Safety, Security and Citizenship – A Research Programme at the Frans Denkers chair, Faculty of Social Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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INTRODUCTION

The Frans Denkers chair on Safety, Security and Citizenship is facilitated by the Amsterdam-Amstelland police force, the municipality of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit. The chair contributes to strategic policy development of the police, but is, by no means, subordinated to it. The motto of the chair is to conduct independent and relevant studies, valuable for both practitioners and the academic community. This memorandum lays out the structure of the chair's program, forming the basis for various research projects, some of which may be funded by third parties. In addition, special attention is granted to the importance of experiments, advice and debates in the field of policing.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, encapsulated in the German phrase Unsicherheit (Bauman, 2000), are now universal motifs in the western world. We are living in a 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) adrift at global migration streams and technological advancements and with crime and disorder often used as a 'semantic net' (Boutellier, 2005) to grasp and understand what is happening today. Garland (2001), for example, speaks about a 'high crime culture' in which deviant and even criminal behaviour has become a daily fact of life. His observation is not without basis, because in the United States and the United Kingdom, but also in the Netherlands, crime rates have skyrocketed since the late 1960s, and so has public attention to and fear of criminal victimization.

This crisis-mood generates omnipresent searches for protection and reassurance, confronting civil society as whole and state authorities in particular with serious problems and dilemmas. There is growing awareness that the police and judicial penal system are limited in their capacity to guarantee public order. As a consequence, state authorities have fostered local capacity building through public-private partnerships and community safety programmes with myriad organisations inside and outside the traditional police sphere (Jones and Newburn, 2006). The 'governance of security' (Johnston and Shearing, 2003) is no longer, if it ever was, the sole monopoly of the state. This makes safety and security highly sensitive political issues, as nothing less than public confidence in the legitimacy of pivotal state institutions, most notably police forces, is at stake in the Netherlands.

That said, the search for safety and security is even so powerful that it features a social ordering function from both an organisational and a moral point of view (Boutellier, 2005). Safety and security, in other words, stir the notion of citizenship people have. In this context, the central goal of the research programme is to further the understanding of the theoretical and empirical relationships between safety, security and citizenship. This goal refers to the oeuvre of Frans Denkers, an influential Dutch police psychologist who passed away five years ago. Denkers' work was largely dedicated to 'responsible citizenship', a term he coined to stipulate the necessity of enhancing the social, legal and political position of citizens vis-à-vis the criminal justice apparatus.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This leads to the following research question: how are citizen's experiences of safety and security related to the organisation of safety and security in Amsterdam? In answering the research question inspiration is drawn from the Anglo-Saxon literature on 'police extended families' (Johnston, 2003), 'mixed economies' of visible patrols (Crawford et al., 2005), 'plural' (Jones and Newburn, 2006) or 'multilateral' (Bayley and Shearing, 2001) policing, 'nodal' security networks (Johnston and Shearing, 2003) and 'the culture of control' (Garland, 2001). As such, the governance concept is central to most projects proposed within the framework of our programme. This programme will be outlined more overleaf.

THE SOCCER MODEL

Today, the provision of policing and security is rapidly redesigned in the Netherlands (Van Steden and Huberts, 2006). It radically disperses in different directions of which 'private security' is one among others. Scholars are groping for approaches and theories capable of doing justice to these shifts by evaluating the sustainability of the conventional state-security nexus. The concept of governance appears to arise as a running thread through these debates, which circle around *one-centre* (the state) and *no-centre* (networked or nodal) alternatives (Wood and Dupont, 2006). Yet, there is something to add in here. Instead of viewing the governance of security either as essentially state-bound or in terms of some abstract, interpenetrating and amorphous 'nodes', it can also be imagined as a *soccer team* (Figure 1) working outward in concentric defence lines (Boutellier, 2005).

This metaphor understands the public prosecutor as a goalkeeper, receiving loads of balls (i.e. criminal cases) directed towards him (fourth line). He therefore increasingly depends on a defence line of 'risk-managing institutions' (third line) such as police forces, private security firms and neighbourhood watches trying to reduce dangers and vulnerabilities. They fulfil a crucial role in stopping deviant and criminal behaviour before the necessity of criminal law reaction. Risk-managing institutions are, in turn, surrounded by 'normative institutions' (second line) consisting of schools, welfare work, housing associations and churches. These institutions have a pedagogic function in guiding and supporting 'moral consciousness' among people. Their main tasks are to instil ethics, correct deviant behaviour and settle conflicts at hand. The forefront players, finally, are ordinary citizens and their social bonds (first line). It is this crossroad of social activities where the ball must really be rolling. Here people find bonds of trust, friendship, fraternity and reciprocity that ideally make up for safe and secure living spaces.
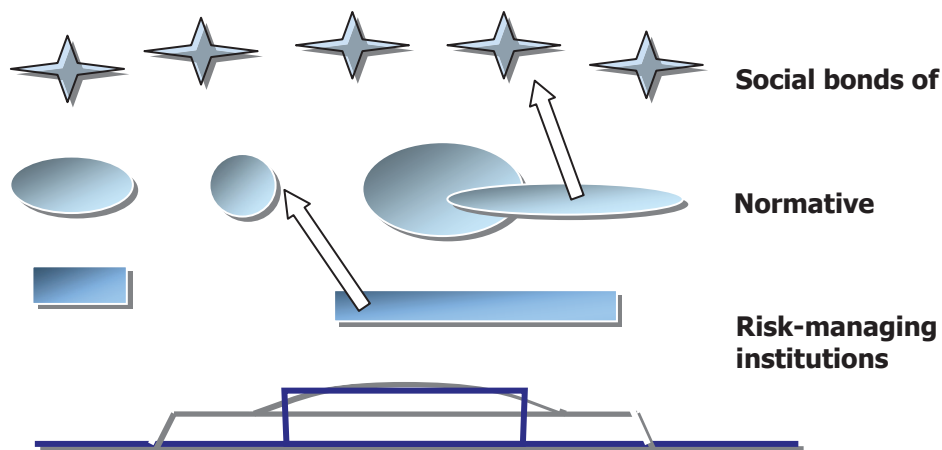

