

# **Kriminologie, Kriminalpolitik und Strafrecht aus internationaler Perspektive**

## **Criminologie, politique criminelle et droit pénal dans une perspective internationale**

### **Criminology, Criminal Policy and Criminal Law in an International Perspective**

Festschrift für Martin Killias  
zum 65. Geburtstag

Mélanges en l'honneur de Martin Killias  
à l'occasion de son 65<sup>e</sup> anniversaire

Essays in honour of Martin Killias  
on the occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday

Herausgeber/Editeurs/Editors

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Stämpfli Verlag

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Zitiervorschlag: Festschrift Martin Killias

Foto: Adri Pol, mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Fotografen

**Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek**

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Gesamtherstellung: Stämpfli Publikationen AG, Bern  
Réalisation intégrale par Stämpfli Publications SA, Berne  
Produced by Stämpfli Publications Ltd., Berne

© Stämpfli Verlag AG Bern · 2013  
© Stämpfli Editions SA Berne · 2013  
© Stämpfli Publishers Ltd., Berne · 2013

Printed in Switzerland

[www.staempfliverlag.com](http://www.staempfliverlag.com)

ISBN Print 978-3-7272-2967-1  
ISBN Judocu 978-3-0354-0945-1



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# Why Switzerland Needs a National Crime Prevention Council

JAN VAN DIJK\*

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## I. Petite histoire d'ICVS

It must have been around 1985 that Martin Killias approached me during a break in the meeting of a committee of experts on Public Attitudes towards Crime of the Council of Europe. He wanted to sound me out on the feasibility of carrying out a victimization survey, modeled after the Dutch and British ones, by telephone interviewing. I had no personal experience with this mode of interviewing at the time but it seemed an interesting option worth testing. No doubt Martin has subsequently kept me posted on the success of the first national Swiss survey using this technique and this experience must have planted a seed in my head. Because attempts to compare the Dutch results with those of the USA and the UK had failed to produce reliable results, I had started to brood on a standardized international survey. Not much later I came across a brochure of the Amsterdam-based polling company Inter/View promoting its newly developed product of cross-national surveys using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). After reading the brochure I imagined how interviewers from various nationalities could interview respondents in their home countries about their experiences of crime from one single location in Amsterdam. With such arrangement a low budget international survey seemed feasible. In 1987 I formally launched a proposal for a low budget standardized victimization survey (Van Dijk, Shapland and Leger, 1987). Soon thereafter a working group was formed comprising of Pat Mayhew, Martin Killias and myself which actually started to prepare for such survey. A questionnaire was designed using the best practices of the Dutch, British and Swiss national surveys. Martin's proficiency in almost all languages needed, proved indispensable for accurate translations of the English mother text. Inter/View was indeed hired as executing agency for the data

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collection. It soon surfaced that for cost reasons the interviews had to be done by local subcontractors rather than from a single location as suggested in their brochure. In Northern Ireland and Spain telephone ownership rates were found to be insufficient for a CATI-based survey and data were collected face to face. The data collection was finally conducted in fourteen countries in early 1989 and a report with first findings was published the next year (Van Dijk, Mayhew & Killias, 1990).

From the outset the conduct of the ICVS has been a challenge. In the first round the main problem with the survey's methodology were low response rates in countries where recalls were prohibited for privacy protection reasons such as Germany. In addition the choice for a relatively big sample size of 5.000 in Germany, instead of the standard 2.000, had created coordination problems for the local subcontractor.

The report on the first ICVS produced a huge media splash in The Netherlands because the country emerged as the participating country with the highest victimization rates for several types of crime and for victimization by crime overall. The media attention led to a special interrogation session of the Dutch minister of justice (my highest boss at the time) in Parliament. Without criticizing the survey – I was at the balcony of the hall, overseeing the debate –, he pointed out that crime in The Netherlands should be understood in the context of its high population density and degree of urbanization. Some Dutch colleagues were less restrained. They sought to demolish the ICVS project by fiercely criticizing its methodology, especially the use of telephone interviewing. Their final conclusion was that the survey was fundamentally flawed and could better be shelved for good. In a rejoinder in the Dutch journal of criminology I extensively addressed their main points of critique. To no avail. The authors re-published their original critique verbatim in the French journal *Déviance et Société*. At this point Martin rose to the challenge and wrote a sharp rejoinder in impeccable French. To no avail either. Leading French criminologists welcomed the critique of my Dutch colleagues because they were at the time sceptical of any initiative to measure crime – or deviance as they called it. In the second sweep of the ICVS in 1992 France, Germany and Switzerland abstained. Switzerland rejoined in 1996. During the preparations Martin proposed to add ethnicity as background variable. In Martin's recollection this proposal was rejected for bureaucratic reasons (Killias, 2012). In my recollection it was not endorsed because there was insufficient time to fully explore its usefulness and possible adverse implications, notably in countries where ethnicity was prohibited in official statistics. At any rate, Martin's proposal was eventually adopted in the fifth, 2005 round of the survey, largely funded by the European Commission. The results showed that the status of immigrant, regardless of other risk factors, acts as a moderately strong risk-enhancing factor (Van Dijk, Van Kesteren & Smit, 2008, p. 94).

