

TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF VULNERABILITY TO CRIME IN ECONOMIC SECTORS

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Project DANGER: www.law.ugent.be/ircp/danger

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Ghent University

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Central research question

- Main objective: in-depth empirical field research to re-consider and explore the concept of vulnerability to crime in the context of economic activity
- Central question: What makes economic sectors vulnerable to crime?



Background

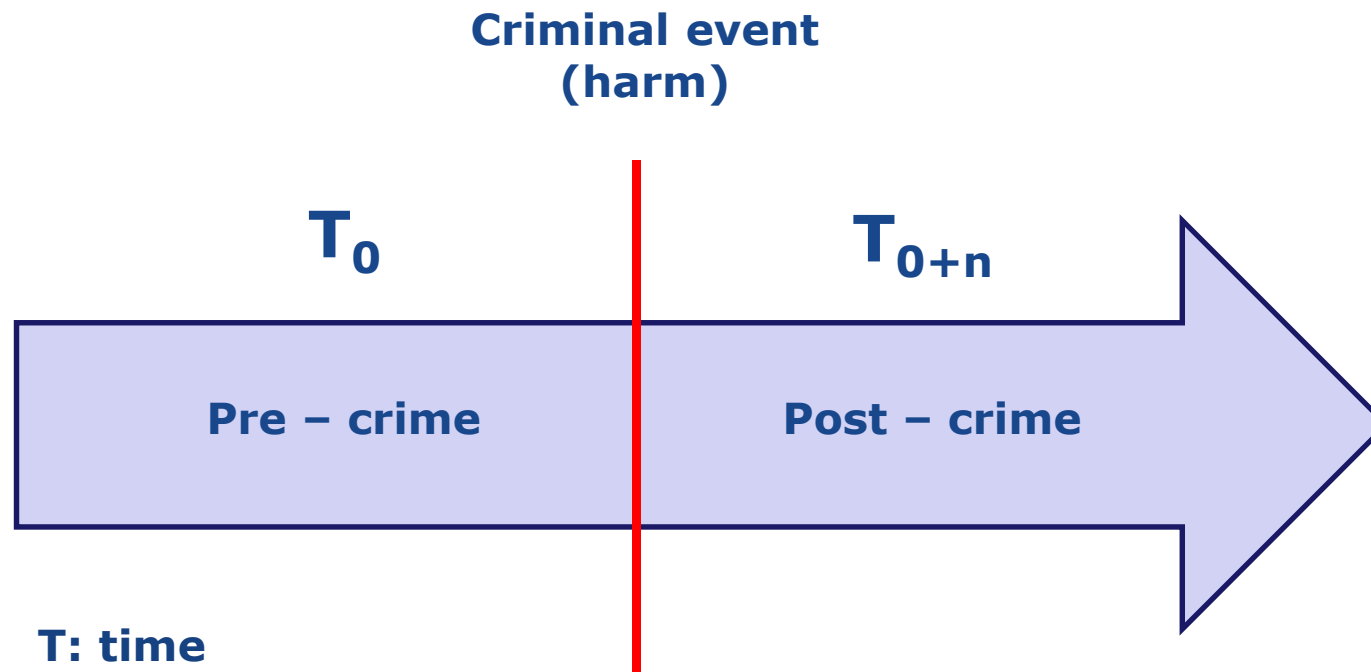
- Contribution to the discourse on (organised) crime prevention
- Search for alternatives to perpetrator oriented approaches
- Environmental criminological perspectives and the concept of opportunity as cause of crime
- Organised crime is profit driven thus economic activity is in the spotlight
- Searching for structures, relations, interdependencies, mechanisms and conditions within economic activities that play a crucial role with respect to (organised) crime
- Shortcomings of former vulnerability studies: too dense and cumbersome to apply in practice, inadequate transfer of indicators from other contexts, lack of empirical grounds)



Methodology

- Under research: Belgian goods transport sector and hotel and catering industry
- Empirical basis: international literature, 75 in-depth interviews and conversations with sector professionals, public servants, law enforcement agents, NGOs, academics and convicted criminals and a study of 48 police and customs case files
- Way of working: Qualitative, three phases, bottom-up and circular research process, flexible topic list, diversity of sources, computer-based analysis (MAXQDA 10)

Results: Temporal dimensions of vulnerability



Results: Vulnerability to crime framework from two sectors

Vulnerability to (organised) crime			
Pre-crime conditions		Post-crime conditions	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Inadequate control</i>	<i>Lack of recovery</i>	<i>Lack of adaptation</i>
Weak financial situation of the enterprise	Inadequate sector entrance checks	No financial back-ups	Lack of communication on crime risks
Lack of crime prevention measures	Lack of key positions checks	No redundancy/back-up in business systems	Lack of employee awareness
Inadequate legislation	Lack of business partnership checks	No contingency/continuity planning	No flexibility in enterprise structures

Vulnerability to crime	Pre-crime conditions	
	Opportunities	Inadequate control
	Weak financial situation of enterprise	"Whenever you have financial problems, you'll always try to do something, to find a way to save yourself. ...even when you have to cross some lines..."
	Lack of crime prevention measures	"The primary goal of a company is to earn money and not to prevent crime."
	Inadequate legislation	"There is a bit of room in the Belgian legislation. We sign people in for four hours work. You do not have to say when they start or finish."
	Inadequate sector entrance checks	"Starting a company is no problem because in the short term there are no checks."
	Lack of key positions checks	"... the shipping agent can always wash his hands off it by referring to the contract and his checks of the papers."
	Lack of business partnership checks	"Any customer who pays is considered bona fide!"
	Post-crime conditions	
	Lack of recovery	
	No financial back-ups	"... we had to use our own home as warranty for the bank, and we lost it. We lost everything. Bankruptcy and go, everything was lost."
No redundancy/ back-up in business systems	"There is no back-up at the airport. It is not possible, as the space is rather limited... if it burned down or blew up it would be the end for us."	
No contingency/ continuity planning	"We try to deal with events after they have occurred. When things have happened, we try to ensure that they don't happen again in the future."	
Lack of adaptation		
Lack of communication on crime risks	"... self-employed drivers ... are on the road most of the time they don't have much opportunity to benefit from the information offered by associations."	
Lack of employee awareness	"Fluctuation of staff is a problem. A sophisticated training programme including crime issues is impossible."	
No flexibility in enterprise structures	"... we immediately sit down together and search for solutions and action plans that can be adopted ... we don't have any hierarchy where you have to fill in documents and so on"	

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Results: General conclusions (1)

- Vulnerability has two temporal dimensions: Pre-crime perspective is complemented by a post-crime perspective
- The concept of resilience might contribute to research on post-crime conditions in economic sectors and enterprises
- Relationship between pre-crime conditions and post-crime conditions is not static but fluid and dynamic
- What is the role of the sector (victim and/or perpetrator, facilitator)? – stakeholder perspective is important (sector professionals, police, policy makers, etc.)
- Better to focus on certain criminal activity not on organised crime in general (problem: lack of common definition and perception)



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Results: General conclusions (2)

- The pre-crime vulnerabilities provide knowledge on the required capacities of potential perpetrators
- ... who is attracted to and capable of exploiting vulnerabilities?
- The post-crime vulnerabilities provide knowledge on the capacities of the sector and enterprises to cope with crime
- ... how can we make economic sectors as part of society more sustainable?





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