yet to be fully realised. This animates a recurring theme throughout this chapter, namely the reasons why prevention did not become a more central feature in the governance of crime and security across the ensuing years. While preventive healthcare practice did advance profoundly over the

equivalent period, the same could not be said of crime prevention policy. Despite the intense early innovations in theory and practice inaugurated in the 1980s – much of it stimulated and sponsored by the work of the Research and Planning Unit in the Home Office – the promise of up-stream early intervention and prevention was stalled, diverted and confused. Consequently, there is much to learn from an analysis of the key developments, innovations and paths taken – and not taken – during the formative years, in part because the same issues, barriers, challenges and opportunities presented then, continue to reverberate and inform developments today.

Historians have rightly cautioned against ‘epochal’ claims that this period marked a simple transition from a state-centred, retrospective and reactive past to a pluralised preventive present (Zedner 2006; Churchill 2017). Nonetheless, in its contemporary revival, the novel forms of crime prevention – particularly situational approaches – drew explicitly upon earlier ideas linked to rational choice theory and altering the opportunity structures for offending (Garland 2000). Object-change and situational modification replaced the focus on people-change. This was deemed both more amenable and more generalisable. It injected a renewed optimism. Rather than focus on individual pre-dispositions to offend – and the difficulties in identifying these – it sought to highlight the benefits to change through modifications to the physical and built environment.

The 1980s saw a flurry of crime prevention thinking and practice, with a number of key innovations during this period standing out as having effected significant subsequent change. One key development was methodological, namely the initiation of victimisation surveys as novel means of measuring and understanding crime, harm and public perceptions, while another placed greater focus on up-stream thinking in relation to crime prevention measures and policy.

#### Victimisation Surveys

Victimisation surveys have been highly influential as an alternative - and often more robust - source of information about the nature and extent of crime and harm. Fundamentally, they also disrupt the erstwhile monopoly of the police as gatekeepers of crime data; serving as an alternative to police recorded crime statistics. In the UK, this initially took the form of the British Crime Survey – first published in 1983 (Hough and Mayhew 1983) and now known as the Crime Survey for England and Wales – but also saw experimentation with local variants (Jones *et al.* 1986), as well as international victimisation surveys (van Dijk *et al.* 1990; van Kersten *et al.* 2014) that have become vital instruments in interpreting the distribution, concentration and patterns of victimisation across the world. Reflecting on their lasting legacy, van Dijk - a key initiator and exponent – commented in interview:

*‘I think symbolically when you do a victimisation survey, you break the monopoly of the police on the topic. In the old days, they were the ones who collected the statistics... When you have victimisation survey data, you changed the rules of the game... So, I see the victimisation survey, more than I did in the past, as an extremely important tool in the democratisation process.’* (Jan van Dijk, 2021)

Here is not the place to assess the massive contribution made by victimisation surveys and the research they have spawned (see McVie and Matthews, this volume). However, a few points warrant highlighting, specifically in regard to the scope of prevention and how it influenced policy.

First, victimisation surveys focused research and policy attention squarely on victims of crime – hitherto largely neglected from the gaze of criminal justice – their experiences and the impacts of victimisation. In particular, they revealed the concentration of crime at the level of individuals, households and neighbourhoods as well as the unequal social and spatial distribution of victimisation. They exposed the compounding effects of multiple and repeat victimisation, leading pioneering criminologists to highlight the ethical and practical benefits of targeting victims as a means of allocating resources to the prevention of repeat crimes (Farrell and Pease 1993).

Secondly, victimisation surveys also prompted considerable debate and enquiry into the role of public perceptions of crime and insecurity – often referred to as ‘the fear of crime’ – as a subject in its own right. This centred not only on the measurement and meaning of people’s fears but more importantly on the relationship between subjective perceptions and objective risks of victimisation. Reflecting the insight of the Thomas Theorem that if humans define a situation as real, it is real in its consequences (Thomas and Thomas 1928), the ways in which individuals’ perceptions of insecurity shape reality and the experiences of public safety have become priorities (Crawford *et al.* 1990). This is particularly so regarding the continuum, identified by researchers, between everyday incidents of low-level abuse and harassment (in private and public spaces) and more extreme forms of violence (Stanko 1990), which became, and remains today, a matter of concern for both academics and policy-makers. This subsequently served to open up space for crime prevention to be drawn into much wider connections with both insecurity as an inter-subjective phenomenon and the links between behaviours, incivilities and ‘signs of crime’ that might not be defined as criminal *per se*, but could serve as indicators of possible future crimes or criminality.

Thirdly, from a methodological perspective, victimisation survey research also helped shift the focus from the offender to offences with the latter understood as an outcome of the convergence in time and space of relationships set in a wider nexus. Whether this was conceived in terms of the ‘routine activities’ triangle of a suitable target, motivated offender and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen and Felson 1979), or the ‘square of crime’ highlighted by self-styled Left Realists encompassing the victim, offender, state (formal social control) and society/public (informal social control) (Young and Matthews 1992), the emphasis was to decentre the offender and the institutions of criminal justice from the purview of both analysing crime causation and promoting crime prevention.

Policy-makers began to recognise that the prevention of crime lay far beyond the levers of the institutions of criminal justice and the police – who had been assumed to carry the prevention mantle. Rather, prevention was increasingly seen as a task for the community as a whole, prompting collaboration between a diverse patchwork of public and private agencies and actors with some relation to, and responsibility for, crime prevention. This new message was elaborated in the inter-departmental circular on ‘crime prevention’ 8/1984 which resulted from cross-Whitehall working group on crime reduction established by then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. It declared that: *‘since some of the factors affecting crime lie outside the control or direct influence of the police, crime prevention cannot be left to them alone. Every individual citizen and all those agencies whose policies and practices can influence the extent of crime should make their contribution. Preventing crime is a task for the whole community’* (Home Office 1984). In practice, this begged the question: how was this patchwork to be organised, marshalled and harnessed for the public good?

