

# CPTED and Community Building: The Next Phase

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## Introduction

Crime is essentially a social problem, not a technical one. Technical solutions like CCTV and target hardening can never be the structural answer to a crime problem. Even the introduction of police as a human factor does not change the root of the problem if the police are limited to traditional methods, such as arresting and sentencing criminals. A more promising approach is a comprehensive one, in which a community building strategy is integrated with traditional policing methods. A comprehensive approach which would include social, physical and economical aspects such as child care, education and responsibility, could prevent people from becoming indifferent to values and standards. This is crucial to crime prevention.

The pure CPTED criteria, such as natural surveillance, natural access control, and territorial reinforcement, are design criteria; they are not directly aimed at community building. Other criteria, such as direct action aimed at mutual care for each other's personal integrity and property, should be added to the CPTED criteria to achieve community building. Traditional CPTED criteria work only when mutual interests already exist. In some neighborhoods, these mechanisms need incentives before CPTED design criteria can become effective.

Community building criteria should therefore be structurally integrated in the CPTED criteria set. This paper is meant to initiate a comprehensive inventory of community building strategies, and ways to fit these strategies into the traditional set of CPTED design criteria. The Dutch situation anno 1998 is the reference. Two types of community building strategies are:

- pushing the degree of organization to a higher level;
- supporting the existing degree of organization.

The first type of community building, "Quality of Life" is attained using strategies that fit perfectly within the concepts of the. The second type of community building is "Community Support".

Use of the word "organization" needs clarification. The "degree of organization" is the operational form of abstract concepts like "community spirit" or "sense of community". This can be determined quantitatively, by measuring the frequency of neighborhood meetings, political level of the activities undertaken by neighborhood organizations, and patterns of actual mutual help offered by the organizations to their members. It is, therefore, more useful than abstract concepts like "community spirit".

## Quality of Life

"Quality of Life" strategies have positive connotations. It is really community *building*, creating something which does not yet exist. The strategy is rooted in the feeling "there is a world to win". Some of the strategies are easily linked to "good design"; "good" not only in aesthetic terms, but in meeting CPTED criteria as well.

## Creating Activity Space

Criteria closely related to traditional CPTED criteria are those which integrate neighborhood facilities, such as schools, playgrounds, parks, shops, and a center for neighborhood activities within a design.

The presence of these "social facilities" helps to organize people, and literally offers a roof for neighborhood activities and contacts.

The presence of these facilities in newly built areas is strongly regulated in Holland. It is not possible to place a school within a design if the number of future inhabitants does not meet government regulations. But, *if* the newly built area is big enough to allow for social facilities, interesting questions arise about how to cluster and locate these facilities in a way that contributes the most to community building.

In Holland, the "Police safe housing label" contains specific requirements for the design of social facilities. An interesting example are the requirements for good school design. The first edition of the police safe housing label manual requires integrated playgrounds around the school: playgrounds that are to be used by the pupils during school hours, and by all people in the neighborhood outside of school hours. This increases the risk of vandalism and arson. The contribution of an integrated playground to community organization was initially judged to be more important than the risk of vandalism and arson. In later editions of the manual, this starting point was abandoned, and after many discussions, the whole item "school design" was removed from the manual. Instead, the item "disturbance giving facilities" was added. The police label's focus shifted from community building to community support.

Quite the opposite happened at the same time in the model colony "Poundbury," presently under construction in the countryside of South West England. The brochure for this project states: "The holistic approach to the planning of Poundbury meant that the designers had to create townscape, landscape and road layout in ways which might encourage the growth of an integrated community." "The key to the success of Poundbury will be the way in which it encourages a mixture of houses, schools, leisure and community facilities, and working places."

The strategy described in the Dutch and British examples could be summarized as: "*creating activity space*." The Poundbury strategy is a true example of activity space viewed from the perspective of its possible contribution to community organization. This strategy is not only beneficial for newly build areas, but also for the revitalization of existing run down areas. In the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam (an area with typical high-rise public housing estates and a severe crime problem), for example, activity spaces built for leisure and religious activities were added in the empty spaces between the complexes. Later, also offices and shops were added. In existing areas, involvement of local people in the planning of activity spaces is both a condition of and a contribution to the process of community building. Involvement implies responsibility for the environment, "territoriality", as Oscar Newman puts it.

