LOCAL CRIME PREVENTION POLICIES:
A CRITICAL APPROACH TO METHODOLOGICAL AND EVALUATION ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets its focal point on *local crime prevention policies* and their methodological context. It combines theoretical exploration with empirical research to achieve an analysis and valuation of the preventive actions based on a community-centered crime prevention approach. Therefore, common elements in methodology are highlighted as prerequisites for the success of local crime prevention policies while evaluation emerges as the cornerstone for advancing scientific knowledge and promoting the development of effective, sustainable and replicable local crime prevention actions. According to our conclusions, and bearing in mind the international, European and national experience on this topic, an effective and rational criminal policy at the local level should be based on intensive preliminary work, systematic implementation, and active engagement of the community as well as proper and thorough evaluation.

Key words: local crime prevention policies, community-centered crime prevention, methodology, evaluation

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Introduction

Crime prevention is one of the top priorities of the criminological agenda on a European and international level, especially in the field of urban security(Tonry & Farrington, 1995; Ceccato & Nalla, 2020; Crawford, 2023).The scientific interest on this topic became particularly prominent from 1950 onwards when specific departments were established in the framework of United Nations such as the Committee of Crime Prevention and Control and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch (United Nations, 1991). The Council of Europe also placed special focus on crime prevention issues through its Recommendations, e.g. Rec No. R (87) 19 for the *"Organisation of Crime Prevention"* as well as Rec No R. (83) 7 for *"Citizens' participation in criminal policy"*. The various actions promoted in this field reflected the broadness of the concept of prevention and from 1980 onwards these initiatives have taken on a more contemporary form, highlighting the great importance of the participatory model at a local level(Zarafonitou, 2003a, 2019), since the problem of crime *"is most acutely felt and perceived and where a sense of insecurity is felt on a daily basis"* (Council of Europe, 2002:15). Therefore, the harnessing of partnerships as a means for implementing urban security strategies has been well established in the field of criminal policy a long time ago (Crawford & Cunningham, 2015:71). Its character is based on the idea that the "answers" to crime should not be a monopoly of the state, but a matter of the entire society (Delmas-Marty,1983:14) through coordinated actions in horizontal networks and cooperation with the state(Berry et. al., 2011; Crawford & Cunningham, 2015:74). In this light, a participatory model reflects pure pragmatism contributing to the democratisation of the citizens' daily life at the local level (Lazerges, 1988:94).

The core pillars of the participatory criminal policy evolved over time consist of partnership, decentralised character and the citizens' participation. Partnership refers to the cooperation between the central government, the local authorities, the local institutional and social stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental organisations and citizens, i.e. crime prevention strategies delivered through multi-sectoral partnerships (Zarafonitou, 2003a:28, 2004; Spinellis, 2001:1025; Crawford, 2023: 168). The second core element, which is inextricably linked to the first one, refers to the application of the criminal policy at the local level aiming at the prevention of urban crime as well as fear of crime. The involvement of community is also considered as a key element of the broader partnership between the central government, the local

authorities and the other public and private entities. Even though the conceptual term of community may vary according to space and time (Boudon et al., 1999: 36; Zarafonitou, 2003a: 22 et seq.), the model of "community prevention" is based on the premise that the most effective way to tackle crime is to actively involve the community in crime prevention actions and programmes at the neighbourhood level (Lurigio & Rosenbaum, 1986:19; Crawford, 1999, Tonry & Farrington, 1995). In this context, citizens participate in various crime prevention actions either in the field of general social prevention or situational prevention at the individual or collective level.

However, this attitude is not always reflected in citizens' participation and existing evidence states that their feelings of insecurity lead often to actions that promote social controversy and exclusion, rather than social cohesion and integration. To address such a serious challenge and ensure the positive and effective participation of citizens in the implementation of crime prevention policies certain conditions must be met. More specifically these conditions refer to "*their positive attitude towards the philosophy of prevention; the proper information for the criminal phenomenon; dealing with the phenomenon in a level-headed manner; the independence from political or economic and other purposes; the proper coordination of the participatory actions and the evaluation of their results; and the respect to human rights*" (Zarafonitou, 2011:59). Compliance with the abovementioned preconditions ensures that aberrations caused by vindictive and punitive attitudes that usually derive from the lack of information or misinformation regarding crime and the criminal justice system are avoided.

Concerning the evaluation of community crime prevention, there is insufficient research evidence on the effectiveness of preventive actions, considering the fact that crime prevention is being evaluated as a *non-event*, thus making it particularly difficult to communicate research results (Crawford, 2023:170; Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:16). Moreover, due to long-term targeting, participatory social crime prevention policies have no immediate benefits compared to situational crime prevention measures. As a result, community crime prevention usually became less preferable for policy-makers, who usually seek immediate responses to crime.

The acquired experience on applying local crime prevention policies

During the eighties, Great Britain, France and Netherlands were considered as being pioneers of the participatory decentralised criminal policy model in Europe, thus having great impact on the development of crime prevention and security policies of other European countries in the nineties (Hebberecht, 2002:7). Against this backdrop, specific entities were established in Europe such as the Local Councils for Crime Prevention (LCCPs) while community policing was particularly expanded (Zarafonitou, 2003a; Brodeur, 1994; Hebberecht & Duprez, 2002; Cartuyvels and Cartuyvels, 2002; Karagiannidis, 2011). The local crime prevention policies may vary in the way they are implemented depending on the spatio-temporal frame of reference and the philosophical and ideological approaches that characterise the social policy of each country, however the principle that "*local problems require local solutions*" (Council of Europe, 2002: 15) is nowadays broadly accepted. Under this spectrum, the cutting edge and the point of differentiation in the context of these policies is the extent and form of the community's participation (Zarafonitou, 2003a:21). Nevertheless, in the end of the nineties the American *zero tolerance* had considerably affected the European criminal policies (Papatheodorou, 2002; Antonopoulou, 2010). Due to this influence and because of the policies' interactions, variations in space and time seemed to be minimised, while local crime prevention policies began to give way to security policies with a special emphasis on the enhancement of the police force and policing, the tackling of youth crime as well as the fight against crime in poor and degraded areas (Zarafonitou, 2003a:187; Duprez, 2002:237). Moreover, nowadays there is a tendency to integrate new crime prevention tools to the traditional criminal justice systems' arsenal. Thus "*the use of administrative municipal orders and other kind of civil, hybrid or semi-criminal regulations to address a wide range of urban issues and social problems, from minor crime to behaviour of young people, is becoming common in many European and North American cities*" (Selmini & Crawford, 2017:1).

