

Editorial

This volume of *Cahiers Politiestudies / Journal of Police Studies* (n° 25) is devoted to tides and currents in police theories. Far too often and long, police research has been fragmented, dispersed and non-theoretical. Today, many scholars recognize this striking immobilizing empiricism and are critical about it, but even they seem to be paralyzed by this reality. Actual attempts to build sound theoretical insights on policing are rare.

In September 2010, the working group on policing of the European Society of Criminology (ESC) organised a pre-conference at Ghent University bringing together an international group of police researchers and police executives to discuss police theories. The outcome of the pre-conference was a paper written by Jack R. Greene, called *'The Tides and Currents, Eddies and Whirlpools and Riptides of Modern Policing: Connecting Thoughts'*. Greene's paper referred to original background papers which were published earlier (Cools *et al.*, 2010).

The *Flemish Centre for Police Studies* (CPS) and the *Dutch Foundation for Society, Safety and Police* (SMVP) decided to organize a residential conference in December 2012, aiming to push the analysis further, with Jack Greene's roundup as a provocative starting point. In preparation of this event, this volume was written to encourage further discussion. Each of the authors of this volume received a copy of Jack's paper before they started to write. In this sense, Greene's paper functioned as the stimulus for the discussion we present in this issue. We thank Jack for his courageous attitude, acting as a target for numerous snipers. It is our intention to later on publish the outcome of the December 2012 conference in a separate volume. The *Flemish Centre for Police Studies* (CPS) and the *Dutch Foundation for Society, Safety and Police* believe it is worthwhile to further invest in this important discussion.

1. Metaphors and Theories

This volume is divided in five parts. The first part deals with Metaphors and Theories and contains four chapters dedicated to this theme. Where are we in the development of police theories? To what extent can a metaphor help us in this? Are metaphors misleading or enlightening?

Kees van der Vijver and **Lodewijk Gunther Moor** remind us in *'Theories of policing'* that this volume is dealing with police theories. In this contribution, they present a brief and introductory overview of the history of police research and subsequently discuss the role theories of policing have been playing in the past. The authors hope that this frame will offer a reference to help the reader understand the other contributions in this volume. Van der Vijver and Gunther Moor concentrate on police work and on how it relates to the police organization. At the end of their contribution they formulate some issues which can impact policing and police theories in the near future.

Policing has been described from a number of perspectives using many metaphors. The next contribution is the provocative paper by **Jack Greene** which we already referred to *'The Tides and Currents, Eddies and Whirlpools and Riptides of Modern Policing: Connecting*

Thoughts'. He states that our understanding of policing is conditioned by a wide range of descriptions, each calling out important aspects of policing. He observes that there seems to be little consideration for how these aspects may interact, or for their cumulative impact on our understanding of policing, socially and institutionally. Such selectivity, of course, casts the police in differing lights, from divergent and often unconnected perspectives, with broad or focused lenses, practically, substantively and symbolically. This kind of description is not always very precise. Nonetheless, these perspectives add to our understanding of many aspects of policing and social control, and in doing so illuminate the complexities and contradictions of policing.

The essay of Greene chooses to examine policing using the metaphor of the sea, illustrating similarities between what we know about the dynamics of the sea and what we think we know about the dynamics of policing. Similar to the sea, policing is also powerful, shaping civil societies for better or worse, while at the same time being shaped by external conditions. Like the sea, policing is complex, has impact and changes. And like the sea the many levels and interdependencies of policing give it depth, breadth and animation.

James Sheptycki develops and elaborates in *'Policing Theory and Research – What's in a metaphor?'* an alternative to Jack Greene's simile. The author argues that Greene's simile – policing is like the sea – equates policing with an irresistible *Force majeure*. According to Sheptycki, capacious though it is, Greene's metaphor allows us to forget that the politics of policing are about the struggle to define it. He argues that the global policing we have is not historically inevitable. Sheptycki argues that there is a strong need to develop metaphors for thinking about policing that do not deny our human agency. In the present global crisis the world is divided in zones of security, which make it possible that everywhere the well-to-do can live in gated communities, while others live in inhospitality.

What is especially important in our theorizing is that we adapt metaphors that shine a beacon on the political choices being made. The author argues that, if the world is to be made better by means of police science, it requires that its practitioners cultivate a philosophical awareness of the profound limitations of that science. The focus on efficacy, the frequent invocation of intentions to prevent harm and, above all, the claim to objective knowledge about 'what works' all serve only to make tactical interventions appear novel, inventive and effective.