### **Offering a social program**

Offering enough space for activities does not automatically imply that the space will be used properly. In some neighborhoods, people will be fully self supporting, but other neighborhoods will require professional supervision. Projects should be undertaken by local welfare organizations, who should initiate social programs to be offered in these spaces. These projects should include leisure activities, educational activities and job mediation.

#### *Educational activities.*

Educational projects are important because they contribute to the internalization of values, such as responsibility for the environment and for people in the neighborhood. Education starts in the earliest phase of the life cycle. Crime problems in the adolescent phase can often be traced back to a lack of supervision and education in earlier phases, maybe even in the first 4 years of life.

For the children in the neighborhood, some Dutch cities offer "*op stap*" projects. These projects are ones in which children and parents both "learn to play". Learn to play implies: learning to concentrate, create, and cooperate. These are important skills for education, starting with elementary school. In elementary education, the Dutch school system has developed strategies for "remedial teaching." Children who need extra supervision are not removed from the class, but enjoy extra supervision from the "remedial teacher" in class. These children get homework to do with their parents, making the parents responsible as well. Another example closer to CPTED practice, is a project organized by

those responsible for the central playground in an area. Children must "earn" toys and other things to play with by showing good behavior. The toys and other materials are stored in a vandalism proof container near the playground. Only the playground supervisor can open it and hand out toys after receiving reports about good or bad behavior from the schools.

#### *Leisure activities for adolescents.*

Community facilities usually do not offer the right activities for adolescents, or there are competing groups in the neighborhood which cannot share one facility. A Dutch solution for this problem is creating 'juvenile meeting places' (JMP's), places where juveniles can meet each other. Adolescents want a place to meet that isn't organized. The only thing that should be organized is the choice of the right location and the design of the shelter. These steps are taken together with the adolescents. If there are competing groups in the neighborhood, different shelters should be created at the same time, and at a secure distance from each other.

An evaluation was carried out in a Dutch town with an advanced JMP strategy. This research reports positive results for most JMP locations. The JMP's were judged positively by the following groups:

- by the juvenile groups, because they have a formal meeting place;
- by the adults in the area, because they got rid of the disturbance at informal meeting places and the crime rate (especially vandalism) decreased in the area;
- by professionals, because it is now possible to send juvenile people, causing a disturbance, to the newly created formal meeting place.

The degree to which people in the neighborhood are organized, as well as the cooperation between the neighborhood and professionals is increased thanks to the intensive development process.

In a number of areas, however, efforts to create a JMP failed. This could have happened for the following reasons:

- the neighborhood could not agree about a suitable location (a too strong NIMBY attitude);
- the JMP was demolished by angry people from the neighborhood, fearing disturbances and crime;
- the JMP was demolished by a competing juvenile group.

These failures are useful lessons. They tell us about conditions necessary for making JMP's a success. Professionals must invest in communication and coordinate their opinions and communication actions towards the neighborhood in order to gain enough support for the project. They must be well aware of competing groups in the neighborhood. If these exist, each group should be offered the chance to realize its own JMP.

#### *Job mediation.*

At first sight, one might think that job mediation could never be related to community building, because the labor market is organized on a regional scale. Jobs are not found in the neighborhood alone, but in the whole region. This is certainly true for Holland as well, nevertheless two examples can be given in which job mediation was downscaled to the neighborhood level and local people were involved.

One example is the organization of job markets in the neighborhoods. These are open air markets organized by commercial and non-commercial job mediators, moving from one neighborhood to the next. The markets are made attractive by festivities, music and theater performances. In this way, the markets also contribute directly to the organization degree in the neighborhood.

