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Youth Crime, Urban Spaces, and Security in Germany since the 19th Century

Klaus Weinhauer [*]

Abstract: *»Jugendkriminalität, städtische Räume und Sicherheit in Deutschland seit dem 19. Jahrhundert«*. This article focuses on juvenile delinquency and on its perceptions in the last thirds of the 19th and of the 20th centuries. Three questions are discussed: Were there any debates on (human) security in both time phases and if yes, which problems were discussed; which larger social developments were mirrored in these debates; what were the implications of potential threats posed by juvenile delinquency for life in urban settings?

In the last third of the nineteenth century the perception of and fears about youth crime focused on easily discernable proletarian male youth (groups and individuals) who mainly lived in densely populated urban neighborhoods. As (youth) crime was mainly interpreted as a threat towards the state and authorities were convinced that the police could successfully handle all challenges in this field, there were no debates about security at that time.

In West Germany during the 1960s and the 1970s, two important changes in juvenile delinquency, in its perception and fears could be discerned. First, a twofold – spatial and social – dissolution of boundaries (Entgrenzung) of youth crime developed. The establishment of the transnational networks of the youth cultural *underground,* in which drug consumption played an important role, was instrumental in these developments. Second, in the early 1970s, as the case of the *Rockers* shows, youth crime had become a potentially omnipresent phenomenon of everyday urban life evoking diffuse spatial fears. Every seemingly friendly boy from the neighborhood could all of sudden turn into a "juvenile violent offender". Thus, crime could potentially lurk everywhere, in every niche of (urban) society. It was against this background that the age of security dawned as it promised a safe haven against all future urban threats.

Keywords: youth crime, juvenile delinquency, security, urban space, crime statistics, urban violence, "Underground", "Rockers", drug consumption, working-class youth.

1. Introduction

With its Trust Fund of Human Security, established in 1999, the United Nations attempts to promote human security. Its main aims are the protection and

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empowerment of people and communities whose survival, livelihood or dignity are threatened. Recently it was pointed out that human security is a concept "so vague that it verges on meaninglessness and consequently offers little practical guidance to academics who might be interested in applying the concept".[1] From a social and cultural historical perspective, however, security is a promising but still neglected field of research. This is especially true when it comes to an analysis of security in urban spaces. In a contribution which tries to overcome the pitfalls of the concept of security, two problems should be tackled: It should be clarified what is meant by security and the analysis should be focused on clear-cut time phases and also on relevant social fields.

While a history of security written from the perspective of the state has a long and well-established tradition dating way back into the eighteenth century,[2] much less historical scholarship exists that is focused on social aspects of security. In Germany the sociologist Franz-Xaver Kaufmann was among the first to include such a perspective in his studies.[3] He emphasized that in order to care for or about the future, the present must be safe.[4] As social science research suggests, security is about providing against indefinable future threats. Seen from this angle, security is a social value which tries to work against the contingency of time and against the uncertainty of the future and aims at a controllable complexity (beherrschbare Komplexität).[5] This leads to a double paradox: the safer the living conditions appear to be, the more people strive for security. Every new step towards a secure society, however, produces new potential risks.

The crimes committed by juveniles figure prominently when it comes to describing the state of security in contemporary urban spaces.[6] This relationship between youth and (imagined) crimes has a long history which dates back to the nineteenth century. Thus, in focusing on youth crime[7], urban space and security I would like to present a comparison of two time phases: the last third of the nineteenth and the last third of the twentieth century. The main focus of the whole contribution, however, will be on the 1960/70s. Both periods were phases of multiple social transitions.[8] These changes were brought about by three interrelated processes: industrialization, urbanization, and migration/social mobility. In Germany and elsewhere during the last third of the

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1 Paris 2001, 102.
2 Lüdtke and Wildt 2008; Zedner 2009; Loader and Walker 2007.
3 See Kaufmann 1970.
4 Kaufmann 2003, 73-104, 93; See recently Münkler 2010, 11-34.
5 Kaufmann 2003, 9.
6 Space is understood not as a pre-existing container but as a socially constructed entity. With this I follow Lefèbvre 1991.
7 The terms *crime* and *delinquency* are defined by Brusten 1999, 507-555. In this paper the terms youth crime and juvenile delinquency will be used synonymously.
8 Overviews are given in Osterhammel 2009; Mazower 2000; Hobsbawm 1998.