According to **Peter Manning** in *'Metaphors and Modern Policing'* the role of metaphors is significant in police studies. It was salient in the 'Report of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice' (1967), and unlike continental systems where the idea of a system of justice was accepted, it was the first representation of the idea that a functioning justice system was present. This metaphor of the criminal justice system as a funnel both broadened and narrowed thinking about policing.

Manning's contribution, a response to Greene's sea metaphor, argues that there are many metaphoric versions of theorizing in policing, those based on metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and cultural or class-based ideas. Greene's metaphor, based primarily on studies of Anglo-American policing, describes cultural forces both inside and outside policing that may lead to change. Ironically, these changes are minimized by the structure

of police organizations. Police reform will require more than shifts in metaphor, and will require real reconstruction of police organizations, according to Manning.

2. Politics and Police

The second part of this volume deals with Politics and Police, a theme that different authors focus on. Three chapters are dedicated to this item. Are decision makers lost in the flood of buzz-words? Is neo-liberal thinking hiding the central discussion on social justice? What is the nature of the relation between police and politics?

Bob Hoogenboom is clear in his statement concerning Greene's argument: '*Lost in the flood*'. Hoogenboom states that Greene's fascination with the sea challenges us to look at the state of the art of police studies. The central argument of Hoogenboom is that today we are caught up in our specific research interests, from community policing, organized crime, intelligence led policing to problem solving policing or reassurance policing. In the meanwhile, we lost the broader picture of the historical, political and sociological contexts of policing. Police research today is 'lost in the flood', characterized by a lack of academic curiosity. The author stresses the argument that we are today in grave danger, forgetting the hard-won lessons of police sociology. Referring to Robert Reiner, Hoogenboom states that there is too much work in the sphere of 'fictional' policing, not enough on 'factual' policing. Therefore, he applauds Greene's attempt to reconnect us again to the lost founding fathers of police sociology, on whose shoulders we should stand.

Robert Reiner analyses in '*Policing and Social Democracy: Resuscitating a Lost Perspective*' a sharp transformation in the problematic of police research that has occurred since the 1990s. The change is from a primary focus on sociology of the police to sociology for the police, from critical and theoretical concerns to providing practicable solutions to immediate policing problems. This is related to wider changes in the discipline of criminology and, beyond that, to seismic shifts in the political economy and culture. These are the supplanting of an at least implicitly social democratic analysis of the ultimate sources and solutions of social problems including crime and disorder, to a neo-liberal one that highlights the politics of law and order. Whilst in the short run these appear to have worked as reflected in the fall in crime rates since the mid-1990s, the longer term issue is whether this has been symptom suppression, as a social democratic perspective suggests, rather than a stable basis for security which would require wider socio-economic justice.

In '*On how a failing government creates an intrusive police force*' **Paul Ponsaers** and **Elke Devroe** contribute further to this discussion. They bring a reflection on the relationship between police and politics, starting from the premise that peacekeeping has traditionally been the core activity of the police. They illustrate this theorem by reference to the results of empirical research conducted in both the United States and Europe. The authors conclude that the expectations of the political class regarding the police have completely transformed over the last three decades, and the emphasis lies more and more on crime fighting. However, this is not based on a realistic vision of concrete police work, which consists in essence of preventive acts. This assertion is based on historical insights, from which it seems that the police were expected to preserve the day-to-day peace and quiet of a neighbourhood.

In this chapter, the authors clarify some causes of the change in political vision. First and foremost, a failing government is an indirect cause of demand for the ‘strong arm of the law’. A government that does not succeed in guaranteeing social justice for its population leads to riots, where the population turns its back on the most apparent representation of the government, that is the police, mostly followed by a zero tolerance policy. A second cause for the shift of emphasis towards crime fighting is the economic crisis: police have become too expensive. Other security professionals (even in the private sector) have taken over day-to-day contact with the population and the police are reserved for large-scale crime fighting. This essay takes a closer look at this relationship between the police and politics.

3. Theory and Research

A third part of this volume concerns Theory and Research. Two authors are focussing on this topic. Can research contribute to bottom-up collective action of neighbourhoods? What are the consequences of the growing ‘What works’ paradigm?