The participatory model finds its application through the creation of decentralised crime prevention policy bodies at the municipal level such as the aforementioned *Local Crime Prevention Councils* which operate in many continental European countries with a different, however form, composition and function (Zarafonitou, 2003a; EUCPN, 2018). Hence, the strategies and practices of participatory crime prevention policy are not one-dimensional but coexist and

intertwine with each other in European countries (Karagiannidis, 2022). The foundations for the development of the institution of Local Crime Prevention Councils were laid by the French model of crime prevention policy as France in the 1980s was the pilot country for the implementation of this institution in the context of the development of an overall city policy aiming at the improvement of the districts and the reconstruction of the social fabric (Zarafonitou, 2003a), through the enhancement of social solidarity and the strengthening of social cohesion. In this respect, the effort is oriented towards the integrated character attributed to the decentralised prevention policies. An illustrative example is the so-called *Local Security Contracts* which can be included within the framework of action of the Local Councils, binding the contracting parties through the assumption of specific obligations regarding the planning and implementation of crime prevention actions (IHESI, 1998). In *Belgium*, an important role is played by the *Municipal Commissions for the Prevention of Crime* chaired by the mayor and composed of representatives of local institutions and social partners. These committees are a prerequisite for concluding a *Security Contract* and receiving the required funding from the municipal authorities for the implementation of crime prevention actions. Therefore, the mayor takes on the additional role of networking the involved bodies - both from the public and private sectors - through a continuous process of consultative meetings (Cartuyvels & Hebberecht, 2002). In *Germany*, Local Crime Prevention Councils emerged in the 1990s with the first Local Council being established in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein aiming at re-establishing the social fabric and involving citizens as co-responsible partners in planning and implementing crime prevention actions and measures to strengthen the feeling of security at the local level (Vourg'h & Marcus, 1993:118 et seq.; Zarafonitou, 2003a:138). In the case of *Greece* prevention policies at the local level are mainly expressed through the institution of the Local Councils for Crime Prevention (LCCPs) which was established by Law 2713/1999. LCCPs are decentralised crime prevention policy bodies with a consultative and advisory character that focus on the local community and aim to strengthen social cohesion and solidarity (Zarafonitou, 2003a, 2003b, 2019). The philosophy of the institution basically refers to the corresponding French one, and the basic characteristics of the institution refer to the dominant role of prevention, both social and situational, in participatory crime prevention policy, partnerships, volunteering and social mediation.

Prevention policies at the local level also entail the implementation of measures to strengthen policing with the participation of the community, i.e. *community policing*. Community policing is expressed either through police and community cooperation as it happens in the Anglo-Saxon area, or through police of proximity e.g. in the case of France or Belgium. It should be noticed that community policing is not a model of crime prevention policy but rather a basic key-concept and a police model and strategy, on which some of the basic principles of participatory crime prevention policy are developed at an operational level. In this context, community policing as a concept is defined as *"a new police model, which favors solving community problems through a repressive response to individual incidents and which proposes the establishment of a partnership between the police and the community with the aim of solving the policing and crime problems"* (Brodeur, 1994:235) while its basic characteristics refer to proximity, visibility, approachability and immediacy of the police. The goal is preventing and tackling crime related problems at the local level, mitigating the citizens' feelings of insecurity and strengthening the relationship between police and community through their close collaboration and the citizens' active involvement (Zarafonitou, 2020). In this regard, police action must be oriented towards the management and treatment of problems, not necessarily of a strict criminal nature, but problems that *can become criminal*, in cooperation with the local community. As a result, *problem oriented* and *problem-solving policy* is succeeded through a *community centered crime prevention policy* (Goldstein, 2018; Miller, 2019). As Crawford & Cunningham (2015:75) highlight "*partnership approaches to policing are largely built on the premise that no single agency can deal with, or be responsible for dealing with, complex community safety and crime problems*".

Scientific literature abounds with examples of various practices in the field of community policing, which highlight the close cooperation between police and community as well as the active engagement of citizens in the process of co-production of urban safety. Indicatively, in *France* a new police force was established in 2018, the so-called *police for daily security* (police de sécurité du quotidien) which aimed at tackling crime and insecurity as well as at strengthening the level of trust between citizens, the police and gendarmerie. It is a police force adjusted to the citizens' expectations and the local needs with a positive impact on local crime reduction. At the core of its philosophy is the relationship between police and citizens and its

implementation entails police patrols, direct communication with the citizens, partnership as well as the harnessing of modern technology, e.g. tablets, smartphones (Zarafonitou, 2019:44; Havrin, 2010). In *Netherlands* a project called *Neighbourhood Prevention Breda* was established in 2010 aiming at the close collaboration between citizens, the police and the municipal authorities with the ultimate goal to improve the local daily life of the community. In this context, the members of the partnership share responsibilities regarding the local security situation, e.g. sharing information, following crime rates. However, the citizens are considered as the core members of the partnership determining the local policy, while the police and the municipal authorities have only an enabling role (EUCPN, 2019:113-114). In *Denmark* the *Safe Neighbourhood Køge* was put in force back in 2017 with the aim to actively engage police and the public in tackling local gang-related crime. Therefore, police cooperated closely with the local professionals, a social housing organisation, the administration of the estate and the municipal authorities. The project has been characterised as very successful, establishing the so-called Karlemose-model that was replicated in other areas of Køge (EUCPN, 2019:103-104). In *Greece*, special interest has been given to the strengthening of neighbourhood policing and the highlighting of the police's social profile, investing policing with the provision of social services to the public, through the establishment of the measure of the neighbourhood police officer. This measure is inspired by the culture of community policing as the police officers are in contact with the members of the local society and their complaints and concerns are conveyed to them. The neighbourhood police officer also identifies the problematic situations that appear within the geographical boundaries of their area and conveys proposals for their resolution to the police administration and their superiors, while at the same time they cooperate with the competent municipal services and the municipal police (Zarafonitou, 2019, 2020).

