

Shifts in policing, police professionalism and police organisation

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Across the international community a great deal of thought is currently focused on the shape of policing in the near future. In Europe, the Dutch *Politieacademie's* 'Pearls in Policing' add to the work of the UK's National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) in developing best practice, while in the United States the Harvard Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety has brought together an international cross-section of academics and practitioners to explore the future shape of policing. If a common thread runs through the work of these bodies and others, it is the recognition that the moment has arrived for a new professional model in policing. The challenges that policing faces are changing apace, and in addressing these changes there is a need to move beyond the practices that have dominated over the last decade.

Upheaval in the contemporary policing landscape has been rapid and widespread. In the UK, the NPIA is currently working around five core themes: cost-effectiveness, leadership, information systems, protective services and local policing. Chief among these is the pressing need to reduce costs in the midst of a global recession. The challenge of providing improved service with fewer resources is European-wide, but in a UK context policing now faces three years of (at best) flat-cash, with a strong possibility of five per cent cuts to police budgets. However, the impact of the economic downturn cannot be addressed in isolation. Patterns of crime are changing dramatically, and the effects of the recession are not as clear cut as they might be. Virtually every statistician in the UK was predicting an impact from the recession on crime that has so far failed to

materialise. Crime has not increased outside of very small pockets, and the majority of forces in England and Wales are still reporting significantly reduced levels. In part, this reflects the shape of the UK workforce. Thus far, many of those laid off in the recession are highly skilled and will not be anxious to commit minor property offences for fear of unemployment. Equally, though, crime has been shifting into spheres where traditional methods of police recording do not capture the activity. Crime recording systems generally focus on geography, constructing information around a postcode or a zip code. By its nature, e-crime is not a geographical activity, a fact that municipal-based policing is finding hard to cope with. This is particularly true in the United States, where the Los Angeles Police Department's Bill Bracknell has been exploring the challenges posed by the increase in e-crime: decentralised forces lack the means and mechanisms for addressing it, and with the FBI distracted by terrorism, there is a gap in the response to e-crime.

The policing community is coming to terms with the changing criminal landscape. The reality of e-crime, for example, is that it does not take on a single form, but comprises a multitude of different schemes. So much time is now spent in e-space that, unsurprisingly, criminal activity is developing in the online world much as it has in the physical world. Equally, viewing organised crime as a business, it is to be expected that in times of recession professional criminals diversify their portfolios. In the current economic climate, it will be interesting to see in what direction they head.

Responding quickly to the criminal population that's moving across boundaries, the UK has shared DNA database scene matches with the Dutch DNA database, identifying 22 matches for serious crimes between the two countries. One match is of particular concern because it relates to an individual who has committed a homicide in both countries and is, as yet, unidentified. While neither country has so far sought to match this particular profile against other European databases (though professional intuition suggests the individual concerned has probably committed offences in others among the 27 EU Member States), the infrastructure for information sharing is developing rapidly. The UK recently agreed to share crime scene matches with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States on a regular basis, with the eventual development of a DNA watch-list in mind. Similarly, the implementation of the Prüm treaty, once the necessary infrastructure has been developed, will allow for databases to be searched on a more routine basis in Europe.

Increased data sharing inevitably raises privacy and security issues. When the Schengen system is switched on across thirty countries, or the Prüm system goes live across twenty countries, the privacy and security debate over who holds information and how it is used will become a great deal louder than it is even now. The issue may be particularly pressing for those new democracies in the eastern part of Europe, where information held by the state has a completely different cultural and political meaning than for those of us in the western part of Europe and, particularly from an Anglo-Saxon perspective where we have fundamentally permissive regimes. But these issues pose challenges everywhere, not least of all in the UK where the Police National Database is due to go live in 2010, making 120 million items of information about people, objects, locations and events available to every frontline police officer at the touch of a button. In addition, the UK also holds ten million fingerprints and six million DNA profiles, which is massively greater per head of population than anywhere else in the world. Explaining the necessity of a system that operates on such a grand scale can sometimes prove difficult, but the transformation such technologies bring about in terms of the quantity and quality of information available to policing is indisputable.

