

Methods of solving criminal problems

Abstract: The author analyses methods of solving criminal problems in local communities. Starting with the constitutive features of Community Policing and Deming Cycle he studies methods used by the police and local communities in Europe and North America.

Key words: community policing, CAPRA, SARA, CAPS, PROCTOR, criminal triangle.

Safety is due to Maslov's pyramid a need of the lowest level and it's hard to disagree with this statement.¹ The answer to the question „How can I guarantee my family's safety?” seems to be more important to find. Safety can be examined at the macro-scale (a country, peoples, a continent) and at the micro-scale (the closest environment). Methods of solving criminal problems facilitate the search for the answer to the question about safety in our closest environment.

The idea of community's joint responsibility for safety doesn't need to be proven. Everybody should ensure common safety up to his capabilities. The most common problem is lack of knowledge on how to ensure it. In different countries the police and local communities prefer various methods of solving problems. The essence of those actions is the strategy of community policing. „Community policing is the policy as well as the strategy to achieve effective crime control, to minimize the sense of crime threat, to upgrade the life level, to improve work, and to raise the police authority by changing the basic conditions for criminal activities by proactively using social means”.² The two main elements of the strategy are:

- *Community partnership* – long-term partner cooperation of a police officer and residents, church, school, business, hospital, societies, etc.
- *Problem solving* – solving problems jointly with town authorities which will assure a faster implementation.³

Community policing strategy has not yet finalized its formation and the perception changes occur quite regularly. We can, nevertheless, point its distinctive constitutive features, the ones that are joined with its philosophy by indissoluble bonds. These are:

- Consultations, systematic surveys of residents' needs and their expectations of the police.
- Adaptation is understood as an alteration in style of managing the forces and the means so that even smaller police units were capable of taking decisions on the force and means shift in order to meet local communities' needs.
- Motivation, the engagement of people and institutions from outside the police in solving safety problems.
- Solution of the problems, elimination of the problems triggering the crime and the fear of becoming a crime victim, and in consequence – preventing crimes.⁴

The review of methods of solving criminal problems the author starts with CAPS method. This method derived from a crime reduction program in Chicago city park. The

¹ SZERZEJ J., S.A. RATHAUS *Psychologia współczesna*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2004, s. 445 – 446,

² R.R. FRIEDMANN. *Community Policing*, New York 1992.

³ T. CIELECKI *Prewencja kryminalna*, Opole 2004, s. 55 – 56.

⁴ SZERZEJ J. CZAPSKA, J. Wójcikiewicz, *Policja w społeczeństwie obywatelskim*, Zakamycze 1999, s. 138 - 139.

program became a success and served as a basis for creating a method of solving criminal problems. CAPS is also known as Five-Step method. The five steps are:

- **First step:** defining the problems and establishing the sequence of solving.
- **Second step:** analyzing.
- **Third step:** creating the action strategy.
- **Fourth:** implementing the strategy.
- **Fifth step:** appraisal and celebrations.⁵

Solving problems using CAPS method takes place during so called district meetings. Residents, police officers and other people interested in improving safety in a particular district participate there. As a first step the people gathered discuss the problems common in their district and choose the most vital one. The choice is taken by voting. A criminal problem is such a phenomenon or behaviour which affects a lot of residents and encourage them to take a joint action, and can be solved by the available means.⁶

The second step is analysis. „Analysis is a research method based on decomposing a phenomenon and studying each component separately.”⁷ The essence of the study carried out in order to solve criminal problems is a search for the reasons of an existing problem. In case of CAPS method so called Criminal Triangle is used for the study.



⁵ SZERZEJ J., GŁOWACKI R., ŁOJEK K., TYBURSKA A., URBAN A. *Poradnik dla członków komisji bezpieczeństwa i porządku*, Szcztytno, 2009.

⁶ Metoda szczegółowo opisana jest w: Wspólne szkolenia mieszkańców i policji, City of Chicago Departament of Police, 1996.

⁷ Encyklopedia popularna PWN, (red.) B. PETROZOLIN-SKOROŃSKA, wyd. 8, Warszawa 1998, s. 81.

Pic. 1. Criminal triangle.⁸

Sprawca – perpetrator

Ofiara – victim

Miejsce – place

The study is carried out by residents separately for each side of the triangle. Three groups – one group for each side of the triangle – are looking for answers to the questions: Who is the perpetrator? Who is the victim? Why is the place dangerous? What are the reasons of such behaviour or situation? Analysis using Criminal Triangle should be aimed at all the sides of triangle. It shouldn't be stated that, for instance, the perpetrator is unknown, and then finish the analysis. It might be enough for the beginning to introduce partial conclusions, e.g. the perpetrator is a single person or a group, it is a man or a woman, of certain age, staying somewhere close, using certain means of transport, taking jewelry and audio- and video appliances. All the information of such sort may be helpful at the next step of solving criminal problems.

Third step determines the action strategy which should eliminate all the reasons of negative phenomena distinguished by the analysis. The strategy must correspond with law defining the state which should be reached as a result of the actions and limiting the time when certain actions should be completed. A well-planned strategy should clearly state who, what and when must do. It is important that certain actions are carried out by the people or institutions which specialize in that particular branch. It would be hard for a police officer to perform chats at school as he is not prepared for them in contrast to a teacher. A police officer should explain the problem to a teacher but it is the teacher who finds the best way to pass the information to children or youth.

