

Research Article

THE INFLUENCE OF SUPERVISION AND SURVEILLANCE ON CRIME PREVENTION

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ABSTRACT

As in the case of diseases healthcare is less costly and prior to the treatment, crime prevention is prior to, more secure, more fruitful and less costly than fighting crime. Supervision can be considered as part of the potential protection of the neighborhood. If the offender comes to the conclusion that in case of committing the offence he will be under surveillance – although he may not – the probability of committing the crime by him will be low. This is because he calculates the benefits and risks of the crime in his “transition of thought into action”. He knows that the probability of arrest will be high in this neighborhood because of the potential surveillance and supervision and the probability of the involvement of the inhabitants. Therefore, he will not commit the crime. This paper focuses on the principle of “supervision and surveillance” as an important instrument for crime prevention.

Keywords: *Supervision, Surveillance, Prevention, Crime*

INTRODUCTION

Delinquency is a phenomenon that has threatened human security and peace of mind for ages and humanity has put behind ups and downs in his reaction against it in the course of centuries. The peace and security of people depend upon low crime rate. Crime in addition to endangering public security in human communities and hurting public sentiments, imposes irreparable losses to the national assets and international reputation of the country.

This ill phenomenon wastes considerable amount of national wealth and manpower capacity of any country (that must be used for development and reconstruction) in addition to imposing material and spiritual losses to the victims. In cases when the delinquent person is arrested, apart from the bad instructions during the prison term – that usually leads to reinforced vandalism of the offender – the family goes unattended and suffers in terms of livelihood and in terms of many other forms of irreparable losses. In such a situation, applying punitive (reactionary) tools for suppressing the delinquency will be of no use. This is why various criminal policy systems have tended to using non-punitive (interactive) measures.

However, the attitudes of past criminologists in connection with the criminal behaviors and attributing the crimes to the individual factors have created a unilateral approach toward the crime creating factors. During the recent years, however, increased interest and attention has been paid to the analysis of the relationship between place and delinquency in the world scientific assemblies.

It seems that the growth in urbanization is the most important factor behind increased attention and concentration on this subject specially during the recent years. The growth in urbanization and identically the unbridled increase in crime in the majority of the world cities, have made the thinkers and criminologist to think about ways for reducing delinquency in their cities. According to Statistical Center of Iran, during the past 40 years, urbanization in Iran has jumped high from 31 percent in 1956 to 61 percent in 1996. It is clear that uncontrolled migration is one of the major factors for the hike in urbanization.

The ever-increasing growth in the population of cities has led to the emergence of many complicated problems especially social abnormalities. The increase in crime rate in the cities has threatened peace and security of the citizenry as well as the integrity of the community.

Therefore, since security, or better say feeling safe, is one of the most important demands of the social life, surveillance and supervision on criminal behaviors of the offenders are needed for a safe and calm

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life. To that end, public and private spaces should be monitored. The presence of control individuals in these spaces is one of the most effective ways for surveillance.

1) Official or Organized Surveillance

Official surveillance is usually carried out by the police. In city planning due attention should be paid to the policing places. Police at service along with people will promote feeling of security and safety among them. In city planning, police stations must be created at special places to give easy and fast access to the vulnerable and offence-ridden areas. On the other hand, using computer and filing criminal backgrounds of the offenders will help the police to use the software to catch the criminals when they are at work in special places such as banks. This software can help the police to get in the place before the offenders and arrest them on-time.

2) Semi-Official Surveillance

Semi-official surveillance calls for rapid protection, without the presence of police forces, by an individual who is present at a special place on a right time. This person can be a doorkeeper of an apartment, shop boy, parking attendant or school janitor or even a housekeeper (Geason, 2008).

Therefore, in the semi-official surveillance person is used as a controller or supervisor. For instance, in the entry gate of administrative or residential centers we can use some one as receptionist to control the entries and exits. The presence of these individuals in the place promotes security measures, but the most important semi-official surveillance is the district guard. This is practiced for years in some countries and in Iran, security groups and companies undertake this mission in cooperation and collaboration with the Law Enforcement Forces.

These people are mostly from among the retired forces of police. Some localities have used honorary police volunteers, as public contribution to the local security, with the principal mission of crime prevention. At present, these developments have been made in 471 local police officers (70%). The law enforcement services units serve as the district guards indeed (Shiri, 2007).

3) Natural or Unofficial Surveillance

One way for imposing risks on criminal behaviors is encouraging people to refer to the courts and to report the crimes and offences. Promoting such cultural awareness among people will be very helpful in crime prevention.

Encouraging people to report the suspicious cases to the police is also very important but it primarily depends upon friendly and trustable relations between people and police. Such a trust will encourage people to give their reports willingly.

In some countries, including Iran, some people like bank managers and managing directors of the companies, are legally obligated to report the criminal cases namely embezzlement or fraud in their offices, otherwise they will be treated as offenders. The basis of natural surveillance calls for people to serve as aids to the district guards or to the police. This is to help them identify and protect each other and interfere in suspicious cases in favor of each other and report the abnormal behaviors to the police. Smaller groups of citizens can gather together to exchange information on abnormal behaviors and plan for their surveillance. Members of these groups watch one another's properties, mark their own properties, boost the security of their houses, and in some cases present programs for expansion of apparent environment.