Another example is the installation of 'Block Guards' in apartment buildings in the Bijlmermeer, previously mentioned. Candidates for these jobs were recruited, as much as possible, from the neighborhood itself. The employees were familiar with the situation in the building and could therefore get feedback from the inhabitants while doing their surveillance. Improvement in job opportunities coincided with improvement in neighborhood organization.

Evaluation research shows a positive effect, not only on job opportunities but also on security in the area. People felt safer and no longer avoided certain places at certain hours of the day. Also, the rate of vandalism and drug related problems decreased.

### **Planning maintenance and development together with the neighborhood**

If physical maintenance is neglected, the environment loses its attraction. Doors remain open which should be kept closed, places remain dark which should be well lit, and on and on. CPTED criteria lose their significance without continuous physical maintenance. There is, however, also a community building aspect to good maintenance. Maintenance programs that involve the neighborhood enhance the feeling of responsibility for the environment. This requires a small scale organization, with a central location in the neighborhood where meetings can take place, complaints can be made and tools can be stored.

In Holland, many larger cities introduced Neighborhood Management between 1985-1995. They decentralized their organization for physical maintenance to the neighborhoods and involved neighborhood people when they developed maintenance plans. Initially the scope of these plans was no longer than 1-3 years, but since 1995 more and more projects show an expansion to long term and strategic planning, with a planning scope of 5-15 years. 'Neighborhood Management' became 'Area Development'. Instruments were also developed that ranged from daily maintenance to reconstruction plans for apartment blocks and public spaces. Two aspects, however, did not shift: the involvement of local people in the planning process and the presence of immediate actions. Immediate, visible and concrete results are a necessary condition for keeping people involved in the neighborhood management and for restoring confidence in the maintenance policies of the local government.

This strategy could be summarized as "planning maintenance and development together with the neighborhood".

### **Summary and remarks about the role of the police**

In this section, three strategies of creative community building are explained and illustrated with Dutch examples:

- creating activity space;
- offering a social program;
- planning maintenance and development together with the neighborhood.

There is a modest role for the police in the implementation of these community building strategies. The police are just one of the participants in this process. Many other participants are involved, with the community inhabitants in the first place.

Processes which involve many participants need adequate coordination. This requires setting up a project structure with clearly formulated aims, means, the role of participants, coordination, budget and time schedule. The police are rarely the coordinator of these projects.

Other participants are the institutions for juvenile support, the maintenance of public space and real estate, managers of schools and community facilities, educational institutions for preventing school drop out, job offices to bring job vacancies and training facilities closer to their potential clients.

If physical reconstruction of public spaces or housing stock is part of the project, the police can contribute specialized knowledge about crime patterns, risk avoidance and specific means for crime prevention. This is especially useful when discussing the design of playgrounds around schools and the choice of locations for schools, as well as for "nuisance giving facilities." The police could follow the police safe housing label guidelines, which proved a successful and practical instrument in Holland.

The clearest role of the police, however, is to be defined within neighborhood management. The police have the best information about crime problems, including specific information about hot spots and hot

hours; not only from the statistics but also from their role as ears and eyes of the neighborhood. With this valuable information, the police can structure its own surveillance patterns and also give incentives for appropriate action by other participants.

The concept of community building by creating activity space, offering social programs and the introduction of neighborhood management has a somewhat romantic character. It is especially popular with planners, architects, social workers and local politicians.

In neighborhoods with severe crime and security problems, however, there is no room for such romantic thinking. More concrete action, aimed directly at solving the problem and preventing disintegration of the community is needed. This kind of action is described in the next chapter.

### **Community Supporting Strategies**

The community supporting strategies are aimed at "holding on tight to what you do not want to loose." They apply to communities with an already existing degree of organization and aim at solving concrete crime and insecurity threats to these communities. They are especially popular with the police and the neighborhood inhabitants themselves; not so much with planners, architects, social workers and local politicians, probably because they seem defensive in character rather than romantic and constructive.

