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Fidos, Michalina

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**Relating Systems Thinking and Design
(RSD12) Symposium | October 6–20, 2023**

Cut the Cause: Societal and systemic incentives that might lead an individual to engage in criminal behaviour

Michalina Fidos

A shared platform (UNNGÅ) with analytical toolsets (OARSF)

In a welfare society, members thrive without security threats, which in the 21st century are mainly caused by crimes. Criminality, as a wicked problem, shapes and impacts the reality in which we live. It is a social and complex matter that involves individuals on both ends—those who commit the crimes and their victims - as well as the justice system and the whole society, as they bear the financial burden of healthcare and welfare. Therefore, it is important to reduce the number of crimes and mitigate their impact.

Cut the Cause is a master's project that aims to explore the complexity surrounding people's cognition and behaviour in the face of crime, both in terms of committing a crime and responding to it. Thus, the project asks: Who is an offender, and who is a victim? It aims to capture an individual's potential by identifying and addressing the underlying causes and the context of crimes, since crimes do not occur in isolation but rather arise from the accumulation of various societal and systemic dysfunctions. Therefore, the project aims to develop an intervention that identifies systemic gaps in the search for core reasons of a problem and redirect existing resources toward prevention. A means to achieve this goal serves the OARSF framework that consists of service and systemic design tools. The framework is a part of the UNNGÅ (Eng. avoid) platform, which serves as a space for various activities related to exchanging experiences, developing joint initiatives, conducting research, and problem-solving surrounding the issue.

Keywords: systemic design, systems oriented design, analytical toolsets, shared resources, forensic research, data analysis

RSD: Methods & Methodology, Policy & Governance, Society & Culture

Presentation brief

The process of designing and testing interventions in the form of a framework within the criminality ecosystem is an interdisciplinary work that spans the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and design. The process incorporates a range of quantitative methods, but more importantly, it heavily relies on qualitative methods. Therefore, the focus is on analysing retrospective interviews with present and former lawbreakers. In the analysis process, the project aims for openness to cooperation and a clear understanding of problems across agencies and disciplines. It involves a diverse selection of experts, establishes good routines for safe information sharing, and most importantly, includes individuals who exhibit destructive behaviours in the problem-solving process.

Discussion

The challenge for the Cut the Cause project was to map out the system around criminality and select the most suitable resolution for the time, recognising that it might not be the final one and could potentially lead to the emergence of other problems and unintended consequences as the problem continually evolves (Ritchey, 2013; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Such a challenge reflects the multidimensional reality. In general terms, an individual's performance is in a complex way, influenced by a multitude of dimensions. These dimensions range widely from biological, socio-economic, and unconditional elements that operate independently of the individual.

Biological aspects include genetic predispositions, brain structure and functioning, as well as hormone and neurotransmitter levels (Glenn et al., 2011; Grigorenko et al., 2010; Karalis, 2019; Narvaes & Martins de Almeida, 2014; Terbeck et al., 2016). However, an individual does not exist in isolation but rather is a part of social networks and cultural

context. Therefore, it is important to consider social and cultural aspects such as religion, age, culture, social class, gender, and ethnic origin, along with broader political, economic and environmental factors (Teicher et al., 2003; Tottenham et al., 2011). Additionally, unconditional elements such as place of birth or exposure to natural disasters play a role. These interconnected contexts interact and constitute a system that is shaped by feedback loops. Consequently, this system is reflected in an individual's behaviours and interactions, which evolve over time.

The position of an individual within the system is thus shaped by multidimensional aspects associated with an individual's self-determination. This, in turn, influences the development of cognitive processes, emotions, and behaviours, ultimately leading to the creation of multiple perspectives and descriptions of any interaction and relationship in the criminal world. Therefore, each individual within the system is likely to formulate an alternative account of the same event. It would be ideal to create a coherent picture of an event, considering multidimensional perspectives that influence the individual (Figure 1).

To address this challenge, I have proposed the OARSF framework that emerged via thematic analysis of semi structured interviews with current and former lawbreakers. The framework is built on service and systemic design tools to analyse the problem and work collaboratively. It aims to meet the needs of the hidden profile paradigm in the group decision-making process by breaking down the task into several steps. The individually oriented tasks are specifically designed to create a shared terminology and standardise information for all participants. On the other hand, the collaboratively oriented task is intended to encourage cooperation and allow every participant in the analysis to introduce a range of intervention strategies. These toolsets are utilised within the UNNGÅ (Eng. avoid) platform, which serves as a space for exchanging experiences, developing joint initiatives, conducting research, and problem-solving related to the issue (Fidos, 2023)

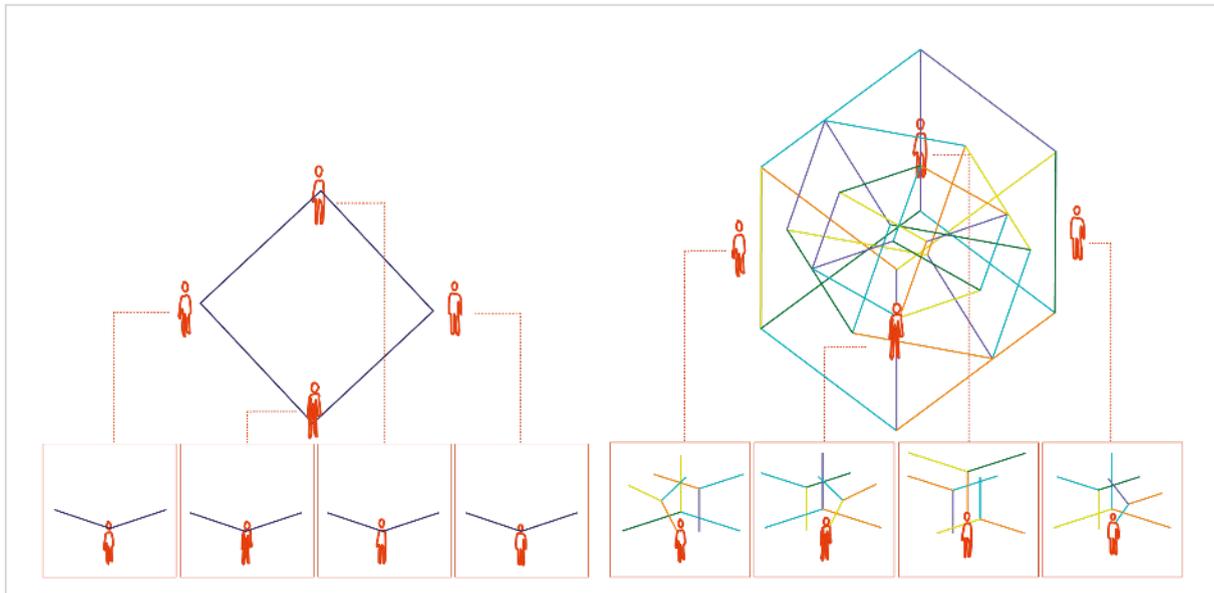


Figure 1: Noticing and Understanding the Problem. On the left, each actor assumes they have the same view and general understanding of the problem. On the right, each actor acknowledges the need for cooperation and a common understanding of the specific problem's complexity and its implications. Illustration by the author, 2023.

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Author

Michalina Fidos, the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, michalina.fidos@gmail.com

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