### Up-stream Thinking

A second and related feature of innovation during this period was the focus on stimulating a new prevention mentality that encouraged 'up-stream' thinking and early interventions to anticipate harm and pre-empt criminal opportunities. Much of this focused on the design and modification of the physical environment to reduce opportunities for crime – with innovations in situational crime prevention and 'crime prevention through environmental design' driving, what Clarke referred to as, a 'framework for some practical and common-sense thinking about how to deal with crime' (1995: 93).<sup>3</sup> The influence on policy and practice of this rich corpus of 'new criminologies of everyday life' (Garland 2001: 127) was extensive; ranging from the implementation of diverse opportunity reduction initiatives, to the establishment of the Secured by Design<sup>4</sup> police initiative and the inauguration of architectural liaison officers – schooled in the new theories - within UK police forces.

Separate to this, a less noticeable and little commented on series of innovations was being stimulated in relation to social and community-based crime prevention. Hope and Shaw (1988) proposed a more social approach focused on relations and interactions rather than just design attributes and spatial arrangements. However, given their affinity with theories of individual responsibility and rational choice, situational approaches aligned well with the prevailing political climate. As such, situational interventions were preferred over approaches that relied on broad social policy interventions and government action. For O'Malley (1992: 263), the triumph of situational, over social, crime prevention, in Anglophone countries signified 'the displacement of socialised risk management with privatised prudentialism'. Furthermore, for him this needed to be understood as being connected to, and an extension of, the neo-liberal political programmes with which it was aligned in those jurisdictions - most notably in the UK but also in Australia.

### The Period of 'Elaboration and Expansion' (Late 1990s – 2010)

This period, with its origins in the recommendations of the Morgan Report (1991) and local government driven change, was crystallised by the *Crime and Disorder Act* 1998 (a flagship of the New Labour Government). Its key features were the elaboration of a novel architecture of 'preventive partnerships' and the expansion, beyond crime reduction, to incorporate wider dimensions of community safety. The subsequent 'opening up' of crime prevention was stimulated, in part, by acknowledgement of the interdependencies and interconnections between crime and wider social forces and societal problems, and also by recourse to wider data sources in measuring the effectiveness of preventive interventions. Furthermore, it recognised the need for responses to crime that reflected the nature of the phenomenon itself and its complex aetiology, allowing for joined-up approaches and pooling of expertise, information and resources.

The conceptual shift, from a narrowly defined police-centric and situationally-focused crime prevention, to a wider notion of neighbourhood and urban safety, was intentionally designed to broaden engagement with public, private and civil society organisations. The Morgan Report had explicitly articulated a preference for the term 'community safety' over

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<sup>3</sup> The current model of 25 opportunity-reducing techniques is organised under five categories: increasing the effort, increasing the risk, reducing the reward, reducing provocation and removing excuses (Clarke 2009). Situational principles have been applied to a range of problems and crimes, from littering and domestic burglary to white collar crime and terrorism.

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.securedbydesign.com/>



'crime prevention', both to emphasise the wider social features of urban security and to detach it from the institutional stranglehold of the police. Indeed, the term crime prevention was seen as too narrow and too closely associated with police-related responsibilities (Morgan 1991: 31). The shift to community safety, in the UK, also heralded both a localised place-based focus to problem-solving and an emphasis on participatory frameworks and partnership working; a recurring theme of the Morgan Report, subsequent research evidence (Crawford 1997) and policy pronouncements.

All of this drew the design, regulation and management of public spaces into sharper focus. Despite considerable advance, there was a growing appreciation that overly crude environmental design and 'defensible space' with overt surveillance as deterrence, paid insufficient regard to aesthetics and the impact on public perceptions. In particular, it was recognised that crime prevention interventions had the capacity to foster insecurity by alerting citizens to risks, thus heightening sensibilities. This hastened a trend towards a 'process of naturalisation', whereby regulation became embedded into the physical infrastructure and social routines in ways that were less noticeable or threatening (Crawford 2011). The balance between security concerns and other public goods or private pursuits was an early lesson learned in the business and retail sector where security concerns often clashed with commercial imperatives. Hence, there remained a tension between the priority accorded to crime prevention and security against other benefits, uses and values, notably with regard to the dangers of over-securitisation of public spaces (Cozens and Love 2017). More broadly, the language of '*security*' with its future-orientation and preventive implications increasingly came to influence urban governance and local safety policies, in part bolstered by the increased role of the private sector in preventative partnerships (Zedner 2009).

Alongside the crime prevention elements of the 1998 Act, was an emphasis on tackling 'disorder'; activity perceived as troublesome or as a nuisance, but which fell short of criminality. This spawned a new set of control mechanisms, court orders to curb individual behaviour and the imposition of youth curfews in particular streets. While the actions which these orders and curfews were designed to control were not necessarily criminal, in themselves, the breach of an order constituted a crime and could culminate in a criminal record. The new framework was designed to counter, what had been considered, a breakdown of community by the application of interventions to force behavioural change. It posited disorder - under the new capacious moniker 'anti-social behaviour' (ASB) - as a type of 'pre-crime' (Zedner 2007) that, if left unchecked, would lead to more serious criminality following a developmental trajectory influenced by Kelling and Wilson's (1982) 'Broken Windows' thesis. As with the developmental logic in relation to youth crime, it was claimed that crime needs to be 'nipped in the bud' by deploying administrative measures to pre-empt the escalation of behaviour and problems. In the context of youth crime, the new multi-disciplinary local Youth Offending Teams and national Youth Justice Board together formed the requisite infrastructure to design and implement integrated strategies. Importantly, the 1998 Act also set out the principal aim of the youth justice system as being 'to *prevent* offending by children and young persons' (see also McAra, this volume).

The Government's Anti-Social Behaviour agenda, also contributed to a new emphasis on the challenges of policy delivery. The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (established in 2001) set the template for 'deliverology - the science (or pseudoscience) of marshalling prime ministerial powers to deliver measurable improvements in the public services' (Barber 2007:

79). A key feature of this was the micro-management of performance data linked to measurable outputs – in this instance, the number of ASBOs issued (Crawford 2009b). While few had been issued before 2003, over 40 per cent of all ASBOs (up to the end of 2013) in England and Wales, were issued in the three year period between 2004 and 2006, declining steadily thereafter. This national picture, however, hid the fact that a large volume of work with young people had been taking place prior to, and in the shadow of, such orders (Lewis *et al.* 2017). Thus, the fluctuations in ASBO rates were less attributable to the effectiveness of the orders themselves (as the performance metric was supposedly measuring) and more to other forms of agency intervention, including youth work. The controversial short history of the ASBO (National Audit Office 2006) saw it subsequently abolished and replaced under the *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014*. Nonetheless, the wider use of administrative preventive orders has persisted and expanded over the ensuing years (Ashworth and Zedner 2014).

