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Crime Prevention Networking and Community-based Prevention Management in Germany

Introduction

The article surveys the situation of crime prevention networking in Germany with a focus on the complementary structure of crime prevention on different levels (local, regional/state and national levels) and especially on the support by national bodies. The necessity for empirical data as a basis for rational crime law policy and for crime prevention strategies is emphasised, while instruments for the acquisition of information are explicated. Further, community-based prevention management is analysed and key recommendations are presented from a variety of aspects: analysis, structure, institutionalisation, multi-agency approach, cooperation, citizens-participation, long term concepts, evaluation and funding.

General facts about the population, political and governmental system

The following facts are chosen due to their relevance to the subject matter.

- Germany has a population of approximately 80 million including 7 million foreigners and is one of the most populated countries in all of Europe (230 people per square kilometre).
- The population is distributed unevenly: There are very large city-regions mostly in the western part, where towns and cities are so close together that there are no distinct boundaries between them. These densely populated regions contrast with very thinly populated rural areas.
- Nearly one-third of the population (about 25 million people) live in the 82 largest cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. The majority of people, however, live in small towns and villages: nearly 6.4 million people in

municipalities with a population of fewer than 2,000 and 50.5 million people in towns with a population between 2,000 and 100,000 people.

- The name “Federal Republic of Germany” itself denotes the country’s federal structure. The country consists of 16 states (*Länder*) with their own constitutions and power. The federal system has a long history and is not variable.
- Another principle has a long tradition: Local self-government, an expression of civic liberty. Self-government includes local transportation and road construction, electricity, water and gas supply, waste treatment and town planning, as well as the building and the maintenance of schools, theatres, museums, hospitals and sport facilities. Other local responsibilities include adult education and youth welfare. Local self-government and independence are bound to suffer if the municipalities are unable to finance their programs – a permanent subject of public debate.
- Internal Security in Germany is carried out by both the states and the federal government. The police are generally under the jurisdiction of the states. The police forces are responsible for ensuring public security/order and for the prevention and detection of crime.

According to the law, crime prevention is first and foremost the task of the police. In a broad sense it is a matter for all citizens, an aim for the whole society. The first link to the local level of crime prevention is that local self-government gives all citizens the most extensive opportunity to play their part and have some influence. The different communal structures in urban and rural areas and regions point to various problems and one could conclude that there are various models for successful crime prevention in Germany.

Theoretical background and development of communal crime prevention

Many German cities and municipalities have established committees during the last several years – nearly 2000 throughout the country. These committees are responsible for crime prevention on the municipal level. Communal crime prevention describes the efforts of municipal institutions and of the police to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Citizens are demanded to participate.

According to a criminology thesis, crime and disorder causes fear among citizens in a municipality and these citizens often go into social retreat. As a consequence, informal control (such as an active neighbourhood) breaks down and criminality spreads more or less unhindered.

The main aspect of this context is the fear of crime, which is caused mostly by a neglected public area (such as decaying buildings and institutions, drug abuse, beggars, graffiti or loitering youth) and less by personal experiences. The “broken windows approach” is evidenced by numerous inquiries of municipal citizens. As a consequence, the reduction of the fear of crime becomes an important aim

in crime preventive efforts. The feeling of security is mainly influenced in the municipality; hence the communal approach takes effect.

In other words: the feeling of security is an important aspect of quality of life for citizens and it influences local security policy. Therefore, the reduction of the fear of crime is a main target of crime preventive efforts especially on a local/municipal level.

Criminological research explains the meaning and necessity of the local approach: Criminality has a strong local reference. The site of crime and residence of the offenders (delinquent) are closely related to each other, in about 70% of all offences. The conditions for the development of local criminality can mainly be found on the local level. Therefore they can only be influenced by municipal preventive measures. This relationship becomes even more evident in the field of disorder phenomena.

Therefore, the following conclusions for the development of local crime prevention can be made:

- the approach of municipal prevention can be based upon the theoretical research,
- crime preventive measures enter into local problems,
- the approach of municipal prevention is more than just the support of bringing the police closer to the citizens. An integral social approach with a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors is also important and corresponds to the traditional self-government on the municipal level in Germany.

The conception of municipal crime prevention has been developing in Germany for the past 20 years and it is as a so-called sectional task part of municipal policy.