### **Supporting safety networks**

In Holland, some projects contributed to the further development of the "Neighborhood Watch" concept. This concept has been redesigned and reintroduced as "Safety networks" for elderly, as elderly were the special target group. There were around 15 experiments carried out in the Netherlands between 1992-1997, all aiming at:

- the identification and communication of security problems and other problems experienced by the elderly to the authorities in charge;
- network building among the elderly, particularly to stimulate the general degree of activity and mutual help.

The basic idea is, the more an elderly person lives an isolated and inactive life, the more sensitive he will be to his sense of security. By increasing the level of activity and social contacts, the circle of isolation and inactivity could be broken.

Whether the activities should be aimed directly at security problems in the area is a question that should be raised and answered in each specific neighborhood, according to the feelings of the elderly themselves. In some areas the elderly want to talk and act directly about crime prevention, in some other areas the networks could have primarily a social character, where crime is slightly 'hidden' on the agenda, and certainly not discussed at every meeting.

Evaluation research shows that the hypothesis on the coincidence between the degree of activity and the feeling of security is valid. The survey proved that elderly people with an increased level of activity showed a decreased fear of crime and also the other way round: elderly with a decreased activity level showed an increased fear of crime and felt more isolated. When the elderly showed an increased activity level, this was primarily thanks to activities offered by the project. When the elderly showed a decreased activity level, the project could not have avoided this. These elderly people had either problems with their health or felt too old to participate in the activities.

The networks can be self supporting with a little help from professionals. This help relates to the organization of meetings, finding the way to the right authorities for specific problems and helping with writing letters or organizing meetings with these authorities. This strategy, which could be summarized as "supporting safety networks," is not exclusively applicable to elderly people. It could be applied to other target groups as well, for example students living on unsafe campuses and parents of young children going to school in unsafe neighborhoods.

### **Installing community boards**

The establishment of "Community boards" in the USA did not go unnoticed in Holland. Since around 1995, the Dutch government has also stimulated local experiments using the principle of community boards in Dutch cities, a policy it calls "Decentralizing the Public Prosecutor."

In the Dutch system, the public prosecutor is usually an invisible power for neighborhood citizens. In the experiment, the public prosecutor becomes an approachable institution, with a "shop" open at fixed times centrally located in the neighborhood.

The projects operate on three impact levels. From low to high impact:

- mediation between neighbors who disturb each other, for example by cutting down the hedge between the rear garden without notification;
- mediating to settle the damages suffered between victim and offender;
- mediating to restore the relation between victim and offender.

The first type of mediation is purely preventive: no criminal incident has yet occurred. The second type is aimed at material damages, for example to make good the vandalism damage done to a car. The third type is aimed at personal damage, such as sexual assault. This is called "repair mediation." In the meeting, the offender shows his or her sorrow for what has been done to the victim. The "repair" aims to let the offender be seen as a neighbor once again by the victim. This prevents victims from locking themselves into an attitude of fear, indifference and apathy.

All three impact levels contribute to the quality of contacts between people and to the degree of organization. People meet frequently, their opinion is asked and they feel involved in the education of values and standards of social behavior.

Decentralizing the public prosecutor also helps to realize an immediate response to petty crime. The punishment could be a fee, but in the case of juvenile offenders an alternative punishment, like cleaning graffiti from walls in the shopping center on a busy Saturday when all the neighbors are watching, is more effective.

In neighborhoods where a large number of juvenile offenders live, the prosecutor organizes a meeting hour, together with police officers working in the area, in which parents can come (with or without a child) to talk to the prosecutor about the crimes committed and the possibilities for settling these within the criminal law. If a crime is committed by a group, such as a riot in which cars and shops are vandalized in the neighborhood, the prosecutor, together with the police, organizes a meeting for all parents of the children suspected, in order to make all parents and children feel responsible, and to settle the damage done to the victims collectively.

In one of the experimental projects, the results of this collective approach were astonishingly good. In an area, previously off-limits to the police who risked returning finding their cars with flat tires, the dialogue between police, public prosecutor and people was re-established and a collective settlement to repair the damage done by a group to a vacant dwelling was agreed between all parties.