Social bonds of

Normative

Risk-managing institutions

Figure 1: The soccer model

The soccer model shows how society is responsible for security matters, with government offering backup when needed. It pictures a concrete image of dynamic 'anchored pluralism' (Loader and Walker, 2006) in which security provision is fragmented, but public authorities still hold control over legitimate violence, and related, coercive coordination and regulation. Specifically police officers adopt a 'libero position'. They support organisations and citizens with preventive practices and constraint interferences, sometimes making use of their authority to firmly restore public order. This widening of policing networks (or more broadly speaking, security networks) has the potential to shape citizenship in three ways. Firstly, it can *promote* citizenship by offering protection and reassurance within the remit of the constitutional state (Innes, 2004). Secondly, it can, at best, *restrict* and, at worst, *undermine* citizenship by, for example, impinging on civil liberties and excluding (minority) groups from society (Young, 1999). And, thirdly, it can *constitute* citizenship by constructing national and personal identities (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003).

Although these developments are, in theory at least, widely recognized as possible outcomes of shifting power relations between communities, corporations and state authorities, they remain surprisingly understudied it in the Netherlands. The research programme remedies this flaw in Dutch police studies by offering a comprehensive analysis of the situation at hand, and hereby enters into a 'friendly dialogue' (Dupont and Wood, 2006) with renowned policing scholars around the world.

RESEARCH THEMES

The soccer model offers a useful framework for conceptual and empirical studies on safety, security and governance. In this respect, we think of the following themes:

- The development of *security arrangements* involving an array of public and private actors (e.g. the police, the municipality, private security firms, schools and housing associations);
- The *strategies, methodologies, mentalities* and *(best) practices* concerning crime and disorder prevention;
- The *coordination* and *tuning* of public-private partnerships in policing and community safety;
- The *place* and *role* granted to *citizens* in public-private partnerships and community safety programmes;
- The *communications* involved in developing, activating and maintaining public-private partnerships and community safety programmes.

The programme rests on two pillars: (1) the public's *experience* of safety and security, whether objective (as a victim) or subjective (as a feeling) and (2) the *organisation* of policing, a function increasingly carried out by a range of (non-)state agents and agencies in society. The programme's first research pillar can be subdivided into two main components: (1a) the *geography of crime*, which portraits and investigates high intensity crime areas in Amsterdam and (1b) the *feeling* and *emotion* of (in)security. This latter angle not only refers to the 'shallow' understanding of personal perceptions, but also to their deeply felt emotions of ontological security. Security greatly contributes to the 'sense of belonging' people have, and is, in effect, a public good par excellence (see e.g. Loader and Walker, 2001). The second research pillar can be subdivided into three components: (2a) the practice of risk-managing institutions, (2b) the practice of normative institutions and (2c) the social bonds of citizenship. This pillar aims to map out the nature and extent of police and other operations, their inter-organisational relationships and their relationships with 'ordinary' citizens. It fits particularly well with earlier empirical research done by British scholars (see e.g. Jones and Newburn, 1998; Crawford et al., 2005).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The research programme provides an overview of significant developments in policing and security governance. In doing so, it offers empirical and conceptual studies exploring the rise of 'fragmented' or 'plural' networks in the Netherlands. Next, the programme's ambition is to produce policy-relevant recommendations on 'best practices', and stimulates thought through innovation and experiment. For collaboration to be achieved both academics and practitioners must, as a matter of necessity, work together and exchange dialogue on lessons learned from research. Of course, this cross-fertilization does not just have to take place within a Dutch context, but can mean forming alliances with scholars and practitioners abroad. For cross-national comparative research is of vital importance to better grasp the differences and similarities between historical policing patterns and to thoroughly learn from foreign countries' successes and failures (Mawby, 1999), it is one of our spearheads, which we will continue to further expand in the coming years.

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