The performance management regimes across the public sector that accompanied 'deliverology' had a range of other flaws (beyond those highlighted by the ASBO targets above). First, they tended to focus on measurable output – the activities of organisations captured in administrative datasets - rather than the societal outcomes of services and the effects on service users or the public, which are much harder to measure and quantify. Second, the intra-organisational focus of most performance measurements afforded scant regard to the more complex process of negotiating shared purposes and inter-organisational relations, essential to crime prevention and urban security partnerships. Third, they invariably produced perverse effects and 'gaming', whereby behaviour was shaped by the measurement rather than the intended outcomes that the measure was seeking to capture, that is a reactive subversion such as 'hitting the target and missing the point'. Increasingly across the first decade of the 2000s, implementation revealed major problems of credibility and commitment, given the incentives to 'cheat' both by target-setters and target managers.

A notable example, however, that did attempt to link institutional performance (specifically that of community safety partnerships) to its impact on the wider public was the short-lived Single Confidence Target, established in 2009. This target utilised data on public perceptions of safety as measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (Rix *et al.* 2009). While it generally aimed to provide some indicators regarding public opinion on policing, more importantly, it sought to measure the impact of the joint work of the police and local authority. Having replaced all other policing targets in early 2009, the target was ultimately abolished the following year. Nonetheless, it constituted an embryonic attempt at both focusing measurement on outcomes (public confidence) rather than outputs and tying organisations (police and local authority) into a shared collective pursuit – namely tackling anti-social behaviour and crime issues that mattered in local areas.

A further feature of this expansionist period was a greater investment in early intervention informed by 'developmental criminology' (LeBlanc and Loeber 1998) and a 'risk-based' approach to preventing youth crime (Farrington 2007; Farrington and Welsh 2007). The period saw considerable investment in social – largely family-based but also some community-based initiatives - and developmental approaches, within the frame of secondary prevention targeted at-risk groups.

At the heart of the risk factor prevention paradigm, according to a key proponent, is a 'very simple' idea to 'identify the key risk factors for offending and implement prevention



methods designed to counteract them' (Farrington 2000: 1). Such an approach 'can be used not only to identify variables to be targeted but also to identify persons to be targeted in an intervention programme' (Farrington 2000: 10). However, as Farrington acknowledged, risk factor analysis tends to be much better at explaining links and associations after the event than it is at predicting future behaviour. While a *risk factor* is commonly understood as a 'predictor'; namely a factor or variable that is associated with and precedes the outcome, prediction is not the same as causation (McAra and McVie 2017). It may only be one possible element in establishing causation. Indeed, most risk factors are markers and symptoms that are correlated to causes but are not necessarily causes in themselves.

Somewhat ironically, the risk factor approach to youth crime prevention was undermined by other efforts to manage the performance of the police. The evidence shows that the introduction, in 2002, of a target to increase the number of offences brought to justice (by reducing the gap between the number of crimes recorded by the police and those for which a perpetrator was identified), served to increase the number of first time entrants and hence the number of young people drawn into the criminal process – notably between 2003/04 and 2006/07. To meet the target, the police had focused attention on young people who had committed non-serious offences, resulting in large numbers being brought into the youth justice system. This was a further example of the perverse effects of crude performance measurement which ultimately served to weaken the preventive logic of the youth justice reforms heralded by the 1998 Act.

### [The Years of 'Fragmentation and Retrenchment' \(2010 – Present Day\)](#)

The Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 ushered in a decade dominated by the language of 'austerity' and the refrain that government could no longer provide the range and extent of public services previously enjoyed. Few policy areas escaped from significant cuts to funding. In the past the police and other security services had largely been protected from the withdrawal of state funding - and even had seen a significant expansion in police personnel during the previous decade. However, -under the new politics of austerity this was no longer the case. Unprecedented reductions in budgets and staff numbers followed; real-terms police spending declined by 16 per cent between 2010 and 2019 and officer numbers declined by over 20,600 (Flatley 2019). The impact of austerity was also felt, often more severely, across the care sector with particular impacts on charitable and voluntary provision for vulnerable people.

Many urban security partnerships which had been incentivised to seek new funding streams so as to ensure their sustainability, found that opportunities to access such resources receded under austerity. In times of fiscal constraint in the public sector, some of the first casualties were collaborative, inter-organisational commitments, as organisations focused on their core objective and statutory duties. Moreover, alongside the police budget cuts, the new Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government explicitly sought to narrow the police mandate to a focus on cutting crime (Home Office 2010: para. 1.22). This served to draw police away from wider community safer commitments and engagement with local partnerships. Subsequently, an Inspectorate report revealed that, collaborations between police forces as well as wider partnership relations were 'deeply disappointing' (HMIC 2013: 18).

While the policing of social problems and vulnerable groups has long been an aspect of the work of the police, the impact of austerity and the retrenchment of public services added a further dimension to such work. Indeed, a prevailing feature of the period since 2010 has been the increased range of complex social issues that have become cast as ‘police problems’, often with little critical assessment as to whether they are best suited to solve such problems, given their limited skills and capabilities. In particular, the last decade has witnessed rapid increases in interconnected problems, including modern slavery, child sexual exploitation and ‘County Lines’. These have added to the longer-standing challenges for policing of domestic abuse, homelessness and mental illness, as well as a variety of hate crimes. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has served to further amplify, existing inequalities between social groups, with the result that many vulnerable groups have lost connection with local service providers and there is considerable unmet need. These shifts have reconfigured relations between community safety partners, as policing has become increasingly the ‘service of first resort’ (HMICFRS 2018) for a host of social problems. A Home Affairs Committee (2018: para. 143, 168) report noted: *‘In too many areas, the police are the only emergency service for those in crisis... the police service is playing an increasing role in managing vulnerability and risk across public services, and many individuals have complex needs which cross organisational boundaries’*. The Conservative Government’s commitment, announced in 2019, to recruit 20,000 new police officers by 2023 was, in part, an acknowledgement that the decline in police numbers across the previous decade had coincided with an increase in complexity and volume of demand on the police service.