nineteenth century, industrialization and urbanization closely interacted and changed the economic structure but also led to rapidly growing cities. Moreover, there were big transnational migration movements and a highly mobile working-class population. The very high mobility of large sections of the working class led to a huge body of casual laborers which in many European countries aroused social fears.[9] Moreover, in this phase of intense social changes the state's monopoly of physical violence was firmly established in a process where police forces began to emancipate themselves from their roots in the military. In the last third of the twentieth century these processes came to an end or took different directions. Many former industrial towns became deindustrialized while cities were strongly affected by the redevelopment of city centers and by the building of high-rises at the periphery. Waves of migration and international agreements brought refugees and laborers ("guest workers") to Germany. Looking at the state's monopoly of physical violence, its erosion began in the 1970s when private security institutions were allowed to handle services which in former times had been provided by the police.

In my analysis of juvenile delinquency and of its related perceptions in the last third of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries three questions are at the center: Was youth crime in both time phases discussed against the background of security, and if yes, which problems were put to the forefront; which larger social developments were mirrored in these debates; what were the implications of potential threats posed by juvenile delinquency for life in urban settings? While such an approach can benefit from the analysis of crime statistics, it must be taken into consideration that such statistics are questionable: Crime statistics tell more about social norms and values than about 'real' crime figures.[10] Moreover, it seems promising not only to analyze the social historical aspects but also to scrutinize the social perception of youth crime among politicians and police personnel as well as in the media. Simultaneously, it should also be checked which offences stood at the center of public interest.[11] It also needs to be inquired whether there were certain urban spaces where juvenile delinquency could develop or where it was imagined that such crimes could take place.

2. Youth Crime in the Last Third of the 19th Century

The 1880s were a phase in which the dangerousness of youth, mainly the male proletarian youth, was discovered.[12] In the public debates these imagined

[9] See Jones 1984.
[10] See Reinke 1992, 199-214; Dinges and Sack 2000, 42-43.
[11] See the pioneering studies Cohen 1973; Hall 1978.
[12] Von Trotha 1982; Roth 1983. See as a general overview Benninghaus 1999; Speitkamp 1998.

threats were combined with the dangers of life in big cities.[13] On the one hand, the population of the *Kaiserreich* in the late nineteenth century had a fairly high percentage of young people.[14] This was especially true for big industrial cities where, for example, in 1905 in Barmen or Essen 63 resp. 67 percent of the inhabitants were younger than 30.[15] On the other hand there is the *Reichskriminalstatistik* (imperial crime statistics), established in 1882. These court statistics were used to point at the rising figures of convicted juveniles aged between 18 and 22.

While criminality of all types was predominantly the preserve of young men between the age of eighteen and thirty, the "most crime prone group was men between the ages twenty-one and twenty-five"[16]. Two additional aspects, however, must be taken into consideration: First, in the last third of the nineteenth century, it was mostly the working-class youth which stood at the center of the heated public discussions about rising youth crime. Second, although at least in the first years of its statistical measurement there were high numbers of convicted juveniles in rural areas, from the turn of the century, the city became the major site of crime and crime fears.[17] Thus, many contemporary studies focused on young proletarian males as the central figures of urban crime which was thought to be mainly situated in proletarian neighborhoods.[18] Clemens Schultz, a Hamburg pastor, published a classical account which was later often quoted. In 1912 he wrote: The urban *Halbstarke* was

> the 'degenerate' young person (...) his preferred activity is to stand around idly in the marketplace and ... he is the sworn enemy of order, he has a passionate distaste for order; he therefore hates regularity, and equally hates all that is beautiful and, in particular, work, especially the regular, ordered fulfilment of duty. (...) When social life is convulsed, for example by a revolution, or perhaps just by a general strike or by great political commotions, this scum comes to the surface and has a dreadful effect. This mob is much worse than individual, so-called hardened criminals. It is possible to protect oneself against those, but these powers of darkness have a poisoning, polluting effect, much worse than any contagious epidemic. It is ... the State's duty to take action against these dreadful elements.[19]

Contemporary counter-measures against youth crime mainly concentrated on the time phase between the end of school attendance and the beginning of military service. State and church officials and medics relied in their counter-measures mainly on social pedagogical education, on work and work-related

[13] Roth 1997; Malmede 2002; Oberwittler 2000; see also the pioneering study written by Peukert 1986.
[14] Tenfelde 1982. "Young" includes people between 0 and 30 years of age.
[15] Tenfelde 1982, 203.
[16] Johnson 1995, 198.
[17] Malmede, 104. See for rural areas Gestrich 1986.
[18] See as a classical account Schultz 1912; also Mischler 1889, 197-198; Appelius 1892.
[19] Schultz 1912, 8 and 33-34.