The effective implementation of local crime policy plans and urban safety practices with the participation of the local community requires first and foremost that the local community members really care about their area. Moreover, they must be convinced that they can influence things and situations in their neighbourhood and solve problematic situations that arise in it. Thus, these problems must be specific and can be solved by municipal authorities and the local police force with the participation of the local community. In addition, the participation and involvement of the local community

is a prerequisite, so special care should be taken for their substantial participation and active involvement in crime prevention actions. In this respect measures are required to establish mutual trust between local community, local authorities and police while proper selection of personnel and continuous training is highly required. In any case partnership working is beneficial because it enables the application of different approaches when developing a local policy as well as the application of multiple interventions, thus maximising their impact on the targeted groups of interest. Furthermore, partnership working facilitates a more effective coordination of resources and opportunities to reduce duplicating while contributing to the development of collaborative skills and collective intelligence, and therefore achieves more efficient problem-solving (Crawford & Cunnigham, 2015:77).

The methodological context

Crime prevention policies are designed and implemented based on a methodology that includes four key elements. The *first element* refers to the diagnosis of the problem to be solved and the specific characteristics and peculiarities of the environmental context. A key point that must be taken into consideration is that people do not perceive problems in the same way and this perception varies according to their "*own reference framework, values and norms*" (Burssens, 2016:241). The objective of diagnostic research is the identification of the crime related problems in an area and the dimensions of the citizens' and professionals' feeling of insecurity as well as the investigation of the suitability of measures proposed by them for the solution of the area's problems (Zarafonitou, 2003a:69; IHESI, 1998:171). In this context, victimisation surveys, the study of police crime statistics, on spot observation, interviews with local stakeholders and meetings with members of the community are adequate tools for recording urban security issues at the city or neighbourhood level. Involving the local community in the process of diagnosing the local security situation enables a deeper insight into the urban security issues at a neighbourhood or city level as well as the development of more tailored tools and interventions adjusted to the specific needs of the involved community and its local stakeholders. In this way, a shared responsibility is ensured during the process of co-production of urban safety (Efus, 2007:29-31; Nubani et al., 2023).

It is worth noting that with the introduction of the integrated security policies and the so-called "Safety Contracts" (Conseil National des villes et du développement social urbain – Délégation Interministérielle à la ville et au développement social urbain, 1990) in many European countries (e.g. France, UK, Belgium) from the 1990s onwards, diagnostic research became very prominent in the field of urban security (Zarafonitou, 2003a; Papatheodorou, 2021; Karagiannidis, 2022). Based on diagnostic research results, policy goals are set by identifying specific priorities (Efus, 2016), while equally important is the study of previous research experience regarding good practices, tools and interventions in the field of crime prevention and urban safety that have been proved to have a positive impact. Indeed, a thorough scientific knowledge on previous relevant research experience is necessary for the design and implementation of similar practices, tools and interventions or the development of new ones tailored to the needs and particularities of the local security situation of interest. It is beyond any doubt that the role of criminological research is crucial for the development of effective evidence-based criminal policies and that a scientific rational criminal policy is always built on an inseparable relationship between criminological research, theory and policy (Alexiadis, 1994:17).

The *second element* refers to the creation of a suitable ground for the application of the participatory model. This implies the mobilisation of the community to participate in the production of the local policies since the need for a co-production process requires the engagement of stakeholders who become actively involved in the development of these policies. This human-centered approach perceives the involved social partners as active co-producers rather than passive recipients of the implemented policy (Crawford, 2023:172). Thus, the impact of the residents' perspectives on crime prevention policy implementation, when residents are involved in that process, is considered of great importance (Miller, 2019). In any case, such a venture requires a series of steps taken to overcome the community's reluctance to be a key part of the participatory process for crime prevention, which is a common problem in the implementation of local urban security policies (Zarafonitou, 2003a:190). These steps include the information, awareness, sensitisation and eventually the mobilisation of the local stakeholders and the members of the community to be co-producers of the local policy. According to Sherman et al. (1997:45) *the definition of mobilisation "varied widely, from the creation of formal community development organisations to the*

mobilisation of resources from outside the community to help solve local problems like crime and unemployment". This process is at the core of the participatory criminal policy model, and it may entail tools such as informative campaigns on urban security issues addressed to the wider local community or to specific target groups (e.g. school community, shop owners), relevant consultation meetings and roundtable discussions with the local stakeholders, the members of the community or specific groups of interest, including vulnerable groups of people, as well as relevant events such as cultural events, scientific workshops and conferences. It should be noticed that groups of vulnerable population are usually hard to reach, and this could be a serious key challenge for effectively delivering a participatory approach in practice. For this purpose, specific guidelines should be followed including respect for their individuality and establishment of trust (Efus, 2007:34-35).

However, it is worth mentioning that even though the active participation of the community is considered as a key parameter for the effective implementation of local urban security strategies, such a participation is not always ensured, especially in urban contexts marked by acute social problems and a high level of population heterogeneity and mobility, thus lacking social cohesion and solidarity (Zarafonitou, 2003a:189). Criminological research over the years has proven that a greater intensity is required in the effort to mobilise and raise awareness of the local community in matters of crime prevention, when it comes to poor and heterogeneously populated areas. In the latter there is a distrust in the real intentions of the designers of participatory crime prevention policy practices. Thus, there is evidence from England and Wales, where it was observed that the probability of participation of residents of wealthy districts in such initiatives is twice that of poor residents. Moreover, research in the Minneapolis, USA, has shown that the success of crime prevention programmes in deprived and troubled areas was relatively higher than the others; however, the participation in areas that remained middle class was higher (Karagiannidis, 2022). Another key problem that needs to be solved is the distrust of the public in the effectiveness of the crime prevention action of the police and in general of the criminal justice system. This problem poses obstacles to the implementation of participatory crime prevention policies which rely precisely on the mobilisation and participation of the public in crime prevention. In this respect, the successful implementation of local crime prevention policies requires a police fully integrated into society that shares and protects the values

of the democracy, a police with a mentality that serves citizens, supports their daily life and improves their quality of life, a police officer fully integrated into the social fabric and the local community they serve and finally, the consolidation of a climate of cooperation and mutual trust between the police and the citizen.