Actors of municipal crime prevention and organisation

The actors of municipal crime prevention are often organised in committees, but may have different names such as a preventive council, a round table or a security board. The integral-social orientation is given shape by the participation of different actors. The main aspect is the combination and linking of resources. Busy citizens and officials as well as experts are brought together to jointly consider the complexity of prevention programs and the multiplicity of reasons for crime. With continuous and institutionalised cooperation, a mutual understanding of all council participants grows and can end with a coordinated division of responsibility and labour. A questionnaire distributed to all German municipalities with more than 50 000 inhabitants shows the main groups that often participate in the municipal crime prevention councils: municipal officials, especially mayors, police, social organisations, justice, local businesses, schools, sports and other clubs, churches, universities, political parties, media/press and others.

Integrated Crime Prevention Structure in Germany

In Germany, an integrated network-structure on three levels, local, regional and national, is developing. The foundation German Forum for Crime Prevention (*Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention* – DFK) started its work in 2001 and represents the national level with a link to European cooperation. The National Service Centre of the Police (ProPK) has also been active since 1997. The national meeting of actors on each level and discipline is the German Congress for Crime Prevention (DPT) – an annual two day event. The regional level supports the communal activities with its own prevention councils, initiated within the last ten years. By coordinating a city-network, the German Forum is directly involved in municipal activities and has knowledge about the local problems and good practices.

The German Forum for Crime Prevention and its functions within the network

The programs, projects and events undertaken by the DFK so far, reflect the foundation's broad, collective and societal understanding of the issue of prevention and the DFK's claim for sustainability. Taking into account the experiences since the foundation's formation, the following prospective tasks for the DFK have been defined:

- **Networking and Cooperation**
Bringing together state and non-state actors in the field of crime prevention, as well as the most suitable prevention actors according to the individual aims and needs of a specific project.
- **Bundling**
Supporting and strengthening the different activities and their mutual use and thus increasing their total effects as well as further developing different prevention approaches by bringing together the various experts and institutions in the field.
- **Management and Transfer of Knowledge**
Initiating further practical work in the field of crime prevention and propagating "good"-practice examples as well as relevant scientific findings on a national and international level.
- **Public Relations**
Sensitising the public for the foundation's aims and objectives and thus working towards public commitment and participation in the field of crime prevention.

The DFK sets a high priority on the scientific consolidation of its work by consulting scientific advisers and expert opinions. The cooperation with the prevention councils of the federal states and the National Service Center of the

Police (*Programm Polizeiliche Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes – ProPK*) is very advantageous for crime prevention in Germany. The cooperation will be further developed to achieve a closer coordination of principal issues. Expert circles as well as the general public increasingly recognise the DFK as the national forum for issues of crime prevention.

The following factors account for this status:

- the DFK's role as a cooperating partner of the German Congress of Crime Prevention "Deutscher Präventionstag",
- the publication of its own journal "forum kriminalprävention" and periodical newsletters,
- the foundation's web presence at www.kriminalpraevention.de,
- the DFK's active engagement in the national and international exchange of information and experience via the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) and the European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS).

The expectations of a continuous, qualified and reliable cooperation with the DFK are generally increasing according to the foundation's established status. In order to meet these expectations, as well as fulfilling its mission of acting as a strong national forum in the field of crime prevention, the DFK works strongly on strengthening its personal and financial resources.

Empirical basis for a rational criminal law policy

Moreover, a rational criminal law policy requires a solid empirical scientific basis that must encompass findings, among others, regarding the current societal development and developments in internal security and prevention, the activities of criminal prosecution and penalty enforcement authorities as well as the consequences of prosecution measures and criminal law sanctions.

Those responsible for crime and criminal law policy acquire the information they require for their activities from a variety of sources. Statistical data on crime and for the administration of criminal justice provide information on the status and development of registered crimes, on criminal prosecutions and on some aspects of penalty enforcement and imprisonment. The Federal Central Register of Criminal Offenses (*Bundeszentralregister*), in which court penalties and decisions of the public prosecution offices in the case of offenses by juveniles are registered, can be used to examine repeated sentencing after criminal law sanctioning. Scientific criminological research addresses individual questions of criminality, criminal prosecution, penalty enforcement, imprisonment and aspects of crime prevention. Examinations of the undetected crime rate, which primarily provide information on crimes that have not been reported and contribute to the better interpretation of the results of crime and criminal justice administration statistics, should be especially emphasized here. A new reporting instrument in the Federal Republic of Germany is the *Periodical Report on Crime and Crime Control in Germany* (published twice in 2003 and 2006) which enables a survey of

statistical and scientific knowledge and which is the primary focus of this contribution. For the sake of completeness, numerous information sources from the community, particularly from non-governmental organizations and governmental offices for criminal prosecution, penalty enforcement and imprisonment, must be mentioned, along with other administrative offices that assist in criminal law sanctioning or the activities of which are significant for crime prevention.