Consequently, the latest resourcing of the police has placed them centre-stage in community safety partnerships, given the absence of similar levels of uplift across other public and voluntary sector services. In this light, tackling vulnerability through early intervention and partnership working has emerged as a key theme in contemporary community safety – both in the UK and beyond (Bartkowiak-Théron and Asquith 2012). As an organising framework, the focus on vulnerability both within policing and across urban safety partnerships has simultaneously destabilised existing preventive infrastructures and breathed new life into cross-organisational collaborations. It has done the former by re-centring the police as the focal point of interventions and has advanced the latter by challenging the traditional bifurcation of ‘victim’ and ‘offender’. Instead it serves to highlight those people whose vulnerability derives from their peripheral, adversarial or problematic relationship with the police as an institution – namely those whose who, due to their social disadvantage, marginalisation and deviant or transgressive lifestyles, are the traditional ‘objects’ of police attention. Furthermore, it draws attention to interconnections, divergences and interdependencies between diverse public services and the complex trajectories that people traverse through service provision. Unlike the incident focus of criminal justice responses to crime, vulnerabilities are seen as multifaceted, relational, interdependent and cumulative.

In delivering inter-agency approaches, novel multi-professional collaborations, processes and teams dedicated to particular vulnerabilities have been established. This includes: Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) for information sharing in relation to high risk domestic abuse cases; Local Safeguarding Children Boards responsible for overseeing and coordinating a multi-agency response to child sexual abuse and exploitation; County Lines taskforces aimed at tackling drugs markets and protecting children and vulnerable adults who are often exploited by gangs into selling or moving drugs; and street triage services in the context of policing mental health.

One of the most significant examples of police-led inter-agency collaboration has been the Violence Reduction Units (VRUs). Inspired by Scottish developments, VRUs were established in England and Wales from 2018, in the light of public and political concerns around knife crime and as part of the Government's Serious Violence Strategy.<sup>5</sup> The Scottish experience dated back to 2005, when in response to Glasgow's reputation for gang violence and knife crime (Fraser 2015), the (then) Strathclyde Police force set up a VRU with the specific aim of reducing the levels of knife crime and homicide. Initially focused on enforcement, over time it broadened to a whole-system public health approach that incorporated both enforcement and preventive interventions at individual, neighbourhood and societal levels. The apparent success of the approach was evidenced by a drop of 52 per cent in police recorded crime statistics for non-sexual violent crime in Scotland in the decade from 2006/7 (Scottish Government 2016). While it is less clear precisely which interventions triggered these reductions in the very specific Scottish (largely Glasgow) context, the VRU model was transferred to areas across England and Wales, bringing together local partners to share information to identify vulnerable children and adults at risk. VRUs now constitute a major infrastructure in driving collaborative preventive work, drawing on a public health approach to violence reduction (Christmas and Srivastava 2019).

Problematically, however, the contemporary 'vulnerability *zeitgeist*' (Brown 2015) has also drawn the police further into areas of social provision, care services and early intervention rather than decentred the police from prevention (as was the aim of both the inter-departmental circular of 1984 and the Morgan Report, see above). It also provides greater access by the police to other public services data and potentially affords the rationing of scarce services (in a context of austerity) on the basis of judgement of who is more deserving. Moreover, by further blurring the boundaries of care and control, the focus on vulnerability can serve to further stigmatise certain socially disadvantaged groups and render them more, rather than less, the objects of control.

## Contrasting European Paths to Urban Security

Having outlined some of the key features of policy and research developments that have informed the British experience in terms of its main (internal) features and recurring fault-lines, we now highlight some of the contrasting (external) European developments and institutional arrangements accumulated over the same period. The aim here is to showcase different responses to similar societal problems, rather than to provide a comprehensive account of diversity across jurisdictions (see Crawford 2009a; Selmini 2010) or to identify a common or dominant European approach. As such, the themes we identify provide insights into 'paths not taken', to better understand the specificities of British developments and some of the intractable challenges that continue to structure the field.

A dominant feature across continental Europe has been the focus on the city or regional level and the urban security framing to contemporary developments. This has been promoted by the European Commission and other European institutions. Through their aim of sharing crime prevention knowledge and practices, pan-European institutions like the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) sponsored by the EU and the looser European

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<sup>5</sup> In March 2019, the Home Secretary announced £100 million Serious Violence Fund to help tackle serious violence, of which, £63.4 million was allocated to 18 police force areas worst affected.

Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)<sup>6</sup> have served inevitably (although not always deliberately) to harmonise approaches. While across Europe there exists a considerable degree of convergence toward a more integrated approach to urban security, nonetheless obdurate legal, political and cultural factors significantly shape how national developments play out and, significantly, how these are realised across cities and neighbourhoods within countries. In sum, while similarities may have become more evident over time, country-to-country and city-to-city differences remain enduring features of urban security practices as illustrated below.

