

WORLD CAFÉ, 19/06/2014

I. Problem statement

How can we increase the participation of the citizens in theft prevention?
Should this participation be increased at all?

« Domestic burglaries are too often considered to be a far removed event, one that can't happen here.»

- a. Where is citizen participation needed, for example, in providing assistance in awareness-raising campaigns and in the provision of prevention advice? And where is it absolutely not needed?
- b. How can we motivate the citizens to take responsibility?

II. Discussions

Various participants indicated that information meetings and events where information can be disseminated do not work. Only a very limited portion of the public comes to such events. Attempts were made in various ways to improve these channels of communication. The Police Zones, for example, provide the surveillance of homes when the residents are absent on holiday. If the resident requests this service more than once, then he or she must be provided with obligatory burglary prevention advice.

However, there was also some criticism of the surveillance service. Does this service not evolve into being simply a systematic reassurance for holiday-goers, and does it in fact prevent a sufficient number of break-ins?

Furthermore, will people really go from door to door informing residents? The citizen still appears to be an actor that is very difficult to reach.

Certain participants stated that the Neighbourhood Information Networks (BINs) really work and that people will participate in them when they hear about them via mouth-to-mouth publicity. For example, if they hear positive things about them from friends or acquaintances and therefore also want to participate in such a network. According to some of the participants, the Neighbourhood Information Networks can bring about structural changes in the behaviour of the citizen. In other words, not only will they demonstrate increased alertness immediately following a burglary, but they will implement these new behaviours in their daily lives. Others state that the Neighbourhood Information Networks must be led by the citizens themselves but that this often is not successful; the Police Zone is too often the actual leader of the networks. This often means additional workload. Furthermore, there were **some persons who were critical of the BINs and who would rather not have one started in their Police Zone**

or municipality. Their reason for this was that the networks would bring about a "Big Brother is watching you" culture.

Other good practices were also cited for increasing citizen participation; for example, the Eén dag niet [One day without] project. The "Eén dag niet" project was first developed in The Netherlands. Its purpose is to initiate a national day of action against burglary. Last year this event took place on 11/12/13.

This event had a massive awareness-raising component in which Facebook, Twitter, films, a website, a stand, the local media etc. were involved. It was primarily a citizens' initiative in which the Police were not significantly involved.

This concept is currently being brought to Belgium by means of a national day of action against burglary planned for 11/12/14. The various Flemish Provinces want to participate in this. At the moment, efforts are being made to also include Brussels and the Walloon Region. Many participants think that this initiative is a good idea and would also like to participate in it. Others were of the opinion that we should keep from creating an exact copy-paste of the Dutch project. The Belgian context must be taken into account. For this initiative to be a success, there must be sufficient support for it.

The Speed TPA project in Ronse was also brought to the fore. The goal of this project is to quickly but accurately provide house-to-house technical preventive advice to all citizens in the BIN neighbourhoods. The principle of Speed TPA is namely this: the citizens don't come to us, therefore we must go to them. Since the entire city was considered to be too large a terrain, the BINs were chosen to be used as stepping stones.

The Tupperware project was also cited. During one of these Tupperware meetings, a visit is made to persons who want information. The host of the meeting and his or her guests (groups of 4 to 12 persons) are thereby given the opportunity to benefit from burglary prevention advice. Sometimes these meetings are organized by associations, residents of apartment buildings, professional organizations ... The Police Zone also proposes that the participants encourage their acquaintances to invite the Domestic Burglary Prevention Consultants.

In Schoten, it seems that efforts are being made to actively recruit and train groups of volunteers. These volunteers are also used to disseminate burglary prevention advice. So, as a "regular" citizen, you can apply to volunteer; in other words, you need not be employed by the Police Zone or by the municipality.

From the various discussions, it was generally noted that the trained volunteers often did not complete the basic training course authorized by the FPS Home Affairs. As a result of this, they cannot be officially recognized as Domestic Burglary Prevention Consultants. Certain participants do not think it is a good idea to train volunteers in this manner by only providing them with a "crash course". Moreover, this will result in the creation of various statuses. This means that it is no longer clear exactly what is included in the position of Domestic Burglary Prevention Consultant.

A good practice that has already been highlighted is the example of online crime maps. This is already being utilized in The Netherlands. This way the citizen is given an overview of the crime issues in the region. It seems that there was initially quite a bit of resistance from the Mayors to actually implementing this idea. It seems that there were different visions with regard to these online crime maps. On the one hand, there were participants who did not think it was a good idea to implement a similar concept in Belgium, given that it could cause

feelings of insecurity. In addition, it was thought that the resistance of the municipalities would be too great. On the other hand, some people thought it was a good way to objectively raise awareness. In other words, there were differences of opinion on the subject.

For many, the first step toward increased citizen participation can be taken by stimulating the willingness to report crimes. Currently, feelings of uncertainty and shame still predominate when, in fact, citizens should take the next step and contact the Police. The goal is to bring about a change in this attitude, for example, by displaying advertisements in car trailers which highlight the importance of being willing to report.

Different participants also mentioned that the **citizen must be obligated** to implement certain measures.

In The Netherlands, for example, there is the Safe Living (Veilig Wonen) quality mark. This is a quality mark for residences who comply with a number of requirements in the area of burglary prevention and social safety. Its operation is simple. The requirements of the quality mark ensure that a burglar needs more time to enter a residence.

It was suggested, for example, that this quality mark could also be implemented in Belgium, if further efforts were made in the area of collaborations with specific companies. These companies could then award certificates. Certain participants did not think this would work. In The Netherlands, the citizens are obligated to implement certain safety measures. If they do not, they are not compensated by the insurance company after a burglary.

The use of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook ... is seen as an important resource for gaining access to the world of the citizens and to point out to them the importance of burglary prevention. However, Facebook may not be used by the citizens themselves to track perpetrators. In fact, that could lead to a literal manhunt.

III. Conclusions

- We can only shift to citizen participation if awareness has been sufficiently raised. Now, much too often, the Police or the municipality are only called upon after someone has been victimized.
- The lack of citizen participation can be seen from within a context of a larger structural societal problem. We must place this concept within the context of the individualization of society. How can we once again reinforce social control and social cohesion?
It is not enough to make efforts in one link of the safety chain; the integral safety chain must be taken into account.
- The help of the citizen in awareness-raising campaigns and in the dissemination of prevention advice is generally seen as essential. Most of the participants in the World Café, however, thought that this should not be permitted to tip over into the citizens' taking the law into their own hands. Posting video of the perpetrator on Facebook is considered as going too far. Care must be taken to prevent the creation of a "crime control" society.

- The citizen must feel involved in the narrative of domestic burglary prevention. To this end, the citizen can best be reached via his or her social network and will participate when he or she is assigned responsibility, thereby gaining the opportunity to play an important role.
- Objective reporting to the “man on the street” remains a difficult balancing act. It continues to be a tightrope walk between strict prevention and the creation of feelings of insecurity. Frightening the citizen must be avoided.

IV. Action points

-The following matters were prioritized for further efforts:

°The general willingness to report must be increased. The policy must support various campaigns to stimulate this.

°A specific communication strategy related to domestic theft must be developed. Thereafter, a recognizable eye-catcher can be created, like the BOB campaign.

°Burglary prevention must be placed in the spotlight in a variety of ways and via different channels. Only in this way will the public remain constantly stimulated.

°The continuation of the tax exemption for securing a residence against burglary and fire was also cited as a policy action point.



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