In 2007 the European Commission issued a call for tender for the design of an EU-wide victimization survey. A consortium with no representation of the ICVS Working Group, was awarded the contract and started to design a new survey from scratch, with minimal resemblance to the ICVS (Aroma et al., 2009). Martin and I argued in Brussels for more continuity in the questionnaire in order to preserve at least a minimum of comparability with the historical ICVS results. Our arguments largely fell on deaf ears. Fortunately, the Home Office in London intervened in Brussels and persuaded the Commission to fund a repeat of the ICVS in 2009 piloting the technique of web-based interviewing (CAWI). The surveys were partly conducted by CAWI and partly by CATI. The tests with CAWI produced disappointing results. Response rates were very low and the results deviated from rates produced by the evaluation of the tests was inconclusive but CATI-based parts of the survey could yet be used as the basis of a publication on the ICVS 2010 (Van Dijk, 2012).

In the meantime I had put together a new consortium, comprising of Pat Mayhew, Martin's successor in Lausanne, Marcelo Aebi, and myself which won the contract to finalize the EU survey. The new group streamlined the draft questionnaire and restored consistency with the ICVS to the extent possible (Van Dijk, Mayhew, Van Kesteren, Aebi & Linde, 2010). No happy ending was in the stars though – at least not for the immediate future – because in September 2012 the European Parliament at the advice of a British MEP, Timothy Kirkhope (conservative), rejected the proposal for the survey<sup>1</sup>. With hindsight I am convinced that the proposal would have passed without a hiss if the old ICVS model, with its well-tested and proven core questionnaire modest sample sizes and moderate budget, would have prevailed. As so often with international survey research *le mieux* had been *l'ennemi du bien*. An optimistic scenario foresees a new proposal to the European Parliament along the lines of the old ICVS. If that were to happen, the envisaged budget of 10 million euro could easily be reduced by half if sample sizes were curtailed to 3.000 per member state.

The most pertinent issue regarding a future ICVS is whether the data collection will be conducted by phone, an increasingly challenged mode due to increased refusal rates and increased mobile only ownership, or partly or exclusively online. The results of the 2010 pilots with CAWI, funded by the European Commission, were, as said, disappointing. The first complication

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<sup>1</sup> The rapporteur advised that the survey would only measure perceptions rather than concrete facts. He also raised doubts about the added value of the SASU exercise, considering that results from national surveys were available from so many member states. On these two counts his reasoning is completely wrong. The survey measures concrete experiences rather than perceptions and results of non-standardized surveys cannot be reliably compared. He also noted that the surveys would at any rate not be fully standardized because some countries, notably France and Ireland, had refused to include extensive questions on domestic violence and/or sexual abuse, introduced at the urgent request of Italy.

was that response rates for the CAWI-mode samples were exceedingly low, especially when the sample was drawn from a register e.g. 3% in Canada. Better response rates were obtained when respondents were selected from panels comprising of persons who had agreed to be interviewed online regularly. However, whether such panels are fully representative of the population at issue is far from assured. The second complication was that the findings of the CAWI studies differed systematically from those of the studies using CATI. Victimization prevalence rates for 10 crimes together were approximately 5 per cent point higher in the CAWI studies than in the CATI studies in five of the six countries. The CAWI studies also showed somewhat higher rates on two fear of crime items. These findings are in line with other crime surveys testing different modes of data collection. Victimization rates were found to be significantly higher when using CAWI in Dutch, Finnish and Belgian victimization surveys (Van Dijk et al., 2010). In the Netherlands the 2010 national survey, partly based on CAWI, produced rates of car theft that were considerably higher than the numbers recorded by insurance companies (Leeuw & Meuldijk, 2012). Whether, or to what extent, the higher rates of CAWI studies are caused by under-coverage and non-response bias or by pure mode effects or both, remained an open question.