## Actors, Stakeholders, Policy and the Political Landscape

### Relations between national and local/regional policies and strategies

Despite globalisation, 'place' and context have become more, not less, important. Global forces and the salience of locality have become increasingly mutually interdependent. The cross-jurisdictional nature of some contemporary criminality and security risks – be it modern slavery, people trafficking, extremist violence or organised crime – demand effective cross-border cooperation and joined up working. In this light, the question of ownership of crime prevention has become a vexed one. Differing constitutional arrangements across European jurisdictions – centralised, federal and devolved administrations – have resulted in a multiplicity of approaches to resolving this question. The evidence suggests, however, that a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to crime prevention as urban security is often undermined by a lack of clarity as to both ownership and leadership, especially regarding responsibilities for coordinating activity to ensure that strategic aims are delivered (Crawford and Cunningham 2015; UN Habitat 2017). There is evidence of tensions between national and municipal authorities in respect of jurisdiction, competencies and responsibilities, as well as conflicts – 'turf wars' - between central government departments operating in isolation. Given the breadth of their competencies and their role as local anchor institutions, city and municipal authorities have often played a vital role in harnessing coalitions for change across multiple sectors and stakeholders. They also afford the possibility – not always realised in practice - to break free from siloed governmental thinking and inter-departmental rivalries. Hence, the relative constitutional competencies and responsibilities of municipal authorities in different jurisdictions have significantly influenced the development of urban security. Where municipal authorities are able to take a strong lead in coordinating services – notably where this is brought together under the direction of the Mayor, for example – cities have been able to develop particular trajectories of development and innovation.<sup>7</sup>

In Germany, the leadership role has come much more clearly from the level of the Federal Länder, and in Italy regional administrations have played a more central role, reflecting the greater responsibility and competency that they have. Contrastingly, it is noticeable how Nordic countries have invested significantly in the development of key national infrastructures responsible for coordinating and promoting crime prevention. For example,

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<sup>6</sup> Established in 1987, EFUS serves as a city-to-city network of nearly 250 member cities and regions from 15 countries that combines local authorities and law enforcement agencies in knowledge sharing and practice learning.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, the city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands has developed a distinctive approach to integrated urban security with its Safety Index and City Marines as prominent features of problem-based design processes, in part due to the leadership of the Mayor (Lub and de Leeuw 2017; Crawford et al. 2022: 120-1).

Sweden established a National Crime Prevention Council (Brå) as early as 1975 (the first in the world), as a leading focus for research and development, as well as collating official statistics and monitoring and evaluating reforms. Sweden also developed an early national strategy, which sought to integrate relevant policy domains with a focus on planning, implementation and resources. In 1996, the Swedish Government published its national crime prevention programme entitled *Our Collective Responsibility* (National Council for Crime Prevention 1997: 59). It sought to pave the way for long-term, lasting crime prevention work in every sector of society, largely by coordinating the government efforts across policy domains nationally, and also at the regional and local levels. It also fostered greater cooperation between the (national) Swedish Police Authority and the municipalities. A central rationale for the national leadership of crime prevention was a strong belief in a welfarist – state driven - approach to coordination and delivery, which resonated throughout the early strategy and remains evident today. The current Swedish strategy declares:

*‘Welfare policy is fundamental to combating the causes of crime... Combating the fundamental causes of crime is largely about creating good welfare for all. This is partly a question of financial security, but also about fairly distributing chances in life and ensuring that people are able to choose their path at different phases of life on equal terms.’* (Swedish Ministry of Justice 2016/17: 6)

Clear national leadership can foster national level partnerships in those industries and sectors where crime concerns are highest, and ensure these partnerships are sustained and effective, with their own preventative strategies. To strengthen this role the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, more recently has been required to submit annual reports to the Government with a responsibility not only to provide an account of national coordination, but also an overarching explanation of the crime prevention work otherwise carried out at local and regional levels. Additionally, in 2018, the Swedish Government set up the Swedish Centre for Preventing Violent Extremism under the auspices of the Council to provide national leadership in this field of prevention.

By contrast, the UK has prioritised the local dimensions of crime prevention and community safety, in part reflecting the localised resources and accountability structures that exist within policing and criminal justice. Ironically, the Westminster government used the national lever of legislation to impose a statutory duty on police and local authorities to collaborate in the delivery of community safety strategies in England and Wales - a non-statutory regime has persisted in Scotland. Yet, as the recent *Strategic Review of Policing* conducted by the Police Foundation (2022: 62) concluded: ‘The core challenge in making a shift to a more preventative approach to public safety is to make sure that there is clear ownership of the problem at all levels’. Given the long-standing lack of strategic coordination at the national level, it proposed both a national cross-departmental strategy for crime prevention – to mobilise and join up work across government – and the establishment of a Crime Prevention Agency, as a new non-departmental public body to serve as a flagship that would have ownership of crime and harm prevention nationally.

### Approaches to Prevention

Here we provide some prominent examples of how divergent national approaches to crime prevention strategies significantly reflect the political preferences and cultural differences between British and European contexts. This is most acutely seen in the relative balance between situational and social approaches and the emphasis accorded to universal services

and primary prevention, as opposed to the provision of interventions targeted at risk factors through secondary prevention.

#### Situational and Social Crime Prevention

In contrast to the prevalent emphasis on situational crime prevention and environmental design in the UK - developments in many other European countries have focused more on social and community-based crime prevention. For example, the French approach, pioneered by Bonnemaïson's (1982) landmark report,<sup>8</sup> rejected a narrow situational approach targeting proximal features and opportunities, preferring inclusionary strategies targeted at alienated and marginalised young people and more distal, causal factors (Ekblom 2011).

In the UK, one dominant expression of situational approaches embraced by policy-makers took the form of CCTV surveillance as a deterrence. It is estimated that in the mid-1990s in England some 78 per cent of the Home Office's crime prevention budget was being spent on CCTV systems alone (Koch 1998). While these surveillance systems continued to expand into the new millennium their expansion waned thereafter. By 2013, the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) estimated there were between 4 and 5.9 million cameras in the UK (BSIA 2013), including some 750,000 in 'sensitive locations' such as schools, hospitals and care homes, but just 1 in 70 of all CCTV systems were publicly owned. More recent figures suggest approximately 5.2 million CCTV cameras nationwide (BSIA 2020). This preoccupation with expanding CCTV systems was not evidenced across Europe where legal and cultural obstacles often held back such technological fervour. By contrast, human forms of surveillance and regulation – such as the Dutch *Stadswachten* 'city wardens' (Van Dijk and De Waard 2009) and French mentoring and mediation schemes (De Maillard and Germain 2012) – were preferred.