Uptake of such systems is expanding: Australia and the United States are planning similar systems, while Canada is expected to go live at the same time as the UK. And databases are just starting to go international. The UK is about to share DNA and fingerprint samples with the five Anglo-Saxon countries, and is preparing to systematically do the same with Europe. Discussions have been taking place between the G8 DNA and fingerprints group about broadening and deepening the level of sharing between countries that are involved in Interpol. While governments are rapidly making headway in terms of information storage and sharing, it is not always clear that they have the support of their publics in doing so. But there is a balance to be struck. The logic of data exchange speaks for itself through cases like the murder of Piet Peeman, an 82-year-old murdered in Schiedam in May 2006. The UK-Dutch DNA exchange identified the killer as a Lithuanian man, then living in Poland, who was arrested for shoplifting in Oxford Street. In December 2009, he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by a Rotterdam court. With the increased permeability of borders, and the technology now available to policing, such crimes ought to be detectable. In terms of European policing, the ratification of the Lisbon treaty holds some substantial implications on this front.

The rollout of Prüm will see the release of a quantity of information quite unlike anything before at European level, driving cooperation in a way that information has not done previously. Cooperation with the Dutch required the establishment of detailed protocols for gathering evidence and dealing effectively with serious crime on a routine basis, because cooperation became increasingly necessary. Based on the Dutch experience, practice in Europe will be driven by the discovery that police services are dealing with the same homicidal maniacs and serious criminals. The policing community realises that this is the case, but information has not yet been made available to officers in a way that would demand action. Changes will only take hold once data sharing starts to shape responses at the operational level.

Broader changes are taking place in the policing world. Pieter Tops argues that the COMPSTAT era has run its course, not only in Europe but also in the United States. There is a general recognition that the public are looking for more confidence-based local policing, and

it is difficult to capture confidence data in a COMPSTAT form, both because improvement takes longer to become visible and because hitting crime detection and reduction targets, certainly in the UK, actually has relatively little impact on the public's confidence in local policing. It can make a substantial difference where there are poor crime figures, but there is a mid-range in which confidence and crime levels do not relate to one another as expected. The UK recently launched a national crime mapping service which shows little difference in confidence between relatively high-crime areas and relatively low-crime areas. The criminological community has been aware of this for some time, but it has taken time for practitioners and policy-makers to respond. Swedish policing, as in the UK, is now increasingly talking about confidence as the key driver of performance. The connection between confidence and legitimacy is confirmed by a growing literature, and this relationship will be critical to shaping interaction between police and public in the near future.

There is a growing awareness of just how localised people's real understanding of crime and disorder is. Perception of crime levels is generally not city-wide, nor is it connected with a whole suburb; by and large, perception of crime focuses on an individual's street and an area extending 125 metres either side of it. People's experience of crime is very local, which means the response has to be localised. Similarly, the criminological evidence on what constitutes a hotspot points to an area equivalent to two houses on one corner. Much as keyhole technology revolutionised surgery, policing must move towards greater precision in dealing with problems of localised criminality. From a politician's perspective local policing may not appear to require a great deal of intelligence, largely involving uniformed officers who are committed to their community and perform a social function. But even at the local level, that sort of policing is outmoded for the challenges facing policing; the development of a skills-base among uniformed officers is of great importance. In the UK, the NPIA is currently pouring resources into capability support of this kind. It can comprise assistance with anything from the development of information systems through to dealing with problems in performance.

Policing everywhere is seeking better dialogue with the public to improve confidence and effectiveness. On the issue of stop and account, for example, a brief survey of the literature reveals a number of studies going on in Scotland, Southern Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Bulgaria and Hungary, with a view to improving the ways that police do stop and account and foster confidence from the public. The entire sector is interested in how the police can go about their day-to-day job in a manner that is efficient and professional, and which thereby establishes legitimacy in the eyes of the public. It is this shift from punishing law-breaking to encouraging law-keeping which makes this moment so critical in the future of policing. But there is still a fantastic paucity of evidence on effective policing. This is particularly true of the responses to public disorder. The UK recently saw a review of public-order policing following the death of a member of the public during the G20 protests. In the wake of the incident Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary published a major report, to which the NPIA contributed a review of the existing research on public-order policing. It is not a very long study, owing to the lack of quality international research on what good public-order policing is. While there is a great deal of opinion, there is very little evidence. The same could be said of much of the work on serious and organised crime, though the police are often reluctant to publicise what research there is. All this is not to deny the emergence of an evidence-base in policing. In the field of counter-terrorism, for example, research is beginning to emerge on effective strategies for anti-radicalisation and preventative policing.