### **Removing jeopardizing elements from the community**

"Removing elements" doesn't sound like a very human strategy, but the contrary is true. This strategy concerns people who terrorize a whole neighborhood with their behavior, causing constant disturbance to all people around them. Drug dealers are a perfect example. Day and night drug addicts come and go, fighting over deals, using drugs nearby, leaving used injection needles in the neighborhood. Psychotic patients are another example, screaming and banging on doors in the middle of the night, waking the whole neighborhood. One such element can jeopardize the whole community structure, if people feel they cannot handle the situation, even when acting as a group. Therefore "removing" the "element" is very human act towards the whole community.

However, in Dutch law, tenants and proprietors are very well protected. It is very difficult to get them evicted. Concrete criminal incidents, like threatening people in the neighborhood, are needed to convince a lawyer that the "elements" have to be "removed" from the area.

Between 1995-1998, 5 experiments were completed by a governmental housing organization together with local institutions such as housing corporations (non profit housing corporations run 40% of the housing stock in the Netherlands).

The experiments aimed not only at removing the annoying tenants, but also at offering them more suitable housing (in an area less sensitive to the deviant behavior) and to help improve the deviant behavior through supervision. The removed tenant gets the key of this new apartment only on the condition that he agrees to a "Supervision Contract." The tenant and his supervisor make agreements about the expected changes in behavior. The supervisor helps the tenant find institutes which can help him with his specific problems, for example a clinic for drug addicts. If the tenant does not act according to the agreements made, he risks losing his house again.

The experiments with the formula "re-housing + supervision" are a success, at least for the time the supervision lasts. The former neighborhood is relieved of the nuisance and the new neighborhood does not experience any disturbance as long as the supervision lasts. The risk of tenants' same old behavior returning at the new location is present. If the new neighborhood is less sensitive to disturbances, the tenant may be less of a problem than in the former neighborhood. Nevertheless, if the housing corporation should start to hear complaints from the new neighborhood, the corporation might feel obliged to re-house the tenant for the second time. A "last chance housing option" like a caravan or a container can be useful for this purpose.

The project's best result, however, does not lie in the curing the tenant or changing his (former) environment. The best result lies in the improved network between professional organizations (housing corporation, police, social workers) which enable a quick and effective re-housing procedure. The re-housing can now be realized before the jeopardizing element destroyed the community structure completely.

### **Summary and remarks on the role of the police**

In this section, the following three strategies of community support are explained and illustrated with Dutch examples:

- Supporting safety networks.
- Installing community boards.
- Removing jeopardizing elements from the community.

All three strategies are aimed at supporting the existing degree of organization of people in the community.

The police are in the position to contribute to the required support to a great extent. Contacts with "chiefs" of the community give the police opportunity to help build up safety networks or organize in other ways a neighborhood watch system in the area. It's a win-win situation for police and community.

The police take a mediating role in "community board" projects. The police can help organize "repair mediation" between the victim and the offender. The police can offer an immediate response to petty crime and can remain in touch with the public prosecutor working in the neighborhood to discuss the most appropriate and effective punishment.

The community support approach is entirely dedicated to the social aspect of community building. The physical and the economical aspects are not affected by this approach.

In areas with a high level of crime or other social problems, the results of an approach limited to social aspects often will be unsatisfactory. In these areas, one should - sooner or later - introduce the typical community *building* strategies, as presented in section 2.

### **Further steps**

To conclude, we recommend combining the set of CPTED criteria and community building strategies. These strategies should be developed after a complete inventory of successful neighborhood projects have been made. These should include projects with and without a physical aspect, projects in which the police were the main participant as well as projects in which the police took on a secondary role.

The six strategies presented in this paper are just the start of the inventory and of the discussion.

The most effective strategies should be used to help define the strategies, as they will, in the end, be added to the CPTED criteria set.

The steps to be taken in order to complete the criteria set are: inventory, definition, and integration.

The last step, "integration," means that the work is not completed simply with a longer list of criteria; a great deal of thinking has to be spent on the possible relations between the traditional, mainly physical CPTED criteria on one side, and the "new," mainly social criteria for community building at the other side.

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