Over the decades situational approaches in the UK moved on from an initial focus on target-hardening and 'bars, bolts and barriers' (Pease 2002: 952) to encompass protective and total surveillance systems. Technological advances have meant that it is now possible that every phone call, text and post on social media can be recorded, monitored, and scrutinised by national authorities. In the UK, there appears to be a relative lack of popular concern regarding the use of such invasive surveillance measures, perhaps betraying the extent to which adaptive, preventive practice has been normalised and absorbed into the fabric of everyday life. Ironically, the British were keen to defend their interests against the spectre of the intrusive surveillance state in the nineteenth century in contrast to their French counterparts, however today the situation appears to have reversed. In France, legal restrictions and public sentiments are more sensitive to the intrusions of surveillance, not only limiting the use of cameras, but other technological advances such as facial recognition and the use of drones. A marked fall in the costs of technology has seen technological solutions increasingly adopted by private citizens, installing CCTV in their homes, adding motion-sensor and infra-red lighting equipment around private spaces, and even adding monitoring devices to cars, sometimes initiated by insurance companies. In these ways, risk-

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<sup>8</sup> The report outlined a decidedly social approach to crime as a counter-narrative to the traditional preoccupation with punitive responses to crime and disorder in France. Arising from a Committee of Mayors chaired by Gilbert Bonnemaïson, the report - *Face à la délinquance: prévention, répression, solidarité* (which loosely translates to 'Opposing Crime: prevention, repression, solidarity') – set the agenda for subsequent policy developments and prevention programmes for many years and remains a key reference point throughout France and beyond (Wyvekens 2009).



management has been dispersed and individuals have to some extent taken responsibility for their own crime protection, considered an example of common-sense and risk-averse behaviour which might be adopted by all (O'Malley 1992).

### Primary and Secondary Prevention

Targeted interventions focused on risk factors are largely justified in terms of effectiveness, as they target those people/factors most likely to effect change, reducing the chances of 'false positives', and cost efficiencies as they target need in more limited ways, reducing costs. Hence, the history of the UK Sure Start programme, originally conceived in more universalist language, unencumbered by crime or behavioural considerations, saw over time a greater targeting around small numbers of problematic families. Launched in 1998, Sure Start was an ambitious, national early intervention programme working with children under 4 years old and their families. Through structured, long-term support, it sought to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, school failure, social exclusion and delinquency. The programme was intended to deliver 250 local Sure Start centres and a visit from an outreach worker for every mother in Sure Start areas (Melhuish et al. 2010).<sup>9</sup> From 2010, the Sure Start programme was pared back to target 'the neediest families' (HM Government 2010: 19), in part, driven by costs and the need to evidence results. From a research perspective, it is obviously easier to isolate and identify tangible outcomes of targeted, risk-focused approaches.

Targeted prevention initiatives, however, raise concerns about the stigmatising potential and labelling implications of associating specific people or places with crime. In some countries, there are strong cultural and political presumptions in favour of universal preventive services for young people – notably in the Nordic countries and the universalistic principles that inform French legal culture. Moreover, services with preventive implications are often more readily justified on the basis of a child's existing educational or social needs and problems, rather than future risks of criminality and/or premised on the understanding that most young people grow out of crime. This is reflected in the very different approaches to youth justice – in the balance between care (welfare) and control (punishment) – that exists across Europe; exemplified in differences in the age of criminal responsibility across jurisdictions, amongst other factors. For similar reasons, many youth service practitioners and some governments prefer universal prevention programmes to targeted ones, despite their obvious resource implications.

While preferences for universal provision or targeted interventions are not absolute or dichotomous, in that most countries operate with a mix of both, there are significant differences in the predominance of one or other approach in different countries, notably with regard to young people. One evident feature that contrast many European countries with their North American and British (especially English) counterparts is the strong focus on non-intervention, diversion and decriminalisation in responses to crime and anti-social behaviour in children and young people. Informed by research there has been a greater awareness of the harmful effects of criminal justice responses and interactions with police and penal institutions, as well as interventions that operate in the shadow of criminal

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<sup>9</sup> Applying primarily in England, slightly different variations existed across the devolved administrations of the UK. The national evaluation of Sure Start suffered challenges of programme diversity in that there were not several hundred programmes delivering one intervention, but several hundred unique interventions. Rutter (2006) provides an independent review of early findings of the evaluation work and a critique of the methodology.



justice, particularly for young people, which has encouraged forms of prevention through diversion (McAra and McVie 2010). Allied to this has been a growing international emphasis on the rights of children and young people and a concern with ensuring standards and safeguards in support of those rights. Additionally, the last decades have seen greater resort to informal or alternative means of processing conflicts outside of the frame of criminal justice, through restorative responses, for example. While these can serve to blur distinctions between civil and criminal - informal and formal - justice and 'widen the net' of intervention in young people's lives, they can also serve preventive ends by diverting young people from criminalisation (Crawford and Newburn 2003).

## Recurring Challenges in Urban Security

In light of the above brief comparative discussion, we now consider a number of recurring challenges that have featured across the last 30-40 years of development and have informed the experiences of different countries (albeit in somewhat distinctive ways) in relation to both the growth of international evidence base and the institutionalisation of crime prevention and urban security. In particular, we focus on the issue of institutional responsibility for prevention - given the intrinsic inter-organisational dimensions of partnership working - and the vexed relations between the knowledge base, on the one hand, and policy and practice, on the other.

### Assessing Learning from Research in the UK and Europe

A notable feature of the period since the mid-1990s has seen the significant decline in aggregate crime rates – notably in traditional offences - and the fact that this is mirrored across jurisdictions and therefore not country-specific in terms of causes. Prevention has played a significant role in the decrease in aggregate crime rates in relation to traditional property and public crimes (Farrell *et al.* 2011). Despite this apparent 'success', crime prevention still remains largely under-resourced and poorly implemented as compared to the resources and investment in the systems of law enforcement, prosecution and punishment. Crime prevention suffers problems associated with demonstrating success and appealing to political timelines and electoral necessities. It is both difficult to evaluate a non-event (except in so far as comparisons can be drawn with a control sample that has not benefited from the intervention) and difficult to communicate the success of prevention, that is, something that did not happen. As Ekblom noted in interview: *'In urban security interventions, innovation and risk-taking is necessary, which collides with the risk aversion of our political culture'* (Paul Ekblom, 2021). Moreover, the future-oriented nature of crime prevention and security problems means they are not static or constant, but rather in perpetual flux as problems innovate and evolve in response to social and technological change. Despite the recognition that the levers of crime and prevention lie outside of the criminal justice system and punitive approaches, criminal justice responses continue to dominate policy and political discourse and, consequently, investments in resources. Waller in interview asserted: *'Politicians talk about prevention but do not do it, in part because they are not familiar with the evidence and in part because they are overly influenced by the special interests of police, lawyers and prisons'* (Irvin Waller, 2021).

