1

Introduction

Paul Ekblom

IN 2005 RON CLARKE AND GRAEME NEWMAN EDITED VOLUME 18 in this series, *Designing Out Crime from Products and Systems*. That volume reported on the fruits of a wave of mainly research-based activity, much of which had occurred under enlightened initiatives of the UK government, associated with the national Crime Reduction Programme (1998–2003) and particularly encouraged and supported by Ken Pease (see, e.g., 2001).

Sadly, that enlightenment was short lived, as Pease notes in the Foreword, and a fallow period followed. Design against crime (DAC) in the built environment, as opposed to that of products, continued to progress. However, recently it has severely faltered in the United Kingdom with a wave of retirements of expert police design advisers, some of which were enforced departures due to severe cuts in public funding. Within the design world, which had been engaged by DAC activity, the drying up of funds led to a petering out of institutional interest. Within UK government research, interest largely ceased (and that meant, among other things, a temporary enforced end to my involvement with the field). The precipitating factor was a moral panic about street crime, the warning signs of which the government had ignored from its own statisticians. The response, cooked up in the COBRA (Cabinet Office Briefing Room) room at 10 Downing Street where all such national and political emergencies are handled, centered on a massive boost to police overtime.[1] This sucked funds away from other activities, including the final stage of the design against crime initiative—namely, take the message to industry. Among projects starved of funds were an interest in crime-free laptops, and crime-free mobile phones—theft of which was the main source of the

panic. Brits not only *do* irony better than our US cousins, but we *need to* because we often foolishly generate the reasons for that irony.

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

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

But hard-nosed evaluation evidence based on practical, realized interventions remains a vital follow-through to convince government, industry, buyers, and users. This volume contains both statements of evaluation principle and practice (Chapter 3), good examples of such evaluations with real products (Chapters 6 and 10), and indications of

the difficulties encountered in attempting them. Chapter 9 was in part a salvage exercise from the wreckage of an ambitious planned research, design, and evaluate project of table clips to prevent handbag theft in bars. This went wrong because, during the course of the project, the host bar company (along with many others) encountered the financial crisis of 2008 and terminated its involvement in the evaluation, after some 2,000 clips had been manufactured and some 14 test bars and 13 control bars had been carefully selected and observations undertaken.

Whatever the precise reasons for that action (see Ekblom in press), it is clear that the system of incentivization for design against crime remains inadequate, as Pease emphasizes in the Foreword. The UK Home Office's in-house economists undertook an excellent study of incentivization of crime reduction behavior in the civil world in general, with a case study of design against crime.[4] But while the intellect was willing, the finance and political will were weak and, apart from a passing interest in the "polluter pays" approach to making companies responsible for the crime externalities of their products that led to various significant changes in cell phone service design, attention to the approach once again diminished; this time perhaps as part of a general fading out of interest in crime prevention.[5]

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

Inherent rather than government-manufactured self-interest can sometimes motivate companies to adopt designs of products that are secure or securing (in the terminology of Chapter 2). Securing products incorporate a protective function within a design that serves other, more dominant purposes. In this vein Chapter 8 focuses on packaging, which

apart from its many other purposes may prevent counterfeiting. Good to know if you have a headache or if you fly on a plane where vital parts have been replaced by spares during the course of its working life.

Design itself is changing. Notorious to outsiders for spawning new fashion and radical, sweeping manifestos, design has become variously user centered, participatory (codesign), socially responsible, and inclusive. Teaching and learning is part of this and, despite earlier suspicions, students seem to engage enthusiastically with the crime topic.[6] Design-related PhDs are currently in progress. Inclusivity is illustrated in Chapter 10, which addresses security needs of older shoppers, but is also relevant when designers seek to ensure that their locks, antitamper caps, and so forth do not form an annoying or even insuperable obstacle for weak or arthritic fingers. Intensive stakeholder analysis and careful addressing of diverse requirements and constraints are illustrated in Chapter 7 (counterterrorism) and Chapter 9 (handbag theft). At the Design Against Crime Research Centre, Adam Thorpe is developing a broader context for addressing crime and much more; namely, socially responsive design that "takes as its primary driver social issues, its main consideration social impact, and its main objective social change."[7]

Design against crime methodology is also under development and features in several chapters, ranging from explicit design against crime rationales and specifications (Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 9), to proofing and testing (Chapter 4) and evaluation (Chapters 3, 6, 10), and the continued evolution of guidance materials, for example from the UK Design Council, the Design Against Crime Research Centre, and now even the POP (problem-oriented policing) guide series.[8] Chapter 7 critically explores links between processes within crime prevention such as SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) and CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design), and design processes. Chapter 11 continues to mine the seminal Hot Products risk factors approach introduced by Clarke (1999), now a major pillar of design against crime (leading for example, to the work described in Chapter 4) and indeed maintains the tradition of spectacular acronyms (AT CUT PRICES) in addressing special issues raised by fast-moving consumer items.

