



Book review

Tore Bjørgo. *Preventing Crime. A Holistic Approach*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 9781137560476 (Hb) 93.59€, 9781349569786 (Pb) 41.59€, 9781137560483 (eBook) 76.99€.

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Crime prevention interventions implemented in many countries have shown to be intuitive in many cases. Even though, there is a bunch of literature on the topic, practitioners and decision makers have relied on traditional and repetitive measures to prevent crime in their communities. *Preventing Crime: A Holistic Approach*, by Tore Bjørgo, professor at the Norwegian Police University College, proposes a general theoretical framework based on existing theory that inspires a holistic model of crime prevention.

The aim of Bjørgo's book is to develop a comprehensive model for crime prevention. Based on the deconstruction of existing prevention models (traditional social and individual prevention, situational prevention, criminal justice system and societal security and risk management), his proposal combines different elements from these approaches in an integrated comprehensive model.

The book explains and applies an integrated model based on a mechanism-based approach coming from those existing theoretical models. Bjørgo proposes nine prevention mechanisms that act as impediments to committing crimes. These mechanisms can be regarded as theoretical cause-effect abstract relations that explain how a measure brings about an outcome.

Each mechanism can be activated through different means, depending on the context and can apply to very different types of crime. The book contains an analysis on how these nine mechanisms can apply to five different types of crime, going from domestic burglary to violent youth gangs or terrorism.

It also must be pointed out that the author states, from the beginning, that the model's aim is to be as intuitive, self-evident and practical as possible. This is because; it is intended to provide a theoretical model, but also a simple practical tool for practitioners.

In chapter 1, *Introduction: A comprehensive model for preventing crime*, the author describes the theoretical framework, presenting the background theoretical approaches. He briefly presents the main theoretical prevention models that inspired his proposal: the criminal justice crime prevention model, the social crime prevention model, the situational crime prevention model and the risk management model. Then, he presents his comprehensive model, proposing nine crime prevention mechanisms by extracting the main preventive mechanisms of these

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diverse theoretical approaches. These mechanisms are the following and, according to Bjørge, should prevent a crime act occurring or occurring again:

- Establishing and maintaining normative barriers to committing criminal acts
- Reducing recruitment, by eliminating or reducing the social and individual causes and processes that lead to criminality
- Deterring potential perpetrators through the threat of punishment
- Disrupting criminal acts by stopping them before their commission
- Protecting vulnerable targets by reducing opportunities and make more demanding to commit criminal acts
- Reducing the harmful consequences of criminal acts
- Reducing the rewards from criminal acts
- Incapacitating or neutralizing perpetrators stopping their capacity or ability to carry out new criminal acts.
- Encouraging desistance from crime and rehabilitating former offenders

The chapter ends constructing a bridge towards practical application. His aim is to pass from a prevention model to a prevention strategy. Thus, he includes in his analysis the following six elements: measures, actors, target-groups and the strengths and limitations of those measures.

In summary, the chapter gathers a bunch of elements that can be organized in a matrix and which constitutes the main argument of the book. According to that structure, he proposes to analyze five types of crimes, through nine mechanisms, using six elements of analysis.

Following that structure, he states that those nine mechanisms can be applied to almost any kind of crime. In the following chapters he analyses the application of the model to five specific crimes to establish on each one, which measures can be applied. One of his arguments is there are a number of measures that can activate a mechanism or even, the same measure can activate different mechanisms. In addition, balance and coordinate sub strategies can ensure that they complement and reinforce.

Chapter 2 of the book analyses the application of the model to the first specific crime: *Domestic Burglary*. This chapter explains how a wide range of measures can activate the nine prevention mechanisms, improving the reduction of this crime. A main contribution on this chapter is to include the involvement of other actors, different to the police, and triggering thinking about less common measures to prevent crime, such as reducing recruitment to milieu involved in these crimes.

Chapter 3 develops the same analysis regarding *Violent Youth Gangs*. This chapter presents many contributions of the Norwegian approach to restorative justice and how it can apply to different mechanisms, even to those mechanisms considered harder, such as, disrupting the criminal acts. An interesting tool mentioned here is the preventive dialogues and the challenges of online interactions among youngsters.

Chapter 4 relates to *Organized Crime Originating from Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs*. This chapter presents an interesting argument about including formal and informal measures of control. In fact, it explores how social and administrative measures, different to criminal sanctions, can have an important deterrent effect.

Chapter 5 makes an analysis on *Driving Under the Influence*. It is interesting the reference to the Norwegian approach that relies on the construction of moral barriers to avoid driving under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants and measures related to rehabilitating habitual drink-drivers.

Chapter 6 analyses the model in relation to *Terrorism*. This is a challenge, since terrorism has been regarded and treated as a military issue in many countries

around the world. Here, the author explains the importance of combining long-term and short-term measures. Also, it analyses the importance of changing contextual conditions. Thus, some measures that worked in a specific temporal and geographical project, do not necessarily work in a different one.

Finally, the *Concluding Remarks* give some thoughts regarding contextual factors, evaluation and coordination. Thus, considering crime is a complex phenomenon, the author states that there is no single mechanism that can prevent crime. In addition isolation and evaluation of the implemented measures is complicated.

In general, I believe the book helps to have an overarching approximation to different approaches on crime prevention, using compelling examples to see how the theoretical framework can be used on specific crime prevention practices. In addition, the model allows expanding possibilities of public policy when proposing to combine different measures that can activate diverse mechanisms to prevent crime.

One of the main strengths of the book is that the model that Bjørge presents helps us to think on mechanisms normally not related to certain kind of crimes. I believe this is a major contribution, since it guides us to be more creative and to avoid the risk of failure when implementing these policies. In addition, the book provides important insights and specific contributions for reducing crime that can be considered and adapted to other experiences.

However, the book also presents some weaknesses. For instance, the majority of examples come from the Norwegian experience, which is quite particular in comparison to other countries, even from Europe or North America. The Norwegian model combines mainly social prevention and situational prevention and has less faith in the criminal system under a retributive model. I believe more international examples are missed and could help to evaluate whether or not the model can be applied in different contexts.

In addition, there is no explanation how and why those specific nine mechanisms were chosen from the theoretical approaches. There is an automatic link between the *original* theoretical approaches and the description of the model.

Additionally, the book it is not based on special fieldwork conducted for the proposal. Even though it provides a lot of examples on real issues, they seem in many cases too general to explain its link to theory or forced to fit the arguments of the book.

Finally, in the majority of cases, limited resources compel practitioners and decision-makers to prioritize among different measures. Thus, in reality, choosing or focusing only in some type of measures is not a matter of theoretical preference, but a matter of available resources. There additional analysis on how to prioritize among measures and mechanisms is missing.

I believe the book is a good contribution for practitioners who seek to find a practical framework to prevent crime. The book offers an entire toolbox of prevention mechanisms. It is true that it does not provide new evidence or an overall different theoretical framework. However, it helps to relocate some theoretical aspects and link them to different mechanisms, which are not normally associated to other types of crimes.

In conclusion, it is a useful book, especially for all those looking for a general overview on crime prevention frameworks. In addition, the book offers a good tool for ordinary practitioners and decision-makers to implement diverse and complementary crime prevention measures and to not restrain to the more common ones. The model is simple and can help to think strategically in the frame of public policy to prevent crime.