- Police Criminal Statistics

The police criminal statistics (PCS) encompass crimes and misdemeanors handled by the police, including attempts that carry a criminal penalty in accordance with a fixed and continuously updated catalogue of offenses. In addition to the type and number of offenses recorded within a calendar year, the PCS also contains information on the location and time of the crime, victims and damages, results of clarification, as well as age, gender, nationality and other characteristics of the suspects. Not included are offenses in the area of political crimes, as to which a separate reporting system was created, which is described in the next paragraph. Likewise, traffic offenses are not included.

- Justice Administration Statistics

Information regarding the further course of criminal proceedings is maintained by the federal states (*Länder*) in a number of justice administration statistics, the results of which are summarized by the Federal Office of Statistics at the federal level. The Survey of Statistical Data by Public Prosecution Offices (PPO Statistics) contains information on the investigation proceedings completed each year by the public prosecution offices. The information recorded includes aspects related to proceedings, particularly how they are initiated and the duration and conclusion of investigation proceedings.

- Studies of Repeat Criminal Sanctioning (Recidivism)

Repeated criminal sanctioning, often referred to as “recidivism”, has long been a subject of criminological research in Germany. In this context, specifically selected groups of offenders (e.g. those released from a certain prison) are examined in regard to repeated criminal activity.

- Studies of Unreported Crime

The statistical recording of crime in Germany extends only to offenses that are known to the police or lead to a court decision. Both research and political interests increasingly focus on offenses that are unknown to the police and the prosecution authorities, because for quite some time awareness has grown that the crime statistics do not reflect the scope, structure or development of all potentially punishable behavior in society, but rather primarily reflect the activities of the police, prosecution authorities and the courts. Changes in recorded crime are not necessarily due only to actual criminality, but also to reporting behavior and the intensity of control. Offender and victim surveys are a methodic approach to shedding light on unreported crime, whereby in Germany the predominant interest is geared towards victim surveys. Community studies were the start of this form of victim research in Germany.

- Criminological Research

The Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Justice use empirical, especially criminological research, for the preparation, monitoring, and evaluation of crime and criminal law policy measures. In order to meaningfully link police-operational and criminological-scientific competences, the Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt* – BKA) has the legislative task, among others, of observing the development of crime and preparing criminal-police analyses and statistics and conducting research on the development of police methods and activities for combating crime. These duties are performed by the department “Crime Institute” of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA). The fields of research include, e.g., crime analysis and prognosis, crime prevention, analyses on legal developments and their suitability for police practice and the development and assessment of police work procedures. With only a few exceptions that are subject to secrecy protections, they are published in an appropriate form, to a large extent in the internet.

Community-based Prevention Management in Germany

In the past few years, the concept of community-based crime prevention has experienced an enormous upward trend in Germany. However, due to the extremely heterogeneous spectrum of various organisational forms and a wide range of substantive approaches, critical voices have become louder; fearing that the concept of community-based crime protection will be diluted and eroded.

The German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK) has thus taken on the task of contributing towards the continued development and stabilisation of community prevention bodies by developing a guide for community practice. Above all, the 2012 published guide identifies structural elements that have proven to be either necessary and beneficial or an impediment to the planning, establishment and work of the community prevention bodies.

It is based upon a secondary analytical assessment of selected publicly accessible literature on the topic of “community crime prevention”, which poses the question as to the discernible prerequisites and framework conditions for effective community prevention work, and the extent to which impulses for the initiation, optimisation and revitalisation of community forms of institutionalisation may be gleaned therefrom.

The results of this analysis have been submitted for evaluation to prevention practitioners from the *DFK-Network “Cities for Safety, Tolerance and Non-violence”* within the scope of a Delphi Survey. The question as to whether the abstract parameters of success and design could be confirmed with the specific experiential insights in the communities of the city-network was central to the study.