To address the latter issue a large scale experiment was conducted in The Netherlands with the purpose of disentangling mode-specific selection effects (caused by undercoverage and response bias) and pure measurement bias in victimization surveys. In their experiment Buelens et al. (2012) used four modes, CAPI (computer-assisted personal interviewing), CATI, CAWI and paper. The results show that, after reweighting for demographics, victimization prevalence rates were indeed higher in CAWI interviews relative to those of CAPI interviews. In contrast, prevalence rates were found to be lower in CATI interviews and paper-based questionnaires relative to those of CAPI interviews. These differences appeared to be almost completely caused by pure mode or measurement effects (different responses by the respondents), and only marginally by selection (under coverage and/or non-response). As possible explanation of the measurement bias in CAWI interviews, the authors mention that respondents may tend to rush the completion of web-based interviews. They may respond about experiences of friends or family or make mistakes with the timing of what happened. In the 2010 EC funded pilots CAWI-based interviews indeed lasted shorter than the CATI-interviews (Ghauharali, Meuldijk & Smit, 2010).

A mixed mode approach was also used in the last Swiss ICVS-based survey (Killias et al., 2011), contacting respondents through the mail and offering them the opportunity to respond online before being contacted by phone (CATI). In this survey CAWI-based victimization rates were, once again, found to be significantly higher, controlling for demographics (Killias, 2012). The consistently diverging results of CAWI-based crime surveys require fur-

ther scrutiny. Yet there can be no doubt that this uniquely efficient and cheap mode will carry the future of crime surveying in the end. The Dutch Statistical Office has decided to carry out the Dutch national victimization surveys with a mixed mode approach from 2012 onwards. The results of the experiment just mentioned will be used to calculate possible correction factors. Building on the experiences of the national surveys in The Netherlands and Switzerland, the EU survey as well as future rounds of the ICVS will no doubt also opt for state of the art modes of data collection, most probably a mixed mode, including CAWI. The use of the cost-effective option of CAWI opens new opportunities for low budget surveys across the world, including in developing countries. Martin has with 2010 Swiss national survey once again been a trend setter ahead of the game.

## II. Substantive results; the case of Switzerland

In 1978 the American criminologist Clinard published *Cities with Little Crime; the case of Switzerland* (Clinard, 1978). In this book Switzerland is heralded as a country with comparatively little crime, supposedly due to the citizen's responsibility for crime prevention and control and effective anti-crime policies of the government. And indeed, when one looks at the results of the 1989 ICVS, Switzerland, together with Northern Ireland and Finland, emerged as low crime countries. However, by 2004/2005 Switzerland had moved up from the bottom to a place among the top ten most crime-ridden countries of the Western world (Van Dijk, van Kesteren & Smit, 2008). In 2010 Switzerland seems to have moved further upwards (Killias et al, 2011; Van Dijk, 2012). Switzerland has, over the past three decades, transformed from a low into a high crime nation.

What has happened with Swiss cities since Clinard's book? According to Killias and Lanfranconi (2012) the main cause of deteriorating levels of violence in Swiss cities is radical deregulation of the night-time industry. This argument seems well taken (Hartfield, 2009) and to apply equally to England and to my own home country, The Netherlands. When studying violence in these affluent nations, the stench of beer or breezers takes one's breath away.

But what about the equally undeniable deterioration in the rates of domestic burglary in Swiss cities? How can this be explained? In our search for explanations we first consulted the report on the first ICVS (Van Dijk, Mayhew & Killias, 1990). Here the reader is informed that in 1988 household burglaries were still rare in Switzerland and attempted burglaries rarer still. What else was criminologically striking about Switzerland at that time? The country stood out with a very low percentage of free standing houses with a burglar alarm and a very high coverage of households by insurance for losses from burglary. These results beg the question that the Swiss households are

perhaps less motivated to invest in anti-burglary devices. Why invest in burglar alarms when burglaries are rare and the insurance covers the losses anyway?

