

The Applicability of Western Environmental Criminology Theories to the Arabic Context

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Abstract : Throughout the last two decades, motor vehicle theft (MVT) has accounted for the largest proportion of property crime incidents in Saudi Arabia (SA). However, to date, few studies have investigated SA's MVT problem. Those that have are primarily focused on the characteristics of car thieves, and most have overlooked any spatial-temporal distribution of MVT incidents and the characteristics of victims. This paper represents the first step in understanding this problem by reviewing the existing MVT studies contextualised within the theoretical frameworks developed in environmental criminology theories - originating in the West - and exploring to what extent they are relevant to the SA context. To achieve this, the paper has identified a range of key features in SA that are different from typical Western contexts, that could limit the appropriateness and capability of applying existing environmental criminology theories. Furthermore, despite these Western studies reviewed so far having introduced a number of explanatory variables for MVT rates, a range of significant elements are apparently absent in the current literature and this requires further analysis. For example, almost no attempts have been made to quantify the associations between the locations of vehicle theft, recovery of stolen vehicles, joyriding and traffic volume.

Keywords : environmental criminology theories, motor vehicle theft, Saudi Arabia, spatial analysis

Conference Title : ICCLCPS 2016 : International Conference on Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : June 20-21, 2016