discipline and on military discipline but also on actions that could be taken by the police and on the effects of incarceration.[20]

Until 1914 fear of crime was about two things: It was a fear about the total downfall of the bourgeois order and it was a fear of political upheaval. These fears were focused mainly on highly mobile young male workers. Crime and social democratic orientation were believed to go hand in hand.[21] Moreover, these debates often concerned the racial purity and strength of the German nation.[22] As current research has elaborated, the main settings which contributed to the rising numbers of violent youth crime were:[23] migration, job mobility, and also a growing state interest in punishing the rough young proletarian males. The importance of the latter becomes obvious when we take a closer look at the imperial crime statistics, where three offences figured prominently: firstly property offences (mainly theft) and acts of bodily harm (*Körperverletzung*). These crimes were often committed by groups of young male working-class lads.[24] Both offences were often expressions of a proletarian way of life of "playful adventure"[25] and they were committed by proletarian youth against proletarian youth. Third on the list were offences against state and public order such as damage to property, breach of the domestic peace, and resistance against officers (Sachbeschädigung, Hausfriedensbruch, Widersetzlichkeit gegen Beamte). All in all, these were offences against the growing number of order norms issued by the bourgeois state.[26] This becomes evident when we look at the offence of "gefährliche Körperverletzung" which was created in February 1876. With this addition to the *Reichstrafgesetzbuch* justice and police were intensifying their crusade against physical violence.[27] This indicates, as Ralph Jessen has convincingly underlined, not only that there were rising numbers of violent offences but also that a much stricter law enforcement and a lessening tolerance towards violence became prominent. Sometimes these violent acts were even interpreted as political terrorism, as the confusing and somewhat strange term "Buben der Propaganda der That" [28] (boys of the propaganda of the deed) underlines. These young lads were mainly described as the lumpen proletarians: the avant-garde of social democracy.[29] In the crime

[20] See Saul 1971.
[21] Oberwittler 2000, 32.
[22] See Dix 1902, 3.
[23] Malmede 2002, 62.
[24] Malmede 2002, 47.
[25] Malmede 2002, 49.
[26] Malmede 2002, 111.
[27] Jessen 1992, 248. See also Jessen 1991.
[28] Appelius 1892, 85.
[29] Malmede 2002, 67.

statistics, however, such political offences were of minor importance, which contrasted greatly with public perception.[30]

Although juvenile delinquency was intensely debated until World War I, the current state of research shows that the topic of security was completely absent from these discussions. There was no public debate about security against (youth) violence. It was mainly about saving the state order or about protecting everyday order (Ordnung). Crime was conceived less as a threat to individuals or to social groups. All in all, before World War I authorities were sure that when it came to discussing and punishing youth crime they were confronted by clearly discernable individuals who failed. In these views two facts were inevitable: First, it was clear that these individuals were overwhelmingly of proletarian origin and mostly lived in the densely populated urban neighborhoods. Second, if any severe troubles might occur in this social field, state authorities were convinced that the police (sometimes assisted by military troops) would meet these challenges successfully.

3. Youth Crime in the 1960/70s

From a social and cultural historical perspective the 1960/70s saw some far-reaching social changes. In general, for West German society the 1960s were a decade of new departures, which already started at the beginning of this decade and not, as it is often thought, only as late as '1968'.[31] In particular, changes in the norm and value systems – be they already visible or still underway – must be taken into consideration when youth crime and its social construction are studied. There was also a breakthrough of mass consumer society with its inherent challenges of making choices in many situations. Social science research was discovering youth culture(s)[32] and a path was taken to virtually equate youthfulness with social change. Thus, the changing patterns of consumption among youth gained public attention.

Beginning in the last third of the 1950s in West Germany, sceptic concerns were articulated about the ever faster changing society. These anxieties culminated in the case of the *Halbstarke*, whose protests were dramatized by media, politicians and social institutions which were all alarmed by these young people.[33] The latest studies, however, underline that these actions should be interpreted as an expression of a minority promoting a hedonistic lifestyle. Their actions pointed at tensions between, on the one hand, social change in a consumer society and conservative moral norms and values on the other hand.[34]

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[30] Malmede 2002, 83; see for a later time period Wagner and Weinhauer 2000.
[31] See for the state of historical research: Frei 2008; Klimke and Scharloth 2008.
[32] Compare Siegfried 2000, 588; for an overview compare Sander and Vollbrecht 2000.
[33] See as the latest study Kurme 2006; Poiger 2000.
[34] See Heintz and König 1957; Kaiser 1959.