In contrast to the overall decline in levels of crime, there is growing evidence of a concentration of victimisation and offending amongst certain groups in the population and within certain (geographical) areas and neighbourhoods, in ways that compound

disadvantages. While these trends express themselves differently across (and within) European countries there are common patterns. The unequal distribution and impacts of crime, risk and vulnerability have thus become in some instances more marked and entrenched, rather than less so. The shift and migration of crime from physical environments to cyberspace also presents major new challenges. Not only are potential victims more abundant given the reach of the internet, but additionally the global (non-territorial) reach of cyberspace has made regulation, prevention and enforcement more challenging. Policing and state interventions remain decidedly bounded to geography and often constrained by jurisdictional boundaries. Moreover, the role of (powerful) commercial interests renders public actors relatively impotent as sole regulatory forces acting alone. Looking back over the last 30-40 years of research and practice, we can identify a number of key trends where accumulated learning and innovation have engendered progress, as well as some recurring – unresolved – tensions and barriers.

### The Problem of Responsibility and the Dynamics of Partnership working

It has long been recognised that in its design and implementation crime prevention and urban security demand collaboration through multi-stakeholder responses and the police alone cannot prevent crime. However, delivering effective problem-oriented partnerships remains decidedly problematic (Berry et al. 2011; Bullock et al. 2022). Enduring challenges pertain to the pursuit of multi-stakeholder urban security networks through horizontal exchanges of shared information, knowledge, resources or other transactions that cut across vertical *intra*-organisational priorities, and which pay scant regard to the task of managing *inter*-organisational relations.

### Data Sharing

Given the siloed nature of data and the different processes through which data are defined, collected and stored – as well as the variable quality of administrative data – the issue of data sharing and information exchange sits at the heart of community safety partnerships. Information exchange itself can be a source of conflict particularly in the context of crime control where information sharing is governed by complex rules and laws relating to sensitive data and privacy. Furthermore, there are problems of the non-interoperability of data across different organisational systems for data management. Nonetheless, good quality data enable the better understanding of the nature and distribution of local crime and disorder related problems, establish local problem profiles and produce a local strategy specifically aimed at preventing the problems. As Laycock noted in interview: *"If you take the view that you're trying to prevent crime on a problem-solving basis, then you need to be very clear on what the problem is, and that means you need data"* (Gloria Laycock, 2021). Quality data also enable more effective multi-stakeholder partnership working by helping to identify the roles and responsibilities that different actors can play in responding to given problems and delivering a joined-up approach (see McVie and Matthews, this volume).

Despite the promise of greater data sharing for crime prevention purposes enabled by s.115 of the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, data sharing remains one of the most intractable and contentious aspects of urban safety practice. Section 115 conferred a power to disclose information to a 'relevant authority' on any person who would not otherwise have such a power, where the disclosure is necessary or expedient for the purposes of any provision of

the Act.<sup>10</sup> Yet across the years, high profile and tragic cases have exposed deep faults in preventing harm and safeguarding vulnerable people - children in particular. In various reviews and enquires into tragedies and scandals - from Victoria Climbié through Fiona Pilkington to Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham - much of the blame and the identified cause of failure has been placed at the door of inadequate inter-organisational coordination, communications, information sharing and data exchange. A pervasive and deeply ingrained reluctance to share information between agencies persists, informed by technological, legal, organisational and cultural barriers to data exchange. Yet, despite government guidance encouraging information sharing between organisations particularly relating to child protection, the possible benefits of data linkage and connected public sector data sets for the purpose of identifying risk factors and protective factors across service providers to enable early intervention, still remains an elusive goal.

One of the practical ways of overcoming some problems about data sharing has been through the establishment of co-located multi-disciplinary teams, where interpersonal trust and denser reciprocal relations become key lubricants in fostering data sharing (Crawford and L'Hoiry 2017: 649). While information exchange through interpersonal relations, fluid team exchanges and informal working practices can provide a valuable basis for communication and negotiation, so too, it can afford opportunities that endanger important confidentiality and might sometimes constitute threats to privacy or civil liberties. Hence, balanced information exchange also demands mutual understanding of the limits and legal constraints in which the sharing of sensitive data can be done ethically.

Prompted by the increase in serious violent crime (from around 2014) and reflecting the intractable nature of barriers to inter-organisational data sharing, in England and Wales the government has introduced the new Serious Violence Duty, in the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022*. This will require local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Importantly, the legislation grants these authorities the power to share data and information with each other for the purpose of preventing and reducing serious violence.<sup>11</sup> The definition of violence for the purpose of the duty explicitly includes domestic abuse and sexual violence. Nonetheless, it is telling that a quarter of a century after the 1998 Act, despite the digitalisation of much social life and the volume, variety and velocity of 'big data', government still feels it necessary to impose another statutory duty to require services to collaborate given the organisational barriers and cultural obstacles that persist.

### The Dissonance between Research, Policy and Practice

Generally, crime prevention as urban security practices, remain poorly informed by the research evidence base. All too often, strategies suffer from a combination of theory failure, implementation failure or methodological failure. They fail to clarify the theories of change that are intended to inform their desired beneficial outcomes, are inadequately or inappropriately implemented and seldom involve rigorous evaluation, such that wider

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<sup>10</sup> The requirements of the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality and the *Data Protection Act 2018* still apply.

<sup>11</sup> It excludes patient information. Additionally, health or social care authorities cannot share personal information under the data sharing provisions in respect of the duty.

lessons might be learned (Tompson *et al.* 2021). Forty years of research in crime prevention and urban security tells us that nothing works everywhere but that quite a few things work somewhere (Sidebottom and Tilley 2021; Crawford *et al.* 2022). Context matters – configured in time and space – in the causation of crime and insecurity. Crime prevention and urban security problems are complex and informed by a tangle of interacting causes and interdependencies, which differ across problems and contexts. There has been a tendency to search for universal solutions under the banner of ‘what works’, which has drawn attention away from the situated and contextualised features of local places, with less regard to which groups of people benefit from particular interventions or design features in a particular place/situation at a specific time.