The *third and fourth elements* refer to implementation and evaluation of these policies. The implementation process can be defined as "*the deliberate initiation of activity that is consciously planned and intended to lead to a changed outcome in line with the designs of an intervention*" and is influenced by the various contextual factors (Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:55 et seq.). Hence, implementation is considered crucial for the effectiveness of crime prevention policies. However, there is limited scientific knowledge about the very implementation processes that may affect the outcomes of crime prevention actions and contribute to their success or failure (ibid:148).

The participatory model can be applied in the form of various social prevention actions, measures or interventions that focus on family, school, juveniles' leisure time, cultural activities or events, information and awareness campaigns, establishment of victim support units etc. On a governance level, such social prevention initiatives are usually designed, implemented and monitored by LCCPs or relevant local entities (Zarafonitou, 2003a, 2019; Karagiannidis, 2022).Moreover, the implementation of the participatory model usually includes situational prevention measures and interventions such as installation of technical protection measures (e.g. CCTV), spatial interventions based on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), collective monitoring of neighbourhoods (e.g. neighbourhood watch), community policing etc. However, it should be noticed that the participatory crime prevention philosophy is meant as prevention not only in the community but first and foremost *with* the cooperation of the community (Karagiannidis, 2022). In this respect, the focus is based on the active participation of the local community in crime prevention initiatives and not solely or predominantly in situational prevention practices with short-term results that more and more are used just to reduce criminal opportunities and harden criminal targets (Cozens & Love, 2017). Furthermore, a necessary prerequisite for the effective implementation of local crime prevention policies is the smooth collaboration in the framework of the multi-agency partnerships. This implies the demarcation of the competences, outcomes and expectations of each involved stakeholder, the

development of trust and information sharing between the partners, the mutual understanding and respect, the recognition of power differences and the development of a productive way of solving conflicts. Equally important is the development of shared values that enables a constructive dialogue between the partners that eventually will lead to effective problem solutions (Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:35).

There are two types of effort that can be implemented in the field of crime prevention in various institutional settings such as community, family, school, labour market, places, police agencies and other agencies of the criminal justice system. The first effort is *practice* which is defined as "*an ongoing routine activity that is well established in that setting, even if it is far from universal*", while the second one is *programme* which is "*a focused effort to change, restrict or create a routine practice in a crime prevention setting*" (Sherman et al., 1997:25). It is important to notice that a programme throughout time may be established as a practice and that there are practices that can be implemented from the outset and over time only in the context of funded programmes. In any case specific methodology must be applied for a successful implementation bringing to the spotlight the crucial role of partnerships between the community and the other local partners. According to problem-oriented approaches, several steps must be taken for an effective implementation of local urban safety policies. The problem-oriented framework entails the identification of the local security problem to be solved, and its causal factors based on different sources of data and techniques of analysis; the development of tailored responses to solve the problem by actively engaging end-users and beneficiaries; and the evaluation of the policy's impact. In this effort, the coordinated collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders and social partners is a necessary condition for the success of the process (Crawford, 2023:173).

Evaluation as a key element of the design and implementation methodology of local crime prevention actions is a prerequisite for evidence-based criminal policy. Research evidence combined with the relevant theoretical corpus can provide policy-makers with a solid basis on which they can build to know what works and what doesn't work in specific contexts and populations as well as what needs further research. It is noteworthy that the evaluation of the local security situation of an area requires not only data on crime and victimisation rates but also data on the feelings of safety, social cohesion, trust in local authorities and the police, victim support etc. (Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:32). Evaluation shall include both *process evaluation* and

outcome/impact evaluation. Impact evaluation in particular should also take into account not intended and undesired consequences, the cost-effectiveness relationship as well as the possibility for the replication of the implemented policy in other cases (Ekblom & Pease, 1995:588-589).

Process evaluation includes the evaluation of the way the implemented policy worked as well as its fidelity, while outcome evaluation refers to the policy's effectiveness that is whether it managed to achieve its goals (Rummens, 2016:12). Evaluation has a *retrospective function* which refers to the compatibility between costs and actions undertaken and the verification of the extent to which the initial objectives have been achieved, a *theoretical function* which refers to the examination of the results of the project as evidence to test a theory or as evidence that contributes to the development of knowledge and a *prospective function* that guides future developments of practices or policies (IHESI, 1998:48 et seq.; Zarafonitou, 2003a:36). Under this spectrum, evaluation must be appropriate and based on a scientifically valid, sound and tailored to the case methodology. Furthermore, it must be external, systematic and comprehensive, covering all aspects of the policy under evaluation (Robert, 1994:62 et. seq.; Zarafonitou, 2003a:37). One of the most commonly used evaluation models is the "OXO" model which requires the combination of experimental and control groups and assesses the impact of the implemented policy by comparing it to the previous situation where the policy had not yet been implemented (Crow, 2000:116). In any case, there is no single or general solution to urban safety problems and local urban safety strategies should be evaluated taking into account, inter alia, the target groups of the implemented strategy, the context and its specific characteristics in a given time as well as the whole process of design and implementation in order to provide policy-makers with the necessary scientific insight for the development of rational and efficient crime prevention policies (Crawford, 2023:174; Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:33; Zarafonitou, 2023:10-13).

The aforementioned key elements are reflected through the existing extensive research experience in the field of crime prevention and urban safety, as illustrated in the following representative examples.

The local contracts of security (France and U.K.)

Diagnosis of the local crime related problems and the local security situation has been a key element for the signing of the *Contracts of Safety* since 1990 in many European countries. In the case of *France* local contracts of security (Contrat Locaux de Sécurité) were established in 1997 with diagnostic research being a required stage for their assignment. The launch of the implementation of the Local Security Conventions coincided with the conclusion of the Villepinte Conference on Public Security (October 1997), which was held under the auspices of the country's (then) Prime Minister *Lionel Jospin* (Conseil National des Villes et du Développement Social Urbain – Délégation Interministérielle à la Ville et au Développement Social Urbain, 1990). The local contract of security provides for the definition of the stakeholders' commitment to suitable and scheduled action plans, the definition of the competent stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the action plan as well as the organisation, monitoring and evaluation of each action and the whole local crime prevention policy. The stages that are followed in the framework of a diagnostic research are the following: [i] organisation of the research; [ii] identification of the local "protagonists", interviews, distribution of roles and responsibilities; [iii] collection of research data from a predefined sample; [iv] analysis of quantitative and qualitative data; [v] drafting of a diagnostic report that includes specific proposals based on the research results; [vi] presentation of the report to the competent Committee and [vii]contract processing (Zarafonitou, 2003a:70; IHESI, 1998:143). The local contracts of security form part of the so-called "integrated policies" that were developed in France back in the 1990s and the evaluation of such policies requires, inter alia, the measurement of the implemented local policy's effectiveness considering the results of the prior diagnostic research (Papatheodorou, 2005, 2021).