Thus, natural supervision and surveillance, that is an easy and secure way for crime prevention, must be achieved through design. The following techniques can be helpful in this connection:

- 1- Windows: Designers should note that the windows must not be placed just for the beauty of the building. They must be worked in a way to assure physical protection of the interior and exterior spaces.
- 2- The triangular corners of gable roofed terraced houses must have windows for overseeing the streets and open spaces.
- 3- When the ground floor is made of glass to the level of open watch from the gardens and streets for those sitting on the bench, standing or passing, transparency of the windows will be important. The protruding windows and large arcades are better than all. Designing other sections such as *iwān* or portico and parking must not obstruct view from windows.

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- 4- The opening of the building should be opposite the main street. It should give view to the streets, passersby, drivers, and any interesting thing on the street.
- 5- The building must be observable from the surrounding streets. Similarly, the windows must be worked in a way to let open watch toward the other buildings.
- 6- If the residential house contains two units, the entry should be worked in a way to allow control of entries and exits from either door. This will allow the residents in one unit see the person entering the other unit when he is not at home. The design, of course, should be in a way to prevent stealthy watched into the neighbor's life.
- 7- The door of the building must be worked in a way to allow control from inside and outside by the owners and the passersby. So, the door must not be placed in the darkest or most secret corners of the district, because in that case, there will be no space for defense.
- 8- The door must be strong enough to resist unblocking from outside. As a weak point, some doors have glassy pieces just close to the keyhole and its interior trigger. The glass can be broken and the trigger can be let loose.
- 9- The gardens and vases in the houses must not be created in places to hide the doors, otherwise the residents will be unaware of unauthorized entries, and thus, a non-defendable space will be created.
- 10- In designing the yard, hidden areas and blind corners must be avoided. The geometrical forms with straight lines such as rectangular or square yards are appropriate. The multifaceted forms create blind corners for hiding. Environmental design should be efficient enough to reduce entrapment spots. These spots are small, confined areas shielded on three sides by some barriers. s. If an entrapment spot cannot be avoided, it should be well lit and mirrors should be utilized.
- 11- Walls, columns, shrubbery, and berms wrongly placed can obstruct the line of sight and provide hiding places for perpetrators.
- 12- In residential complexes, a special place should be created for social gatherings to boost social interaction, feeling of ownership, and surveillance.
- 13- The best form of parking for the settlers is allocating a special parking lot to each unit or building a parking lot in their property. The street side parking allows the owners and neighbors to see the cars and hear the sounds that will prevent crime against their vehicles.
- 14- The chances for parking vehicles in places other than those designed for parking must be eliminated by design and installation of street equipment, green areas and other facilities to let the parking take place at the specified points.
- 15- The sight of the open-air parking lots must be improved by eliminating the bushes or any unnecessary structure.
- 16- The covered and basement parking lots must have good lighting and few and narrow pillars to avoid hideouts.
- 17- Windows can be worked around the parking lot on the surrounding buildings to let overseeing the parking.
- 18- Fences and walls are encouraged to be integrated into the site and unit design, to provide privacy screens for outdoor spaces, while maintaining the maximum amount of walls within the unit with windows and doors. Opaque walls or fences are encouraged for privacy and screening purposes.
- 19- The apartments must have janitors with internal telephone extension. He must check the identity of the guests before opening the door and ask the host about the identity of the guest. If the residential unit is unsafe and insecure, all settlers must cooperate in installation of security systems.
- 20- The Board of Directors must hold sessions regularly. Constant safety inspection of the building is necessary. The problems in connection with garbage, bad words written on the walls, burnt-out lamps, faulty lighting devices, etc. must be immediately reported by the owners and the Board shall manage them.

4) Mechanical or Technological Surveillance

Mechanical or technological surveillance is achieved by installation of electronic equipment and boosting lighting.

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Installation of Electronic Equipment

There are five ways in total to prevent entry of the delinquent persons into the building (Khalili and Mahmoud, 2009):

- Electronic tools like pressure activated door mat, magnetic switches for the exterior doors and windows, and vibration alarm
- Personal activating tools like various types of alarms
- Smoke and heat detectors
- Control tools, like videos for the entries, yard and video control of the people entering the apartment. Controlling the the entries through magnetic cards, electronic eye, electronic code, mirror and laser codes

But closed circuit cameras are the most important tools for controlling the unauthorized entries. These cameras are placed in public passageways, buses, parking lots, underpasses and pedestrian bridges. These tools boost security coefficient by creating the feeling that the environment is under surveillance.

The occasional and weak-hearted offenders avoid committing a crime when they see the camera. There is of course another reason in addition to the fear of arrest, i.e. the high risk and the shamefulness after arrest. Orientation of the camera in a certain direction will make the offenders review the risk in their evaluation and decide to do the job or leave it. It should be noted that, professional felons do not spare time in inspection of the weak points of the prevention tools. They disable the tool by physical ways if they can.