One of the central challenges has been the translation and application of the growing evidence base into policy and practice. Much of this can be put down to policy-makers’ preferences and ideologies that do not necessarily align with research findings, political time horizons that are short-term and reactive, and resistant organisational cultures that are unreceptive to change and distort implementation. Nonetheless, there are also issues that reside within the research knowledge base itself. Simply put, most of the research is written by researchers for other researchers, in that it tends to focus on exploring certain narrow questions, often to the exclusion of wider contextual factors of the kinds that are of particular interest and value to both policy-makers, practitioners and citizens (Crawford *et al.* 2022).

Much of the research literature has over-estimated the value of methodological rigour and a rigid hierarchy of evidence in its quest to understand ‘what works’, with insufficient regard to the relational and process-based mechanisms that foster change. Much of the evidence base has been influenced by medicine and healthcare research. It posits a clear hierarchy of knowledge informed by a ranking of methodologies with randomised controlled trials (RCTs) at its apex. One of the drawbacks is that while RCTs provide strong internal validity, they do not tell us much about whether we could replicate a given intervention in another context. This focus on internal validity also encourages studies of single mechanisms with hypothesised mono-causes as the relationships are easier to determine than social complexity and interdependencies. Such contextual factors, however, may be central to a programme’s execution, effectiveness and impact. By narrowing the frame of relevance, studies of single mechanisms also tend to ignore the role played by practitioners in giving life to interventions and the knowledge that they bring to the resultant effectiveness of interventions. This approach also informs a rather unhelpful language and cataloguing of ‘what works’, as if interventions ‘work’ free of context.

In building the accumulated evidence base, the quest for methodological rigour and internal validity has often come at the expense of external validity and a more complex understanding of ‘what works where, for whom and under what conditions’, as well as a more sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of implementation and context. In interview, Ekblom noted:

*‘Preventive interventions have to be intelligently customised to problem and context; success stories cannot simply be copied cookbook-fashion. Intelligent replication requires a process that customises action to problem and context. In this respect, replication will always involve some degree of innovation, trial, feedback and adjustment, whether minor or major. This in turn places requirements on the kind and format of knowledge that security practitioners possess, and the institutional context of implementation.’ (Paul Ekblom, 2021)*

Given the limitations of RCTs and quasi-experimental designs, greater methodological pluralism is perhaps what is needed for such tasks. Building upon these insights, recent efforts have been given to developing ways to combine discussions of measurement effects and their size together with other dimensions of importance to practitioners and that enable us to assess the quality and applicability of evaluation evidence. One notable example has been the EMMIE scale (Johnson *et al.* 2015), which seeks to provide evidence that equips policy-makers and practitioners with actionable knowledge in a format that helps users to access and understand the evidence quickly.

## Conclusion

After forty years of experimentation and learning from research, there is now a rich evidence base demonstrating the societal benefits that derive from ‘up-stream’ prevention and early intervention. It is evidently more effective to anticipate harm and pre-empt criminal opportunities by effecting social, physical and technological change than responding to problems once they manifest themselves or by retrofitting solutions after the event. Yet the promise of a sustainable turn to prevention in the field of crime and harm reduction remains stubbornly unfulfilled (Waller 2019). Despite the evidence that prevention has played a role in reducing aggregate crime rates across many and diverse jurisdictions, the preoccupation with police, prosecution and punishment maintains a pervasive hold over the political consciousness, legal mind-set and cultural sensibilities. However, as decades of criminological research testify, the effects of research on policy and practice are not always benign. Knowledge does not simply solve governance problems but can also create new ones.

In delivering problem-based preventive strategies, political leadership, public trust and institutional commitment, appropriate levels of resources and buy-in from relevant stakeholders, are all vital to the success of interventions. Demonstration projects backed by rigorous research evaluations may provide interesting and valuable insights and learning but will result in modest enduring change if they are not embedded within infrastructures that align with cultural values, underpinned by sustainable funding and supported by long-term organisational commitments. For many of the reasons outlined in this chapter, implementation failure and the incapacity to mainstream evidence-based practices remain persistent blockages. The promising potential of the ‘early years’ and the obdurate barriers encountered over the subsequent years highlight the need to focus on the tasks of effecting sustainable change. In the face of contemporary crime and security challenges, increasingly diverse urban populations and growing social polarisation, there is now as great a need as ever for renewed policy and public commitment to prevention that combines the knowledge, expertise and insights of diverse actors. The mounting levels of fraud and cyber-crime, as well as the interdependencies of diverse forms of vulnerability, harm and disadvantage – exposed so sharply during the Covid pandemic – will require governments (whether local or national) to explore new strategies to advance prevention alongside radically different models of governance and service delivery.

## Suggested Further Reading

The intersection between crime prevention, community safety and urban security is a large field that benefits from multi-disciplinary insights from psychology, sociology, law, philosophy, history, social policy, urban studies and political science. From within criminology, Tilley's (2009) *Crime Prevention* remains a valuable source of understanding, notably in outlining the theory of situational and social crime prevention techniques while situating these within a broader theoretical backdrop. Evans offers a critical exploration of the field in the UK in *Crime Prevention: A Critical Introduction* (2011), while Tilley and Sidebottom's *Handbook of Crime Prevention and Community Safety* (2017) brings together essays from many key contributors to theory and practice. In their book *Preventive Justice* (2014), Ashworth and Zedner provide an excellent, historically-informed analysis of the increasing advance of preventive logics, powers and tools within criminal justice. Zedner also explores the impact and implications of security for criminology in her short book *Security* (2009). Crawford's edited collection *Crime Prevention Policies in Comparative Perspective* (2009) brings together international contributions that explore similarities and differences in the application of crime prevention policies and urban security practices. The 'what works' literature is well-covered in Sherman and colleagues' *Evidence-Based Crime Prevention* (2002).

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