In the case of *UK*, the diagnosis of the local security situation emphasises on the recording of the dimensions as well as the qualitative and geographical characteristics of crime and was established in the framework of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) aiming at the development of rational and realistic local urban security policies. In fact, as early as the beginning of the 1990s, the National Audit Commission had already pointed out that the empirical study of crime and victimisation rates enables the evaluation of the impact of the implemented local policies and provides data that can be used to adjust these policies in the future (Audit Commission, 1993; Papatheodorou,

2005:369; Efus, 2007). In this respect, the implementation of the "Safer Communities: The Local Delivery of Crime Prevention through the Partnership Approach" Programme in Britain (1995-) was based on the networking of all agencies and organisations active in the fight against crime and on informing, raising awareness and mobilising the local community to undertake targeted actions in their area. The central idea of the programme was that the lack of cooperation is the root of the problem; therefore, the existence and strengthening of cooperation will be the solution by integrating the whole project into a wider social policy (Home Office, 1993:15; Crawford, 1999:22). Moreover, in 1998 Crime and Disorder Act was introduced and established Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), between police, local authorities, justice and health agencies and services, various collectives and NGOs as well as the local community. These partnerships aim to reduce crime and disorder in their area by following more or less the same process: [i] Monitoring the levels of crime and disorder problems in the area and broad consultation with the population of that area, a crucial element in order to be sure of the co-perception between agencies and the local population about the problems of the area, and [ii] formulation of the strategy, which includes measures and actions to address the problems identified and highlighted as priorities by the local community itself (Home Office, 2003:17). In this context various implemented crime prevention policy plans and projects are considered successful such as programmes targeting young people, e.g. the *Pit Stop* and *Rampage* programmes or targeting women, e.g. Safer Areas For Everyone as well as programmes targeting the local community as a whole, e.g. Neighbourhood Wardens, Local Community Safety Officers and Crime Reduction Officers or the Rewind Drugs and Communities Against Drugs plans to combat drug use and prevent drug-related crime (Home Office, 2003: 42 et seq.). Lately, crime prevention practices at the local level are being designed and implemented in public spaces like parks by municipalities, so everyone would feel safe and welcome to them. As an example, can be noticed the case of London Borough of Greenwich where they have introduced a Public Safety Protocol for their parks. These Public Safety Protocols contain all the relevant about the specific actions which staff should take for a range of safety issues, to ensure that the problematic situations raised receive "*a full response in the immediate and longer term, and that the community is reassured*" (The Safer Parks Consortium, 2023:19). Moreover, community has an active role in the implementation of the programme,

engaging also women and girls to identify potential improvements (The Safer Parks Consortium, 2023: 57). Once the evaluation of the programme had a clear positive sign, mayor of West Yorkshire Mrs. Tracy Brabin had been led to the conclusion that "*a new generation of female decision makers is emerging, to bring a more gender-balanced workforce to our design professions and shape our towns and cities for the better*" (The Safer Parks Consortium, 2023:3).

The project "Neighbourhood manages" in Rotterdam

In many Dutch municipalities there are teams of professionals co-operating with the aim to improve security and liveability in their district and/or neighbourhood. They also try to stimulate the inhabitants to choose important problems to be managed by themselves. One out of many examples is *Neighbourhood manages* in Rotterdam, which was initiated by the neighbourhood police team in Rotterdam New West in 2009 to try out whether and in how far local community could be involved in the work, aiming at increasing safety in their neighbourhood by choosing themselves problems that their community face and should be solved. Under *Neighbourhood manages* a local crime prevention plan is implemented, known as *BuurtBestuurt*. More specifically, the inhabitants get acquainted with the neighbourhood policemen (*Wijkagent*) and the neighbourhood guards (*Stadswacht)* and become informed about their work. At the same time professionals get insight in the problems of the citizens.

Initially, the residents of an area (neighbourhood) who are interested in being active in the field of implementing crime prevention practices are approached and contacted. Then, a *neighbourhood committee* is formed consisting of 5-10 residents, which meets and holds meetings for identifying various related issues that concern their area with the participation of special professionals in the field, on average once a month. It should be noticed that all the residents of an area can participate in these meetings. In the beginning, the three most important problematic situations that concern the local community and concern their safety and their living conditions are identified and recorded. Depending on the problems indicated by the local community, professionals and experts are invited and participate in the meetings. The residents of each neighbourhood, where the plan is implemented, actively co-operate with the local police and municipal authorities. Then again, the residents participate in solving the problematic situations in their neighbourhood, together with the local police with

actions mainly of a social crime prevention policy. Actions usually implemented are speed limit control and road traffic improvement, the improvement of street and park lighting, the safety improvements on bike lanes, transporting children to their school, helping neighbourhood students who are having problems with their lessons, preparing and offering free meals to needy elderly people in the area, renovations of playgrounds and creation of green areas, tree planting etc.

The solutions' effectiveness is *evaluated on a regular basis* after a certain period of time, usually a few months. According to the Dutch Centre for Crime Prevention and Security (*Centrum voor Criminaliteitspreventie en Veiligheid*), the BuurtBestuurt project became a success and won the "Publieke Veiligheid Award" (Public Safety Award). This specific local crime prevention project is very successful, and it is already implemented in more than seventy (70) neighbourhoods of the city, i.e. there are seventy (70) relevant committees in Rotterdam. It should be noticed that it is implemented in a different way in each of them, depending on the particular local conditions. Repairing broken trust, looking for links and practical actions are the basis for success as it meets successfully the wishes of the local community and with all that is of importance for them (Sagel-Grande & Aarsen, 2013; Karagiannidis, 2022).