Optimal Lighting

Darkness is the first step in creation of defenseless and vulnerable space. When there is no light and darkness is governing the space, nothing will be visible, no objects, artificial or non-artificial, space or man. This will encourage criminals to intrude into these spaces.

Therefore, lighting is an important aspect in urban security that will reduce crime, in addition to the fear of committing the crime. Dark places provide more changes for criminal behavior (Majid, 2007). Appropriate lighting helps people to see and to be seen.

Statistics show that some certain crimes are committed in winter. This is because of the long dark hours in this season.

Using lights, however, should be according to principles and standards of design and criminology to avoid undesirable results. These principles are the following:

- Minimum Standards

If a district has been considered for surveillance at night, sufficient lighting should be provided there. Pedestrian passes, alleys, highly crowded places must be illuminated in a way to enable an ordinary person to distinguish faces from 10 meters away. Entries, exits and tableaux must be illuminated properly. On the other hand, lamp voltage, color and the degree of lighting must be appropriate for seeing the people not for group gatherings.

- Paths no considered for night use

There is no need to illuminate unsettled districts with no passersby. Illumination of these places will attract some people to go there and this will be dangerous for them. These places, not considered for night traffic, must be confined by fences to tell the people they are not safe places.

- Stability and Compatibility of Light

Illumination must be made properly to eliminate any blind corner. Using low-voltage electric tools will reduce intensity of light and darkness. Light must not create shadows or blind corners.

Some angles of light, like bottom to top lighting, is harmful to the brain, just like land light for security reasons. This is not safe at all, because we are accustomed to receive light from the top to the bottom.

In the majority of cases, a combination of direct and scattered light is the best method. Such a combination provides an in-depth sight into the darkness.

- Protection of Lighting Implements

Lighting and electric implements and tools must be protected against sabotage and against destruction of wires and tools.

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- Lighting Places

Lamps should directly cast light into the thoroughfares and illuminate the surroundings as well. In lighting design, the gardens, bushes and everything that may obstruct the light beams must be considered.

Conclusion

Crime prevention programs must be carried out in three levels: First, in individual level, i.e. the things that a real or legal person should do to reduce chance for committing a crime by potential criminals and protect themselves from the risk of misdemeanants. Second, in collective level in nongovernmental form, like what the neighborhood settlers or the shopkeepers in bazaar do for their security. And third, in governmental level, i.e. what the governmental sectors such as district governorships, municipalities, governorships, governor-generalships, ministries, etc. carry out in line with their duties and responsibilities for crime prevention.

Therefore, the need for using participatory criminal policy is a result of these discussions. Reporting the crimes and suspicious activities, formation of district guards, mediation and the like are instance of public contributions that can have a good role in crime prevention. Another preventive approach has placed emphasis on bottom to the top policies, district orientation and public participation. This approach monitors all crimes with the help of people and specialized social control strategies, and by preemptive measures brings about reduction in crime prevention.

The biggest barrier in using this crime prevention method is lack of sufficient knowledge on it. A limited number of people knowing about it, try to act upon its requirements, of course without boosting their understanding of the concept of crime prevention through designing safe and secure spaces. Others try to take it for granted, and some others see it as an amusement for passing their time.

Formation of a center to represent the neighborhood (a group comprising of local leaders, women and the youth) to undertake the responsibilities of decision-making, consultation, implementation and teaching techniques for crime prevention is highly recommended. To realize public participation in crime control in districts the following guidelines are proposed:

- Creating a feeling of belongingness to the place, establishing peace of mind and assurance on decision-making, fixation on identifying local leaders, official recognition by legal and official organizations
- Calling the attention of the owners of houses and the tenants in these regions to air pollution and destruction of residential units
- Financial supports and encouraging the residents to protect the green spaces in a bid to boost their feeling of ownership
- Creating an atmosphere for face-to-face communications and interactions among residents
- Empowering local institutions such as mosques and district guardianships in cooperation with people to realize cultural cooperation and accord in districts and boost neighborhood relationships
- Encouraging people to report suspicious cases. This will serve as complementary to the police data, although it cannot replace administrative statistics, and provide more information to the policymakers and managers.

In the end, we should say that all these measures and especially natural surveillance need legal guarantee (legal and penal) on abstention from reporting misdemeanor in order to be useful.

Article 24 of Anti-Narcotics Law (According to this article, any member of village Islamic councils has as his duty, as soon as learns of cultivation of poppy, coca or cannabis in the rural area, to notify the matter in writing to the alderman and the closest outpost) as well as the liabilities for the aldermen and district officials.

With respect to Article 22 of the Law on Penalty for Railway Offences contains the same liabilities (According to Article 22 of the law passed in March 1941, the aldermen and the rural district officers protecting part of the railway upon order by authorities in charge, will be sentenced to 3 month to 3 years prison term in case their carelessness is proved in protection of the railway).

Therefore, anticipating for various civil and penal sanctions is the prerequisite for success in crime prevention cooperation.

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