In the UK home security has been actively promoted by the police with the nationwide Secured by Design certification program. In The Netherlands the instalment of basic household security measures has also been actively promoted by the central government since the mid 1980s (Ministry of Justice, 1985). In 1999 basic household security was incorporated in the Building Regulations and since then such security is mandatory for all newly built houses. Ben Vollaard of Tilburg University has analyzed results of the Dutch national victimization surveys to determine the impact of the new building regulations upon burglary victimization rates. He compared burglary victimization rates of owners of newly built houses with those of older houses. His analysis shows that risks to be burgled of newly built houses were reduced by 50%, controlling for the impact of external factors (Vollaard & Van Ours, 2010). Supplementary analyses found no evidence of displacement to houses in other neighbourhoods or cities or to other types of theft. According to the authors the new building regulations had been responsible for almost a fifth of the total drop in burglaries in The Netherlands in recent years. The one off costs of the security measures were found to be much lower than the benefits in terms of losses prevented over the years. The costs of elementary home security have been estimated at 433 euro per house by Vollaard & van Ours (2010). The benefits are estimated at 780 euro over a 30 year period per house.

The litmus test of the impact of responsive securitization on burglary rates is whether national trends in rates of victimization by burglary can be predicted by the penetration rate of elementary security measures. In other words, are countries reaching a higher penetration of household security in a given year rewarded by lower burglary rates in the years ahead. The repeats of the ICVS in 2005 and 2010 allow us to explore this issue empirically. In 2005 and 2010 the ICVS was repeated in just eight Western nations, Canada, Denmark, England/Wales, Estonia, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland (Van Dijk, 2012). Fortunately these eight nations, however similar in many other respects, show considerable variation in the penetration of household security in 2005 (measured as the percentages of households covered by burglar alarms and/or special security locks). The data therefore allow us to put the security hypothesis to an empirical test by examining the possible link between security penetration at time 1 (2005) and the changes in burglary victimization between time 1 and time 2 (2010). Table 1 shows results.

In table 1 we can see that trends in burglary victimization between 2005 and 2010 have diverging. In England/Wales, The Netherlands and Canada rates have fallen, in Germany and Sweden rates remained stable and in Esto-



nia, Denmark and Switzerland they went up. The results are graphically depicted in figure 1.

**Table 1:** Rates of home security in 2004 and burglary victimization trends between 2004 and 2010 from eight countries

	High-grade door locks, 2004 (%)	Burglar alarm, 2004 (%)	Burglary rate, 2004 (%)	Burglary rate, 2010 (%)	Change burglary rate (%-point)
England and Wales	60	41	3.5	1.5	- 2.0
Netherlands	78	15	1.3	0.8	- 0.5
Canada	48	28	2.0	1.3	- 0.7
Germany	63	14	0.9	1.2	+0.3
Sweden	46	16	0.7	1.0	+0.3
Estonia	40	7	2.5	3.0	+0.5
Switzerland <sup>2</sup>	29	5	1.1	1.9	+0.8
Denmark	32	9	2.7	3.6	+0.9

Sources: Van Dijk et al, 2007<sup>3</sup>

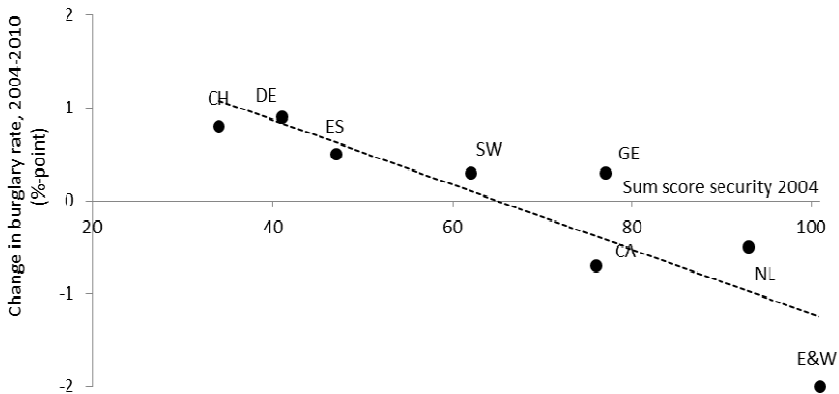
Figure 1 depicts the statistical significant relationship between the levels of security in 2004 and the changes in burglary victimization between 2004 and 2010 ( $r = + .88$ ;  $p < 0.002$ ). During this period rates of burglary victimization went down in countries with the highest penetration of home security and went up in countries with the lowest penetration. In 2010 the burglary victimization rate in Denmark was 3.6%. In Estonia it was 3.3% and in Switzerland 1.9%. These rates are twice as high as in The Netherlands and Sweden, countries similar in many other respects, including open borders with Central and Eastern European countries. The promotion of home security by central and local government in countries such as The Netherlands and the UK seems to have paid off handsomely in terms of reductions of crime. In these countries anxieties about burglary have also decreased. In Denmark, Estonia and Switzerland, however, fear of household burglary has remained widespread. In Denmark the percentage of the public thinking it likely or very likely to be burgled in the coming twelve months jumped up from 14% in 2005 to 32% in