The project "BeSecure-FeelSecure: A Holistic Risk Management Approach for monitoring, assessing and forecasting the efficiency, sustainability and resilience of Piraeus (Greece)

In Greece, the Local Councils for Crime Prevention can propose specific local measures and interventions at the municipality level and sign contracts of partnership with the competent ministries in the field of urban security after having conducted diagnostic research in the form of a victimisation survey. In this regard, the focus of the diagnostic research is on the recording of the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of the municipality's residents regarding crime, victimisation, and fear of crime as well as their proposals for the enhancement of urban safety and the improvement of their daily life. Apart from the diagnostic research, the LCCPs record the local agencies and bodies who could actively engage as stakeholders in the process of resolving urban safety issues as well as police statistics to compose a report on crime rates and its annual course at the municipality level (Zarafonitou, 2004, 2019).

In this context, it is worth mentioning the innovative European programme "*BeSecure-FeelSecure: A Holistic Risk Management Approach for monitoring, assessing and forecasting the efficiency, sustainability and resilience of Piraeus*" that aimed at the promotion of urban security in the city of Piraeus[4]. In the framework of the project several actions and interventions were designed and implemented under the supervision of the Local Council for Crime Prevention of Piraeus, which was established in the framework of the project. Before the design and implementation of these measures diagnostic research was carried out in the form of a victimisation survey in the 2nd and 5th Municipal Departments of the city. The diagnostic research aimed at the examination of crime and fear of crime in the city of Piraeus and the related factors and was conducted on a representative sample of 539 residents (on a household level). In this context, there was a baseline assessment of specific indicators. The indicators were developed and measured in the framework of the victimisation survey on the household level[5]. At the final phase of the project a re-evaluation of the indicators followed to assess the project's impact on the local security situation of the areas of intervention. Finally, separate supplementary diagnostic research (on a smaller scale) was conducted on a sample of 100 shop owners in the two Municipal Departments to record their perceptions about crime related problems and insecurity, as they were important stakeholders and had high levels of repeated victimisation in their establishments. The research results highlighted the need for the re-establishment of the Local Council for Crime Prevention, the establishment of a generic crime victims support unit as well as the implementation of awareness and sensitisation actions addressed to the members of the local society. Under this spectrum, specific key steps were followed to inform, sensitise and mobilise citizens and local social partners with the goal to develop a robust network of stakeholders in order to create a common ground

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[4] The BSFS project (2019-2023) was funded by the European Regional Development Fund in the framework of the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative (UIA). The leader of the project was the Municipality of Piraeus and the project's partners were: Panteion University via the Laboratory of Urban Criminology, the Police (Ministry of Citizen Protection), the European Forum for Urban Security (Efus), Singular Logic, Space Hellas and the Research Centre of the University of Piraeus. The first of the authors as the Head of the Laboratory of Urban Criminology was the scientific responsible for the research as well as the spatial and social interventions of the project. Project Overview – Be Secure Feel Secure (BSFS) (bsfs-piraeus.eu)

[5] The indicators were the following: fear of crime, perception of safety, individual participation in community based criminal policy, intention to participate in community based criminal policy and citizens' trust in local authorities.

of collaboration with the LCCP and the victim support unit that was established in the framework of the project.

In this respect, there was an identification and recording of the institutional and social entities that aimed at vulnerable groups and potential victims of crime in the Municipality of Piraeus. The next step entailed consultation meetings with these entities to inform them about the project and engage them as stakeholders while meetings were also organised with citizens as representatives of the local society. Training sessions followed on urban security issues addressed to public servants of the local authorities, the members of the Local Council for Crime Prevention and the engaged stakeholders as well as market protection training actions addressed to the local shop owners. At the same time informative meetings along with the competent stakeholders were implemented addressed to teachers and parents' associations of high schools of Piraeus to engage them in the implementation of students' awareness seminars. These seminars aimed at raising awareness and mobilising the school community regarding bullying and victimisation in the school environment and the internet, reducing the feeling of insecurity in the school environment and preventing victimisation with the final goal to contribute to the prevention of future antisocial behaviours in school. Moreover, an event took place with all the involved stakeholders in order for them to be informed and discuss about the operation of the established victim support unit and the ground of their collaboration. The aforementioned social actions along with two sport events addressed to the citizens of Piraeus aimed at raising community awareness, mobilising citizens and local stakeholders and enhancing community connectivity. In the framework of the project, there were also spatial actions in schools and playgrounds based on CPTED as well as actions at the cyber level, i.e. development of a digital platform (CURiM platform) that enabled the assessment of physical and cyber threats (Efus, 2023). The impact of the project was assessed by re-evaluating the indicators that were measured in the baseline assessment. The re-assessment of the result indicators showed the overall positive impact of the BSFS programme in the city of Piraeus (Zarafonitou, Mimis, & Kalamaras, 2022; Kontopoulou, 2023).

The "IcARUS: Innovative Approaches to Urban Security" Project

The European programme "*IcARUS: Innovative Approaches to Urban Security",* which is being implemented since 2020 and will be completed in September 2024 aims at designing and developing innovative social and technological tools in the field of urban security for them to be applied in the specific context of six European cities (i.e. Riga, Stuttgart, Turin, Lisbon, Nice, Rotterdam), thus offering solutions adapted to the local needs regarding crime prevention, enhancement of the feeling of safety and the citizens' trust in the institutions and local authorities. The ultimate objective of the project is to develop common strategies for urban safety at the local and regional level with an emphasis on partnership and citizens' participation. The project's areas of interest are *prevention of juvenile delinquency, organised crime and trafficking, design and management of public spaces as well as prevention of radicalisation and extremism*[6].

In the framework of the project the *Design Thinking methodology* was adopted. Design Thinking is a human-centered methodology that implies the inclusion of end-users in the process of creating ideas and solutions, so stakeholders become a component element of the policy-making process. The methodology consists of five stages: *empathise*, i.e. engage with the end-users, listen, observe and identify issues, *define*, i.e. define the problem that must be solved, *ideate*, i.e. investigate ideas for resolving the problem, *prototype*, i.e. transform the chosen ideas into practical and tangible tools and *test*, i.e. apply the tool and feedback is given regarding the test and the implementation of the tool (Fattori, 2020; Brown & Wyatt, 2010). The diagnosis of the problem that needs to be solved falls within the first two stages that refer to *empathise* and *define*. More specifically, in the framework of the project, workshops were organised with the partner cities and the end-users and various stakeholders to reach a thorough knowledge regarding the local security situation, the challenges and the needs of the citizens. Moreover, in some cases, there was also supplementary research with further workshops, interviews with stakeholders and civil society organisations, observational research etc. to gain more insight into problems or issues and possible solution directions (Davey et. al., 2024). These two steps of *empathise* and

define enable the deeper understanding of the specific needs, the viewpoint and the perceptions of the end-users and the members of the community, who are involved either as end-users or beneficiaries in the co-production of the tools. Such a process is considered a cornerstone for the next steps that involve the development, implementation and evaluation of the tools (Fattori, 2021). The information and awareness of the end-users and the stakeholders was achieved by harnessing communication campaigns (in person invitations, social media, flyers, posters) and meetings with those who corresponded positively to the communication campaigns.

