

# Review

## Hot spot policing in a Danish context

### *Background and objectives:*

- Several international studies have found that police intervention focusing on small geographic areas with high crime rates – also known as hot spots – is an effective approach to reduce crime.
- Before a potential broader launch of this model, the Danish National Police (*Rigspolitiet*) initiated an experiment in order to study the applicability of the concept in a Danish context where the concentration of crime is generally less noticeable than in other countries.

### *Research design:*

- The concept was tested in three police districts by using a randomised controlled trial. 31 hot spot areas were identified and randomly divided into treatment and control areas.
- The local police decided themselves the type of intervention they would test in the treatment areas.
- Besides an effect evaluation of hot spot policing, a process evaluation of the type and progress of police interventions in hot spot areas was made.

### *Findings:*

- In general, police officers found working with hot spot policing meaningful and a good and efficient way to spend limited police resources. However, the number of crimes in hot spot areas did not decrease compared to the control areas. Still, this cannot be interpreted to mean that hot spot policing is not an effective way to reduce crime. The process evaluation thus points to a number of factors that may have influenced the outcome:
  - Due to increased anti-terror patrolling and more border control at the time of the experiment, insufficient resources were allocated to the interventions.
  - The police did not see all of the identified hot spots as having distinct high crime rates meaning that less interest and enthusiasm and fewer resources were allocated to hot spot interventions.
  - The concept was not always implemented as intended. Some interventions were not new or more intensive than previous interventions.
  - Some interventions were initiated very late in the trial period.
  - Often interventions focused on only part of and not the whole hot spot area, and some of the planned interventions were actually not implemented.
- It should be noted that hot spot policing did reduce the number of cases of vandalism and car crimes (motor vehicle thefts and thefts from vehicles). However, due to the difficulties and shortcomings mentioned the validity of the results is uncertain.