In the second half of the 1960s (around 1967), however, crime became a main issue in the field of domestic concerns. The caesura in the numbers of crimes registered by the police as well as in the perception of crime and its inherent dangers is underlined by three developments.[35] First, roughly by the middle of the 1960s, the figures of the crime statistics (including juvenile delinquency) collected by the police showed a marked increase in the number of offences. Second, public concern about crime grew stronger. This trend is supported by the fact that new television programs were established (for instance in March of 1964 and in October of 1967) which dealt with criminal cases.[36] At the same time, opinion polls were taken that demonstrated that from the mid-1960s onwards, there was a heightened need for security among West Germans.[37] To this day it is not clear whether these TV programs and opinion polls were expressions of fears about crime or whether they contributed to the increase of such fears.[38] Third, among policemen and politicians the term "Innere Sicherheit" began to gain importance at the end of the 1960s. Under this vague umbrella term the police set out to define the fight against crime as a tool to deliver security.

In January 1973, the news magazine *Der Spiegel* quoted the North Rhine-Westphalian minister of the interior Willi Weyer, who had said that juvenile delinquency has "'risen in an alarming way.'" Moreover, in the same article the magazine reported an "over-proportional rise in violent crime" committed by young people.[39] In the 1960s, however, it was not mainly working-class youth on which public concern was focused, but youth in general. Besides violent offences, police personnel, politicians, and journalists of the late 1960s put one set of offences at the center of their concern about youth crime: drug consumption.[40] Starting during the mid-1960s, drug consumption took the shape that is has today: It became an international youth problem – which, at least in the case of Germany, is still not well-studied.[41] On the one hand, within the youth culture, drugs were an expression of a revolt in lifestyle,[42] which can be characterized by self-realization, hedonism, and by the "attainment of new worlds of

[35] See for further details Weinhauer 2005; Weinhauer 2003.
[36] Zimmermann 1969, 11 and 45.
[37] See Reuband 1995; Weinhauer 2003, 249-250. Compare as an opinion poll *Allensbacher Berichte*, no. 19, August 1971.
[38] Compare Weinhauer 2003, 251-262.
[39] *Der Spiegel* 26, 1 January 1973, 64. More detailed information on the following is given in Weinhauer 2006, 376-397.
[40] In this essay, the term *drugs* includes cannabis products (hashish and marijuana), opiates (morphine and heroin), cocaine, LSD, mescaline, amphetamines, and barbiturates. Alcohol is not included. For details see Weinhauer 2006, 187-224. Problems of definition are discussed in Renggli and Tanner 1994, 10-15.
[41] See as a local study Stephens 2007; also Marwick 1998, 78, 480-496; Tanner 1998.
[42] Compare Klessmann 1991.

experience".[43] On the other hand, debates about drugs figured prominently in a process of "normative self-assurance" made to combat the erosion of social norms and values.[44]

3.1 Threats of the *Underground*

Leaving aside the rising numbers of criminal offences, as registered by the police, and the growing importance of crime for domestic concerns, during the mid-1960s youth crime transformed in two important ways: Juvenile delinquency lost its traditional spaces and offences were no longer exclusively committed by juveniles coming from the lower social stratums but also from those belonging to higher social classes. With regard to (juvenile) delinquency, for a long time, the police were mostly concerned with the red light and entertainment districts as well as the port areas of big cities. It was there that runaway youths found hiding-places when they had left their parental homes or reformatories. Moreover, large parts of the criminal underworld could be found in these precincts.[45] Starting in the mid-1960s, however, police, social workers, and politicians had to face juveniles who were part of a complex – more or less counter-cultural – *underground*.[46] Political actions such as demonstrations, happenings, sit-ins etc. were only one part of these international networks, which were also structured by inner-city meeting points in the streets and in other public places.