Wesley G. Skogan compares in ‘*Collective Action, Structural Disadvantage and Crime*’ “top down” to “bottom up” community reactions to neighbourhood crime and disorder. Bottom-up efforts to defend communities are largely naturally-occurring, for they arise out of shared values and perspectives on problems, dense social relationships, civic engagement and the organizing abilities of community residents. The bottom-up neighbourhood self-regulatory mechanisms examined here include informal social control, collective efficacy, community mobilization and electoral alliance-building.

The research of Skogan contrasts bottom-up collective action with a top-down, state-sponsored alternative, Chicago’s beat meetings. It evaluates them in terms of their relationship to concentrated disadvantage. A great deal of research on public and civil society activities that rely on voluntary participation has found that the opportunities for involvement they create typically advantage better-off neighbourhoods that need them the least and already get along with the police. The question here is, do top-down or bottom-up projects hold out more hope for assisting poorer areas?

In ‘*What’s what? – Evaluating the mechanisms of crime reduction projects*’ **Tim Hope** substantiates that the prevailing paradigm of finding out “what works” seems to unite criminological researchers in pursuing the goal of being ‘useful’ for policy and practice in policing. The paper explores the implications of a ‘mechanism-based’ approach to understanding the outcome of local crime prevention projects. It shows how a ‘theories of change’ approach can be developed to understand the process of implementation, and how interventions can be related to outcomes. Drawing on experience of evaluating the Home Office Reducing Burglary Initiative (RBI), this paper illustrates some of the contradictions and difficulties of the ‘what works’ paradigm. By comparing the RBI expected theory of change with a set of counterfactual explanations, the evaluation demonstrated the critical importance of understanding the implementation process, especially an emphasis on adaptability and problem solving rather than on planning and compliance.

4. Policing in specific national circumstances

A fourth part of this volume deals with questions concerning specific national situations. Three authors go into this question, dealing with the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium. Is there a tendency to convergence or divergence? Are there national differences in formalisation or informalisation of social control?

Nicholas Fyfe and **Alistair Henry** argue in *'Negotiating divergent tides of police reform within the United Kingdom'* that discussions of current police reform agendas around Europe have tended to emphasise convergence in western police policy and practice, and the role of global problems and dilemmas – from international terrorism, to migration, to fiscal austerity following the economic crisis – in driving it. The authors argue here that the divergent patterns of reform that have become apparent within the United Kingdom in recent years require such perspectives to be qualified. Jack Greene's maritime metaphor of tides and currents in policing is used throughout as a framework for helping to unpack the context, drivers and content of reform agendas in both England and Wales and in Scotland. They move on to argue that the metaphor talks effectively to core narratives within existing police scholarship that act as timely reminders of the sometimes limited purchase of police reform – namely the limited role of the public police in securing social order and their oft-found inertia in the face of currents of change – but also that the metaphor requires extension if it is to adequately account for political agency and the local political cultures through which the tides and currents of policing are negotiated, traversed and given meaning.

Thomas Feltes and **Jutta Dincă** focus in their chapter *'Tides and currents in policing Germany'* on police education and training on the one hand and events that had an impact on developments within police organisation and strategy on the other hand. In doing so, they reflect on Greene's idea to use the ocean as a metaphor and investigate if Greene's observations are applicable in the cases they present. A model like Greene's is supposed to simplify structures up to the point that they describe them without losing the most important features. Feltes and Dincă ask themselves if recent developments, which changed and continue to change police and society in Germany, are explainable in terms of Greene's model. After a short introduction to the organization of the German police force they analyze elements of the macro, meso and micro level of Greene's sea-metaphor. To this end the authors highlight certain dynamics of policing and police training in Germany. The aim is to contribute to the understanding of how police is being shaped by society, but also of how police is shaping the social order. Therefore, Feltes and Dincă reflect on Greene's ideas to use the ocean as a metaphor for thinking about policing. The authors conclude after examination that they found consistent doubts to file these developments under one of the keywords Greene is suggesting in his essay.

In *'Tides and Currents of Social Control – The Drift of Community Policing, a Belgian case...'* **Tom Van den Broeck** discusses tides and currents in modern policing from a perspective of changes in the exercise of social control and in the balance between formal and informal social control in particular. The primary focus is on the case of Belgium which has, like other Western countries, a considerable tradition in developing (a discourse on) community policing and other community oriented security policies within and outside police agencies. This analysis also briefly elaborates on the impact of late modernity on policing and on the evolution of criminal policy in general.