Design against crime is very much a practical, doing, making, testing, and improving activity. But as Schön (1995) maintains, practice should be reflective. That reflectiveness should moreover be collective. Capturing, articulating, and refining knowledge of design against crime (as in this volume as a whole and in Chapter 2 in particular) is not an exercise in stamp collecting. It plays an important role in building inno-

vative capacity among designers for designing against crime (Arts and Humanities Research Council 2008). Such capacity is a strategic necessity for several reasons.

First, both crime prevention and design each cover extremely diverse problems and solutions. Crime and related problems range widely from theft of luggage at airports to graffiti to violent assault; and crime prevention from physical methods involving locks and bolts to social ones involving guardianship, to combinations of both such as youth shelters where young people may safely hang out without conflicting with other users of public space. Design addresses products, places, information, procedures, and systems and extends into social innovation; it draws on graphical, material, industrial, and communication skills and connects with entrepreneurship and marketing. Such diversity makes for the excitement and the challenge of the design against crime field but, by the same token, can lead toward confusion for practitioners and researchers of either discipline.

Second, crime prevention has to be customized to context to succeed (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Ekblom 2002, 2005a), meaning that the design effort does not just have to be made once (e.g., designing a universal alley gate to block burglars' access to the rear of homes), but adjusted or re-created many times over. It is therefore far more efficient to empower designers of all kinds and in all circumstances to undertake this work well than to maintain a centralized, scarce elite that keeps the expertise to itself. Indeed, there are significant benefits to so-called open innovation (Chesbrough 2003; Thorpe et al. 2009), though not so open that it empowers criminals.

Third, we live in a Heraclitean world of flux where new technology, social change, and offenders who are adaptive and innovative themselves render our store of what-works knowledge a wasting asset (Ekblom 1997, 1999, 2005a, 2011a). Developing innovative capacity to design against crime and then transferring it to designers in general is part of the core mission of the Design Against Crime Research Centre.[9]

Finally, a focus on capacity is especially important as a means of countering the tendency, in my experience, for crime prevention practitioners to equate design with designed end products to be operationally deployed rather than with the design process in which they should be participating with their unique perspectives and problem-specific knowledge. In this, I have personally made a rather interesting journey since I entered the design against crime world, from getting designers to "think thief" (Ekblom 1995, 1997) to getting more conventional

crime prevention practitioners in the police and elsewhere to "draw on design" (e.g., Ekblom 2011a, 2011b) in all their research, thinking, planning, development, and improvement of interventions.

Design against crime is increasingly a subject of interest in conventional criminological circles although, as Pease says in the Foreword, not always in a positive manner. But one positive indicator is the inclusion of a chapter on the subject, not just in the (slightly incestuous, it must be said) world of situational crime prevention and problem-oriented policing, but in a handbook of mainstream criminology (e.g., Ekblom 2012).

The most fundamental issue raised, perhaps is whether design against crime is evolving from a multidisciplinary field where crime scientists and criminologists and designers work alongside one another, intermittently sharing ideas and exchanging perspectives, toward a state of true interdisciplinarity where a new and integrated way of looking at research, theory, and practice emerges. I revisit this in Chapter 12.

Finally, it is worth recalling the main points that Clarke and Newman made in their editors' introduction of the 2005 volume on products and crime (pp. 2–6), with amendments to reflect the current state of play, where different, 6 years later:

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

Notes

1. Although other interventions were developed and studied; see Tilley et al. (2004).

2. See UK Design Council, www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/ security/design-out-crime/The-Alliance/ (accessed May 28, 2011).

3. See UK Design Council, www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/ security/design-out-crime/ (accessed May 28, 2011).

4. The National Archives, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ 20110220105210/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/changing-behaviour.html (accessed May 28, 2011).

5. See Ekblom (2008c); and European Forum on Urban Security, www .efus.eu/en/policies/national/united-kingdom/public/2021 (accessed May 22, 2011).

6. See, for example, Design Against Crime website, www.designagainst crime.com/project/students/ (accessed May 22, 2011).

7. From the Design Against Crime website, www.designagainstcrime.com/ methodology-resources/socially-responsive-design/ (accessed May 22, 2011).

8. See, respectively, UK Design Council, www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/challenges/security/design-out-crime/Design-out-crime-guide/ and www .designagainstcrime.com/about-us/contact-us/#; and COPS Guides No. 52 on Bicycle Theft and No. 60 on Personal Property in Cafes and Bars, www.pop center.org/problems/ (all accessed May 22, 2011).

9. See Design Against Crime website, www.designagainstcrime.com/ about-us/aims-philosophy/ (accessed May 28, 2011).