This vaguely defined *underground* was not exclusively concentrated in the traditional red light or port districts but also in the city centers, in wealthy quarters as well as in the suburbs.[47] Moreover, it was not the underclass youth which constituted the core groups of the underground. Instead, members of the middle and higher stratums of society dominated this new underground. Thus, the emergence of the *underground* meant a spatial as well as social expansion of delinquent milieus. During the mid-1960s, in West Germany the dropouts (*Gammler*) could be seen as the harbingers of the underground that developed in big cities like Munich, Frankfurt, Berlin, or Hamburg.[48] The dropouts, whose disposition (*Habitus*) and political directions differed from town to town, were predominantly 17 to 25-year-old males of middle-class background.[49] The long

[43] Tanner 2001, quote on 245.
[44] Tanner 1990, 399.
[45] Compare the descriptions of Werner 1969, 41-45; Pietsch 1965, 126; compare also Falck 1965, 161-173; see as a broader interpretation Reinke 2010, 539-553.
[46] For the term underground, compare Hollstein 1969, 24-27, 106-142; *Der Spiegel* 21, June 9, 1969, 142-155; for an international overview compare Marwick 1998, in particular 489-492.
[47] A summary is given by Kreuzer 1975, 137-149.
[48] Compare Claessens and Ahna 1982, 103-106; a good contemporary impression is provided by Kosel 1967.
[49] Compare Jaedicke 1968, 87.

hair of the dropouts especially "attacked the image of the masculine man; their untidiness challenged bourgeois feelings of cleanliness; having no job and possessions they questioned the capitalist achievement-orientated society."[50]

The *underground* networks – just as the later student protests – were instrumental in changing the police's analysis of threats. From this time, there were so many patterns of social behavior that juveniles could exhibit that the spectrum of normality (and of delinquency) could not be very easily defined. The international youth/cultural *underground* had too many ways of delinquent behavior ready to explain crime/delinquency with the help of individual abnormal behavior. Moreover, it was not only the underground youth which used the supplies of new consumer goods (clothes, beat, rock, and pop music, drugs, motorbikes, etc.) to create their personal lifestyles. This also became increasingly true for 'normal' young men and women.[51] Moreover, during the mid-1960s, the term society (*Gesellschaft*)[52] gained the upper hand vis-à-vis community (*Gemeinschaft*) when it came to describing and analyzing the social order in West Germany. Because of this and owing to the discovery and the development of the *underground*, criminologists and police personnel were able to understand delinquency and criminality as a social problem.

3.2 Working-Class Youth Crime: The *Rockers*

Working-class-based youth crime and the corresponding fears did not disappear in the 1960s. It was in cities such as Hamburg, Berlin, or Essen in 1968/69 where the press, in particular the *Bild-Zeitung*, turned the *Rockers* into a public threat – into real folk devils. The interest that the *Rockers* garnered from the police and from the press lasted until the early 1970s.[53] *Rockers* were seen as the tip of an iceberg of ever-increasing juvenile delinquency and violence.[54] Press reports gave the impression that anybody could become the victim of the violent acts of the *Rockers* – anywhere, anytime.[55] Thus, the *Rockers*' case was an example of the breakthrough of the term violence when it came to describing and analyzing security and social order in these years.[56]

When the Hamburg police force checked their card files, it became evident that nearly two thirds of the *Rockers* were unskilled, many of them pursuing

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[50] Hollstein 1981, 12.
[51] For the term "bricolage", compare Hebdige 1979.
[52] Nolte 2000.
[53] The state of research on the *Rockers* is reviewed in Cremer 1992; for an analysis of the press in Essen, compare Adam 1972, 57-69; for a paradigmatic opinion poll, compare Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Behoerde fuer Inneres [Federal archive of the city of Hamburg, Office for domestic affairs], *Infas Hamburg Report*. Bad Godesberg, 1974, 824.
[54] See as an statistical overview Thome and Birkel 2007; for local details see Adam 1972, 62-63.
[55] *Der Spiegel* 26, January 1, 1973, 8, 15 and 22; *Konkret* (1972) 13.
[56] See Cremer-Schaefer and Steinert 1998, 99-100, 117-122.

only odd jobs.[57] Similar to the members of the underground, the *Rockers* did not meet in the traditional delinquent areas of the red light districts or in the city districts close to the ports. Instead their pubs were spread all over the city.[58] Some *Rockers* lived in high-rise concrete-laden residential districts such as the *Maerkisches Viertel* in West Berlin.[59]

The *Rockers* imported the long hair of the contemporary dropouts into their rough working-class outfit, wore black leather jeans and jackets, heavy boots and later also rode motorbikes. They gave their groups names like "Bloody Devils", "Hell's Dogs", "Black Souls" or "Hell's Angels".[60] The *Rockers* showed off an aggressive pattern of masculinity with which they distinguished themselves from all current social tendencies, which they considered would lead towards softness and femininity. Therefore, *Rockers* often attacked homosexuals and disliked 'soft' hashish smokers.[61] The *Rockers* of the late 1960s, who resembled the *Halbstarke* of the late 1950s only in a limited sense, were a working-class component of contemporary youth delinquency in Western Germany.[62] Their provocative appearance owing to their rough and aggressive masculinity was reinforced by their usage of Nazi symbols.