5. Globalization and Policing

A fifth and last part points to the globalisation of policing. Four authors are looking more closely to this reality. Do we need to examine a broader dimension than the Anglo-American world? Is the social mandate of the police a global answer to managerialism? What is going on with the (de)militarization of the police function? What is the relation between public and private policing, dealing with dirty crime?

The paper of **Layla Skinns**, *'The role of the law in policing: the well-trodden path, the road less travelled and the road ahead'*, critically explores 'where we are now' in theories about the role of the law in policing in the Anglo-American world. It examines the well-trodden path of theories about the law, police discretion and the politics of policing. Two other well-trodden paths are theories concerning the law and police powers, and the law and police legitimacy. In contrast to other areas of police studies and perhaps because of the significance of the law to policing, it is argued that theories about the role of the law in policing are in a healthy state. However, to remain so in the future, they need adjusting in the light of the pluralisation, internationalisation and transnationalisation of policing, which represent the 'road less travelled'. Whilst on the 'road ahead', it will be important to examine the relevance and validity of concepts and theories about the role of the law in policing to countries beyond the Anglo-American world.

In the paper of **Jan Terpstra**, *'The Social Mandate of the Police: on police identity and core elements in police work'*, a (re-)formulation is presented of the so-called social mandate of the police. Four elements of this social mandate are distinguished: the competence to use power, the moral basis of police work, a problem-solving orientation, and the need to gain and maintain legitimacy. These four elements are closely interrelated. If one or more of these elements are treated in isolation, then serious problems will arise. Many problems of the contemporary police may be understood as a result of the tendency to treat one or more of these elements as isolated phenomena. With this formulation of the social mandate an alternative is presented for several other views on the police that dominate contemporary policy and debate, like the new managerial view on the core business tasks of the police or the view that emphasizes the 'hard' aspects of the police as mainly a force.

Marleen Easton uses in *'Processes of Militarization in Policing'* the same metaphors as Greene to address the processes of (de)militarization of policing, taking into account the evolving 'architecture' of security. She observes that the sea is being navigated by a diversity of 'vessels' like semi-public regulators and authorities, private security, military companies and intelligence. The author states that growing hybrid arrangements between these actors emerge. As a result she concludes that 'plural policing' and 'governance of security' are concepts which are considered to be more appropriate to capture these realities.

Starting from this observation she addresses processes of (de)militarization of policing by zooming in on the public police, on the one hand, and the military, on the other hand, considering that both organizations have been studied separately for too long. She argues that these processes can be considered to be deep currents which affect the nature of policing worldwide, provoking effects on a macro, meso and micro level. Do these currents lead to divergence and/or convergence between these organizations? Do

these actors are taking a competitive or complementary stance in these relationships and interactions? Easton concludes that theories on policing might benefit from mapping the boundaries between police, gendarmie and military.

Lieselot Bisschop and **Antoinette Verhage** depart from the observation that the police became the go-to organization for many issues related to – or reaching far beyond – public order maintenance and crime fighting in their contribution '*The complex(ity) of policing 'dirty' crime*'. They remind us that policing, however, is not necessarily limited to the involvement of governmental actors. Particularly for complex phenomena such as dirty crime, a broader governance framework applies.

Similar to the police organization, this governance framework is affected by forces on macro, meso and micro level, or as Greene puts it, by tides, currents, eddies, whirlpools and riptides of modern policing. In this article, the authors discuss two cases of dirty crime (money laundering and illegal e-waste trade) and analyze the policing challenges and opportunities they present, reflecting on the metaphor of the sea.

Let us conclude with the expression of our profound gratitude to the Faculty of Law of Ghent University, the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research (FWO), the Flemish Centre for Police Studies (CPS), the Dutch Foundation for Society, Safety and Police (SMVP) and the research group Social Analysis of Security (SVA) for co-funding and sustaining the activities which accompany this publication.



Elke Devroe, Paul Ponsaers, Lodewijk Gunther Moor, Jack Greene, Layla Skinns, Lieselot Bisschop, Antoinette Verhage & Matthew Bacon (editors)

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