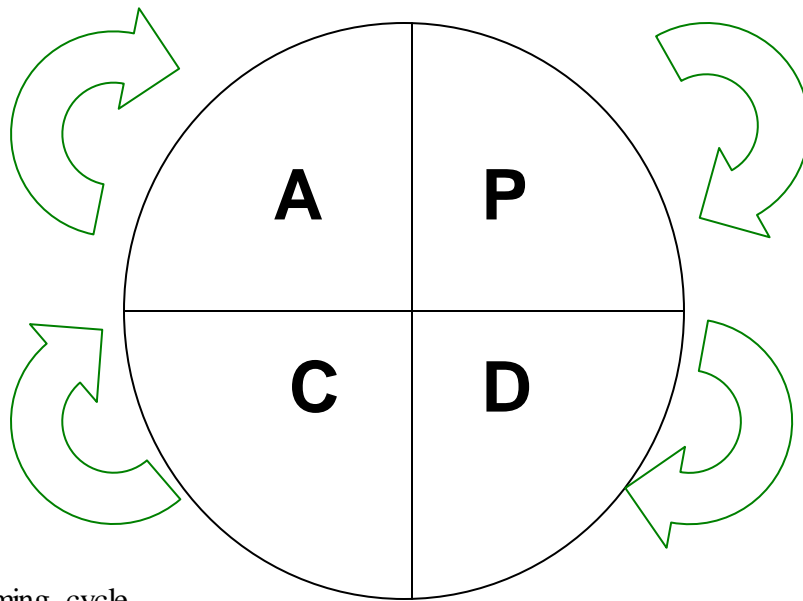
The next, fourth step – implementing the strategy – comes down to performing the planned actions.

Appraisal and celebrations is the fifth step in CAPS method. During a district meeting the performers appraise the realization. The tasks being appraised are as well those successful as those unsuccessful. That meeting serves to understanding the reasons of success and failure.

The fifth step does not need to be the last one. During the meeting examining both progress and drawbacks of a completed project new problems can be pointed and a new project can be initiated. This kind of closed cycle where the last step proceeds to the first refers to so called Deming cycle, also known as improvement cycle or PDCA cycle. That acronym comes from the English words:

- **P** - *plan*;
- **D** - *do*;
- **C** - *check*;
- **A** - *act*.

⁸ A. URBAN *Prewencja kryminalna*, Szczytno 2006, s. 7.



Pic. 2. Deming cycle.

Similar to Five-Step method Deming cycle doesn't finish with improved activities but slowly transforms into the planning phase.

Other methods of solving criminal problems used by local communities are SARA, CAPRA and PROCTOR. The most popular method of solving problems used in Great Britain is SARA method. The name of it as well as many other names is the acronym of:

- *S* – scanning
- *A* – analysis
- *R* – response
- *A* – assessment

Next method is CAPRA which is used by local communities in Canada. This method pays more attention to the cooperation with local communities. The name of SARA method derives from English words, too:

- *C* – clients
- *A* – analysis
- *P* – partnership
- *R* – response
- *A* – assessment

PROCTOR method got its name as well as the previous methods from the first letters of English words:

- *Pro* – problem
- *C* – cause
- *T* – tactic/treatment
- *O* – output

- **R** – result⁹

Methods of solving problems are the instruments enabling local communities a systematic approach to criminal problem solving. It is important to understand that this instrument is proper for any action which local community will wish to take in order to solve a problem. The presented methods of solving criminal problems are simple instruments proven to be effective in many countries for solving various problems. CAPS method can be taken as an example of successful solving the following problems, named as disturbing by local communities:

- car showroom run by a criminal group,
- liquor store open even at night,
- bus stop safety,
- drug dealer,
- lack of illumination,
- town park,
- garbage,
- old hospital ruins – hotbed of drug addicts and gangs.

There is a range of various problems solved with the help of CAPS method. In all the above mentioned cases local communities assisted by the police officers from local units managed to solve problems which were either completely eliminated or considerably restricted.

Let us hope that these or other methods will be used by local communities more often and in effect both crime and the fear of it will be noticeably limited.

Kľúčové slová: spoločnosť, bezpečnosť, komunitárna polícia, kriminálny problém, bezpečnostné stratégie

Súhrn

Autor v spracovanom odbornom článku v metodologickej časti vymedzuje charakteristiky na tieto kategórie: - bezpečnosť, spoločnosť, komunitárna polícia. Osobitnú pozornosť venuje vymedzeniu charakteristiky zložiek stratégie bezpečnosti.

V nosnej časti odborného článku analyzuje akceptované stratégie policajných činností pri riešení kriminálnych problémov vo vybraných štátoch (Európy a Severnej Ameriky). Konkrétne spracoval analýzu stratégií bezpečnosti, ktoré sú aplikované pod názvom CAPRA, SARA, CAPS a PROCTOR. Výsledky týchto analýz sú autorom interpretované cieľavedomo a názorne. Spracované poznanie je autorom ponúkané ako predmet odbornej diskusie.

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⁹ Szerzej o metodach rozwiązywania problemów kryminalnych, K. ŁOJEK *Metodyka rozwiązywania problemów kryminalnych*, Szczytno 2008 oraz A. URBAN *Bezpieczeństwo społeczności lokalnych*, WAiP, Warszawa 2008.

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