In the early 1970s, the big gangs of the *Rockers* dissolved and only small groups were left. Simultaneously the outfit of the *Rockers* began to change towards a more civilian disposition (*Habitus*). They wore leather vests, jackets with leather fringes, and jeans jackets with inscriptions. The Hamburg police approached this end of old certainties by 'inventing' a new group of juvenile delinquents. They were "outwardly totally inconspicuous in their group behavior and performance"; however, they were "threatening in a similar way" to the *Rockers*. Beginning in early 1972, this "*Taetertyp nach 'Rockerart'"* (a quasi-Rockeresque perpetrator-type) was also labeled as "young violent offender" (*Junge Gewalttaeter*).[63]

This definition made it easy for the police to include all young delinquent boys and girls who wore ordinary clothes. As a consequence, the numbers of "young violent offenders" in Hamburg skyrocketed from 563 in 1971 up to 1,909 in 1972.[64] This example underscores the close relationship between youth (culture) and youth delinquency,[65] since the changes in the way of clothing led to this redefinition of youth crime. On the one hand, the 'normal' youth copied the leather clothing style of the *Rockers.* The clothing industry had made this

[57] Kreuzer 1970, 348.
[58] Simon 1997, 270.
[59] Homann 1969, 12-15.
[60] See Wolter 1973, 293.
[61] Compare Kreuzer 1970, 339, 352.
[62] For literature on *Halbstarke* see footnotes 19, 33 and 34.
[63] Wolter 1973, 294.
[64] Piesch 1975, 12.
[65] This is underlined by Trotha 1982.

style palatable to non-Rockers. On the other hand, *Rockers* apparently integrated new styles into their outfits. Even without *Rockers,* the threat of juvenile delinquency could be maintained by this widening of definition. Since the police decentralized the perspective on delinquency, its threat seemed to be omnipresent with deep roots in society. Even a friendly, normally-dressed boy next door could turn into a "young violent offender."

4. Conclusion

In the last third of the nineteenth century the perception of and fears about youth crime and youth violence were focused on easily discernable proletarian male youth (groups and individuals) who mostly lived in densely populated urban neighborhoods. If any severe troubles should occur in this social field, state authorities were convinced that the police (sometimes assisted by military troops) would meet these challenges successfully. In the last third of the twentieth century juvenile delinquency and youth violence became much more diffuse and was not so easy to locate in urban spaces. In West Germany during the 1960s and the 1970s there were two important changes in juvenile delinquency, in its perception, and in the related fears which influenced the search for security in a society which was felt to be changing ever faster. First, there was a double dissolution of boundaries (Entgrenzung) of youth crime. From the mid-1960s delinquent behavior was no longer concentrated in its traditional centers such as red light or port districts of the cities. At the same time, delinquency reached broader strata of society. The establishment of the international *underground* networks, in which drug users played an important role, was instrumental for this development. The early 1970s brought a second impulse for this end of certainties about the social and spatial aspects of youth crime. As the case of the *Rockers* has shown, from now on it was impossible to ascribe delinquency predominantly to abnormal individuals. Youth crime had become a potentially omnipresent phenomenon of everyday urban life. Thus the fight for security as a social value which tries to work against the contingency of time and against the uncertainty of the future gained unprecedented importance.

Both time phases under consideration here mirrored changes in the urban setting of delinquency. In the last third of the nineteenth century the debates focused on the interaction of industrialization, urban growth and social life in overcrowded working class neighborhoods. The fears about crime of the 1960/1970s occurred against the background of radical changes in the built-up urban environment caused particularly by urban renewal with its focus on concrete high-rises and the redevelopment of city centers. As a consequence,

the resurgence of the scholarly field of criminal geography in the mid 1970s[66] was one effort to locate more precisely the origins, spaces, and fears of crime in Western Germany. In short: In the early/mid 1970s there were diffuse spatial fears. Every seemingly friendly boy from the neighbourhood could all of sudden turn into a "juvenile violent offender". Thus, crime could lurk everywhere, in every niche of (urban) society. It was against this background that the age of security dawned as it promised a safe haven against all future urban threats.

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[66] See Hellmer 1972; Schwind et al 1978; Frehsee 1979.

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