

## **Book Review**

**Crawford, A. (ed) (2009) *Prevention Policies In Comparative Perspective* .Cullompton. Willan .**

This is a collection of nine essays on the development of strategies to tackle crime across the United Kingdom (England and Wales, Scotland) as well as from France, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Hungary. These are sandwiched between overarching chapters which attempt to place the national perspectives in a wider political, economic and philosophical context, seeking to find common themes and narratives.

The initial chapter on situating crime perspectives in a comparative context is very helpful as it looks at the difficulties in making valid comparisons as different European countries approach the problem of preventing crime and responding to crime within different socio economic and political contexts. Though the comparative countries have very different histories, population structures and constitutional arrangements, what unites them is the social reality that policing and punitive measures have been seen not to solve a rises in recorded crime. The difference in national narratives ,based on where the journey towards crime prevention begins, all end up in the direction of the development of local partnership, incorporation of urban and product design to combat crime and the realisation that preventing crime involves a complex network of assertive social development and criminal justice actions. It is the capturing of this varied narrative that is the fascination of the book

I found that the book explores core themes, each echoed throughout the collection of essays .Often the same policy trajectory, for example locally devised and implemented responses arise through varied routes.

The strength of central government and the place and power of local and regional government is a key theme of the book. Systems for delivering criminal justice located in states with weak governmental structures such as Belgium and Italy show that, with relatively weak central government, leadership in developing responses to crime is devolved more locally, often at city level. Dario Melossi and Rosella Selmini , in the chapter on Italy, capture this complexity by talking about the ‘search for integration and the absence of the state’ (p165) and the observation that ‘a new infrastructure of local governance of crime prevention has been established in the absence of the national state’. Similarly, Patrick Hebberecht, describing Belgium, talks about an increasing federalisation, with ‘more competencies for the Flemish region’ (p192), with local cities and areas asserting competence in crime prevention within a framework set by the state governments.

Germany has a stronger and more balanced and cohesive federal constitutional structure in which the development of Local Crime Prevention Councils at city or locality level, is set within a framework set by the Provincial (lande) and Federal Government. This is well described by Michael Jasch in the chapter on Germany.

Another useful theme explored in the book is the development of a socio-political culture. The chapter by Jan J.M. Van Dijk and Jaap De Waard on the Netherlands spends time discussing the impact of a culture of common interest developed in response to a shared perception of threat or danger. The culture developed by local areas in response to a shared danger of flooding known as the Polder System is discussed as an analogy to how cities and localities are responding to the collective danger of crime and criminality.

The chapter by Klara Kerezsi on Hungary talks about a nation emerging from decades of USSR imposed Communism following the devastation of World War 2. She talks about 'zigzags' or changes in direction of policy (P215) regarding policing, punishment and prevention. As a new member of the European Union, Hungary incorporated legal reforms to comply with European standards in the 1990's. As a society in transition, she notes that Hungary has to adjust to 'unfavourable socio-economic conditions' (P231) and 'low living standards' as can be seen in the disproportionately high rate of criminality amongst the Roma and high rates of juvenile crime. Klara Kerezsi mentions the helpful realisation by Hungary's Ministry of Justice that the 'social crime prevention system is based on the principle of social justice' (p224) and the importance of creating opportunities and routes out of criminality for the marginalised.

The advent of a devolved constitutional settlement on the United Kingdom has had an impact on the delivery of criminal justice and crime prevention, described by Adam Edwards and Gordon Hughes (concerning England) and Alistair Henry (writing about Scotland) which allows both countries to develop different responses to crime and disorder. England has locally agreed partnership structures led by local government and the police service including Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. The notion of partnership includes the idea of the property owning citizen having a responsibility for the safety of his property (houses and possessions) demonstrated by the development of Neighbourhood Watch, alarm and CCTV systems and private security or purchased security. At the same time, social work intervention with offenders is now located in a correctional structure, with probation now part of a 'National Offender Management Service' in conjunction with the Prison Service.

Scotland, as described by Alistair Henry, supports a criminal justice system with an emphasis on avoiding the labelling as criminals young people involved in law breaking (Kilbrandon Report 1968). In addition, social work with offenders continues to be located alongside mainstream social work with adults and families within social work departments, rather than a probation service located within the coercive collocation with the prison service in National Offender Management Service.

The book also addresses the important issue of responses to diversity. The chapter by Dario Melossi and Rossella Selmini addresses the impact on northern Italian regional and city

politics of a wave of immigration to main industrial cities such as Turin or Milan. They talk about the rise of the newly urbanised industrial working class gaining the surplus income to acquire or consume objects or goods . They describe the ‘devalorisation of labour’ (P156)and the development of socially disconnected working class men engaging in criminal activities, often in working class areas.

The chapter discussing developments in France also comments on the effects of immigration on crime and crime prevention. In describing the high rate of non-white, often North African population in the banlieues, Anne Wyvekens writes about the attempts to engage with the poor educational attainment, exclusion and unemployment in these suburbs of the major cities as well as writing on using urban redesign and surveillance as a means to design out crime.

This book can be read in two equally valued ways. The Essays can be read individually, providing a valuable and personal account of crime prevention in the context of the political ( including constitution),social and economic structure and philosophy of the country. However, I would recommend that the collection is best read cumulatively, with each essay providing a prism for viewing both earlier and later contributions. Having read the book in a cumulative manner, insights into the individual chapter become more nuanced and are deepened.

I would recommend this book to students, academics, and researchers as well as to practitioners who are interested in the historical , economic and political context in which criminal justice policy is formed and implemented.

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