In IcARUS project the active involvement of the end-users and the local stakeholders was at the core of the tools' development process. All tools were tailored to the specific needs of each partner city combing elements of both social and technological innovation. In the case of *Lisbon*, a programme for preventing juvenile delinquency was implemented aiming at the improvement of young people's skills and self-perceptions and the strengthening of their relationship with the local community and the police. In this context, small teams of young people (11-19 years old and mainly young people at risk) are created with the support of a youth worker and a police officer mentor. For a period of 12 weeks the members of each team work together to identify problems in their community that must be solved with the ultimate goal to engage in the development of solutions for the identified problems. In the case of *Turin*, a city that focused on juvenile delinquency prevention too, a collaborative decision-making support tool was developed. More specifically, a multi-stakeholder governance network was created, that is a committee composed of various stakeholders with different expertise related to the field of juvenile delinquency (e.g. law enforcement, education, social services, NGOs) to suggest solutions for addressing juvenile delinquency related problems. These solutions are evidence-based due to the harnessing of a digital dashboard that illustrates data regarding demographics, school dropouts, youth aggression etc. and finally, are being presented to the Municipal Council and thus possible interventions are being discussed. The *Rotterdam* tool consists of a forum event that involves the users of the Spaanse Polder area (business park). In the framework of a collaborative workshop the local authorities, the local professionals and the local businesses share with each other information regarding urban security issues of the area including organised crime. Therefore, through regular meetings with the community the local authorities and the Police are able to respond promptly to emerging

local security issues and give the relevant feedback to the community members. In the case of *Nice*, the well-known "Ask for Angela" tool, which aims at protecting and supporting citizens who feel vulnerable and unsafe in the public space, was implemented, as it was the case in UK back in 2016. According to its concept, establishments (e.g. bars and restaurants) become partners of this partnership and their staff gets the necessary training to effectively engage in the implementation of the tool. Therefore, if a citizen feels that there are being threatened or in danger, they can approach an establishment that displays the relevant sticker "Demandez Angela" and ask for help from the personnel by using the codeword in order for the staff to take all the necessary steps to ensure the person's safety. The *Stuttgart* tool aims at raising awareness regarding democracy values and enhances resilience of youth against radicalisation and extremism. The concept of the tool entails a magic show (a mobile interactive arts-workshop), a magician and a fake volunteer. The magic workshop takes place in public and by engaging the audience in the performance shows how the subjects can be easily influenced and directed towards assimilating views and behaviours that reflect radicalisation and extremism. Finally, in the case of *Riga* a collaborative tool was developed for effectively managing public spaces. In this context, a web application was created to support evidence-based modification of the applied local policing. This application includes data based on police records as well as data from three different surveys addressed to the citizens (conducted by police officers, volunteers from NGOs and local coordinators from district municipal centres). Each Chief of Department from the different districts of Riga considers the web application's data and proceeds, if necessary, to the information and adjustment of the local policing framework while sharing this information with the tool's end-users (Davey et al., 2024)

With regard to the evaluation of the project, tailored performance indicators for process evaluation were developed for each of the cities. The indicators were distributed in six different lists and referred indicatively to topics such as: the engagement of stakeholders; end-users and the community (e.g. specific targets groups); the level of their awareness; the cooperation between the involved partners; the end-users' and the stakeholders' satisfaction from the tool; the process of the training on using the tools; the sustainability of the tool; the usefulness of the tool etc. In this context, two different questionnaires were distributed to the end-users as well as to community members and stakeholders. The evaluation surveys were conducted during the end-users' training

workshops on using the tools and their components as well as during demonstration workshops, where the implementation of the tools took place. The evaluation of the IcARUS toolkit is still ongoing (Fattori et. al., 2024).

The aforementioned examples highlight the very common methodology elements applied as well as the active engagement of the community in the co-production of urban security, as the *conditio sine qua non* for their success. Furthermore, evaluation emerges as the cornerstone for advancing scientific knowledge, thus promoting the development of effective, sustainable and replicable local crime prevention policies.

Evaluation issues

The implementation of local crime prevention measures is just the first step towards building a participatory crime prevention policy. The rational formulation of a crime prevention policy and the effective prevention of crime require the scientific investigation of the criminal phenomenon, and the examination and *evaluation* of practices and strategies to successfully deal with it. What is necessary and important is the evaluation of the actions taken, i.e. the assessment of the impact of them.

The principle of scientific validation should be applied continuously and without exception in the formulation and implementation of crime prevention policies, with the aim of overcoming the identified difficulty of converting research data into an effective strategy. Thus, the regular monitoring and evaluation of crime prevention actions will help us to draw safe conclusions about their effectiveness and to carry out the necessary adjustments, interventions or recommendations for the institutionalisation of new actions, when and where required (Karagiannidis, 2011). As Tonry & Farrington (1995:14) notice *"high-quality evaluation research designs are needed to convince leading scholars, as well as intelligent policy makers and practitioners, about the effectiveness of crime prevention techniques"*.

In this respect, in order to make the necessary evaluation there are both qualitative and quantitative methods that can be used to measure the impact of the changes or improvements that have been introduced. As has been mentioned such methods and tools for the evaluation of the policies are first and foremost criminological surveys. Surveys can help policy-makers to understand the local community's needs and views after the implementation of a crime prevention practice. Moreover, repeating

surveys at regular intervals, for example every six months or one year can demonstrate changes over time in relation to the police statistics which can be used as an indicator. Indeed, there is a need for regular and systematic evaluation of the implemented policies via a constant monitoring mechanism for informing and adjusting policies, if necessary, according to updated research data (Efus, 2016).