<sup>2</sup> Swiss data on security are from 1996. Data on security in 2004 and 2010 are missing because the questions were not retained in the questionnaire. This fact by itself suggests a lack of interest in situational crime prevention. When a Swiss group carried out the ICVS in Georgia in 2005, they also deleted the items on situational prevention.

<sup>3</sup> For 2010 see: <62.50.10.34/icvs/Products/Database\_Results\_ICVS\_2010\_Pilot. Swiss data are from Killias et al. , 2012 and data from Estonia from Ahven, et al. 2010>.

2010. In Switzerland this percentage was 25% in 2010. The percentages of people worried about burglary have decreased elsewhere in Western Europe in tandem with decreasing victimization. They stand now at a much lower level than in Denmark and Switzerland.

**Figure 1:** The sum of levels of high grade locks and burglar alarms in 2004 by changes in burglary rates (% points) between 2004 and 2010; eight countries from which ICVS data are available



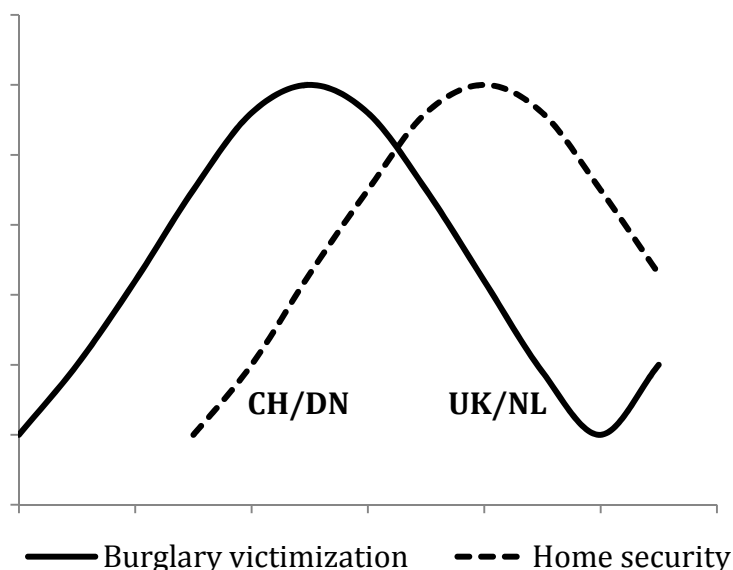
In the countries where many households took security measures, burglary rates went down, whereas in countries with little response from households, burglary rates actually went up. In other words: these countries are out of cycle. England and Wales and The Netherlands have gone full circle, in terms of the model depicted in Figure 2. In this model these two countries are situated on the right side of the x-axis. Denmark, Estonia and Switzerland are as yet only halfway. They are situated on the left side, where burglary rates as well as fear of crime and investments in protection are still going up<sup>4</sup>. Figure 2 illustrates the position of the countries at the two extremes.

The results suggest that the active promotion of household security in Britain and The Netherlands has indeed paid off and that Denmark, Estonia and Switzerland are paying the price for their government's policies of *laissez faire* on the security market. Denmark and Estonia have well-functioning National Councils of Crime Prevention. The Danish Council is currently deliberating whether, how and at what speed to follow the Dutch or British models of active intervention on the home security market. In Switzerland no such council exists and it is unclear where the debate on this issue could be

<sup>4</sup> The figure is only for illustrative purposes. In reality, the relationships are anything but smooth: many factors outside the model also affect offender and victim behaviour.

launched. Clinard's generous and widely cited praise of the safety of Switzerland in the 1970s seems to have made the country unduly complacent. In order to reduce crime, it needs to bring its institutional arrangements for crime prevention up to par. A national council or other equivalent institution to promote home security seems urgently needed. Such institution could then also assure funding of the Swiss part of future international victimization surveys.

**Figure 2:** The cycle of crime booms and security responses



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