The guide *Impulses for Community-based Prevention Management* is a reworked summary of the study and is available for download from the DFK Internet site (www.kriminalpraevention.de).

Results and recommendations with regard to organisation and work of crime prevention bodies on the community level: An overview

The successful initiation, thematic direction and goal-oriented work of community prevention bodies present demanding challenges for the participants. Some of the parameters of success and design have proven to be particularly important for helping to meet those challenges:

- Characterising crime prevention as a **multi-disciplinary endeavour**, first and foremost, means recognising existing areas of activity in terms of their significance for crime prevention, fulfilling these in a more efficient and effective manner by networking available resources, and taking into account the ancillary effects of community action in terms of crime prevention.
- **Institutionalisation** of community-based crime prevention is of crucial importance for its acceptance and coordination.
- The key to establishing functional cooperative structures is harmonising the interests, restrictions and motivations of various actors with one another.
- The success of networks active in crime prevention depends to a great extent on the **willingness to cooperate and compromise** on the part of the participants.
- Goals of the **cooperative approach** include:
 - inclusion of multi-faceted expertise,
 - coordination and communication between the actors,
 - taking full advantage of the synergistic potential,
 - participation opportunities for the general public.
- The **participation of high-ranking representatives** from the community and police top-level leadership in prevention bodies (*mayoral obligation*) underscores their importance and facilitates implementation of decisions within the public authorities.
- Timely anchoring of **prevention as an obligatory aspect of planning** in the establishment of goals and the planning and decision-making process of communities offers the opportunity to attain financial savings.
- The guiding principle of **citizen participation** is a constituent feature of community-based crime prevention. Addressing and including the direct surroundings of the public seems to promise success.
- Conceptually well-shaped and goal-oriented **public relations and outreach work** should foster the recognition of crime prevention forums and bodies within the target groups, among potential members and partners, financial contributors as well as competing institutions. For this, specific goals, tasks, work focuses and approaches to problem solving must be imparted in a manner appropriate to the target group.
- The principle of **cause orientation** implies not only viewing crime in the community at a symptomatic level, but also analysing a multitude of possible

framework, conditional and creational factors in order to be able to develop strategies which contribute to a sustainable manner of reducing delinquency and feelings of insecurity by influencing their causal contexts.

- In order to be able to direct measures to the influencing factors of crime in a goal-oriented manner, thorough **stocktaking** and cause analyses are necessary.
- **Long-term community prevention concepts** are designed to connect strengths of “primary” crime prevention (cause orientation and sustainability) with the advantages of situation-based approaches (direct effects, easier to measure effectiveness). **Professional performance of tasks** consistent with original responsibilities and special expertise would accent the strengths of both approaches instead of playing them off against one another.
- Uniform structural recommendations for the **establishment organisation** of community prevention bodies are not very feasible because they do not adequately reflect concrete on-site framework conditions.
- Currently, a transformation is apparently taking place in terms of the **structure of crime prevention bodies** as a result of participatory deficits in recruiting public commitment. Connected with this is a functional split into three: a small leadership group capable of decision-making, a broader working level which includes the most comprehensive expertise possible and a district level narrower in scope.
- Initiatives on the **district and neighbourhood level** open up identification opportunities for the public, with the goal of community crime prevention in their immediate everyday surroundings.
- Coordination in the sense of management is a necessary prerequisite for the continuity of the work of a prevention body. In addition to these administrative obligations, a **prevention manager** could take on additional responsibilities which are of great significance for the professionalisation of community crime prevention.
 1. The integration of crime prevention as an independent planning item into the community administration
 2. The guarantee of a scientifically confirmed strategic direction of the approaches to crime prevention, as well as
 3. A social integration function as the moderator between differing special interests.
- **Evaluations** – understood here as analyses of effect – are indispensable for the methodological continued development of the crime prevention approach as well as for its long-term legitimacy. To establish the instrument, however, the willingness to admit to errors (“**error culture**”) is necessary.
- Particularly indispensable for the institutionalisation of community crime prevention is a **basic funding level** by the community, which is ideally delineated in a separate line item in the budget.

The recommendations are known all over the country and supplemented through several current studies and expertises.