However, evaluations, even if they are conducted on a regular basis, provide information regarding the effectiveness of an implemented policy for a specific target population in a given spatio-temporal context. Therefore, only speculations can be made regarding the successful replication of that policy in another context and for another target group. Furthermore, studying causation is a rather challenging task considering the limited scientific knowledge regarding causal relationships and interactions between risk and protective factors as well as regarding the probable effect of context on outcomes (Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:36). As an advocate of *realistic evaluation* Tilley notices (2000:4) that "*the key problem for evaluation research is to find out how and under what conditions a given measure will produce its impacts*". Under this spectrum, when doing evaluation, one should consider not only the underlying causal mechanisms but also the context that might affect the outcome. Such a consideration could be quite challenging taking into account the fact that in social reality there are too many underlying causal mechanisms and too many different contextual factors.

There are specific key points that should be considered by project managers, central agencies and researchers in order to effectively perform evaluation of crime prevention policies: [i] focus on priority areas where there is the greatest benefit; [ii] regular monitoring of the crime prevention project's performance; [iii] development of mechanisms for the efficient management and support of the evaluation process; [iv] combination of process and outcome evaluation; [v] design of the evaluation methodology at an early stage; [vi] definition of the mechanisms through which an intervention works considering contextual factors too; [vii] harnessing of weak evaluations; and [viii] measurement of short and long term outcomes; and consider economic assessment if possible (Morgan & Homel, 2013; Eck, 2002).

Moreover, the evaluation of the effectiveness of crime prevention should place equal focus on negative side effects. Indeed, in some cases negative side effects may even outweigh the positive impact of the implemented intervention. In this context, it

must be pointed out that side effects could also relate to serious ethical concerns regarding protection of human rights, individual freedoms and personal data. As Burssens (2016:241) highlights "*the question of how you want to prevent a problem is not separate from ethical questions (…) whether you find certain measures acceptable or not depends, among other things, on how much importance you attach to freedom, privacy, independence etc*". Therefore, during evaluation all kinds of costs and benefits should be considered to come up with a crime prevention policy which isreally effective, justifiable and suitable.

Another key challenge for the evaluation process is the seamless and close collaboration between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners (Tilley, 2002:9) which is usually hindered by the fact that they do not share common goals, priorities and expectations. In this respect, Crawford, Donkin and Weirich (2022:49) notice that while researchers focus more on the advancement of scientific knowledge rather than the harnessing of this knowledge in the real world, policy-makers demand immediate cost-effective crime prevention solutions and practitioners expect practical guidance to solve the problems. Therefore, it is necessary for the involved parties in the evaluation process to recognise each other's expectations, values, priorities and boundaries and develop a partnership of mutual respect and trust (Crawford, Donkin, & Weirich, 2022:49; Ekblom & Pease, 1995).

Finally, the successful implementation of participatory crime prevention and security practices at the local level requires a rational response to the problems faced by the local community that can act as a source of crime. The criminal phenomenon is not simply an administrative problem but is a problematic situation to deal with, which requires active participatory work between local authorities, stakeholders and citizens. In this respect, the active engagement of citizens is crucial for the success of the implemented crime prevention policy. Therefore, all local participatory policies and initiatives that have been evaluated with a positive impact, have been designed and implemented based on the aforementioned methodology context placing particular emphasis on the community's mobilisation and active engagement, which is considered as the cornerstone of the whole process for the co-production of urban safety.

Concluding remarks

The international, European and national experience highlights the importance of the participatory model, which is based on information, awareness, activation and collective participation of citizens in crime prevention actions at the micro-level of their city or neighbourhood. These decentralised prevention policies also highlight the role of local government which, when it functions properly, can record significant results. This is due to the fact that social problems and the conditions for the development of social solidarity are more easily identified at the micro-level of the city/district, while at the same time any difficulties in the implementation of these policies are mitigated due to the better coordination of the involved co-competent bodies.

However, the degree of success of these policies depends on a number of parameters such as the correct planning and coordination of the implemented actions and interventions based on reliable research data, the holistic nature of crime prevention measures with a long-term sustainability perspective, the response to real needs and particularities of the local society, the active participation of citizens as well as the formation and coordination of a strong network of local institutional and social partners aiming at developing effective synergies.

Many years ago, Skogan concluded that the most interesting aspect in community crime prevention is that the very definition of what crime prevention is hinges on the political outlook of the beholder (Skogan, 1988:72). In any case, the existence of political will to support these policies is deemed necessary, so that they function effectively with the corresponding scientific guidance, but also financial support. In this respect there should be efforts to invest in a scientific rational crime prevention policy with a long-term character and based mainly on participatory social crime prevention practices with the aim of developing the community bond in modern cities, improving the quality of daily life in them and promoting the citizens' sense of co-responsibility in the matter of crime prevention. What is needed is "*a holistic approach which is 'problem-focused' rather than 'bureaucracy-premised*" (Crawford & Cunningham, 2015:76).

The core component of the participatory criminal policy is the active involvement of community in the development and implementation of crime prevention. In this respect, the mobilisation of citizens to participate in community crime prevention policies requires a clarification of the idea of this model. Therefore,

intensive preparatory effort is required, which consists in building and operating a substantial mechanism of stimulation, prompting, and encouragement to the members of the local community to act participatively for the prevention of crime. For this reason, the coordination and networking of the various social services and agencies operating at the local level is required, e.g. at the municipality level, in matters of social preventive policy.

The partnership approach in crime prevention in order to be rational and effective needs intensive preliminary work, systematic implementation and thorough assessment of the actions taken. It is this very process that can highlight on the one hand often ignored problems and structural conflicts and good practices on the other (Crawford & Cunningham, 2015:72). The methodology context of the local crime prevention policies highlights the equal importance of diagnosing the local security situation, preparing the ground for the application of the local policies by informing and sensitising the community members with the aim to actively engage them, implementing the policy and finally, evaluating its impact considering also the probable negative side effects. The success of the policy depends on the very application of the aforementioned methodology while scientifically proper evaluation provides us with all the valuable insight for choosing good-quality short-term, mid-term or long-term interventions.

Even though predicting crime is considered as a rather challenging task, due to its multifactorial nature, the limited scientific knowledge regarding underlying causal mechanisms and other possible intervening parameters as well as due to methodological limitations of research schemes, the drawing up of a rational effective crime prevention policy with a long-term character, clear goals and a human-centered orientation is still possible by strictly applying the scientific method always considering theory in combination with the existing research experience.

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