Similarly, accountability has become more complex. The demand for greater accountability at local levels seems to be a universal one in most countries, and poses substantial challenges for both government and policing. But calls for more effective democratic accountability at national and supranational levels present greater difficulties still. Certainly, a lack of accountability mechanisms is one of the great vulnerabilities of European policing. From a UK perspective, democratic engagement with some of the structures that are developing for international cooperation will prove a central challenge in the immediate future. Across European polities, the picture of diversity is infinitely more complex than 20 years ago, and it continues to grow more so. The

fastest-growing groups within virtually every European country are immigrant populations, a fact which poses a whole series of challenges for policing. The UK very likely possesses the highest threat from home-grown terrorism. This in itself provides a constant source of political and community debate. But there is also a wider debate about cross-border migration which bleeds into a debate about what the police are for. There is a danger that policing ignores the assumption, from the public perspective, that border police and local police are joined up. Even in the United States where there are hard lines drawn between Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local police, the public still expect the two to cooperate fully in dealing with particular issues. Misunderstanding the public's expectations of social controls can be quite problematic. Of course, the nature of the policing response to public opinion will depend on the issues of concern. Distinctions must be drawn, for example, between migration-related crime and public concern about migration, which may not reflect the reality, but nevertheless drives feelings of insecurity and a demand for more 'law and order' policing. Further, as European police cooperation continues to develop, it begs the question of whether there is a European public with a consistent set of views and expectations in relation to policing. While there are a number of EU-wide crime surveys, there has not until recently been a serious attempt to pull the data together. Dutch research on policing culture demonstrates both north-south and east-west differences of tone and tenor, but there are nevertheless common themes, particularly in regards to expectations. Balancing central, regional and local responsiveness — and drawing connections between the three — poses substantial challenges to European policing, particularly when the visibility of frameworks for collaboration within countries is often so low.

There are major accompanying shifts in the policing profession. Historically, one of the most resistant areas to reform has been the criminal investigation bureau; it is now one of the fastest moving. By way of example, 2010 will see the introduction in the field not just of accelerated fingerprint identification, but also of accelerated DNA analysis, allowing for the processing of crime-scene samples in under an hour. These innovations alone have the potential to radically alter the role of investigator. It will also necessitate the restructuring of the entire information framework that

sits behind investigative work, along with the way in which analysts operate and resources are coordinated at major crime scenes. The last year has witnessed investigators attending major crime scenes — one example being the large-scale theft of IT equipment in Sussex — and, through the remote transmission of fingerprints, arriving at the offenders' addresses before they returned home. The police workforce is diversifying, and policing organisations increasingly include people with scientific qualifications, ranging from crime-scene investigators through to analysts. The need for the service to develop these professions and their impact on the wider police community is critical.

Scientifically conducted experiments are taking place, such as current research into the effectiveness of crime mapping in the UK. But it is still a wildly under-developed field. There is no systematic method of evaluation, although bodies such as the Campbell Crime and Justice Coordination Group are starting to bring together individuals in the field. There is no register where research programmes across police and research institutions are recorded or made publicly available, with the result that practitioners conduct very useful studies and then fail share them with anyone. Too often, research sits on shelves as part of PhD and Master's theses, because practitioners, on the whole, do not publish. The issue of risk aversion, for example, is an area in which there is not a great deal of evidence-based practice in the UK, but there is a vast quantity of practice written down, resulting in the paralysis that such levels of knowledge can create. At present, the right course of action is often obscured by the sheer quantity of bureaucracy involved in making a difficult decision. The situation is changing in the UK after the criticism of officers for a lack of action in circumstances where it was urgently required. Perhaps public outcry is sometimes necessary to prompt wholesale institutional reform.

Similarly, predictive policing is fast becoming a reality. The NPIA recently held a conference with the National Institute of Justice, the LAPD, and a number of larger United States forces, exploring how theory can be turned into practice in the field of predictive policing. Scientific method is creeping into the policing field, most obviously in the tools already applied to specific disciplines, including forensics, identification and less lethal force. Recent studies suggest, for example, that the

introduction of tasers has led to a 60 per cent reduction in serious injuries to police officers, although the lack of randomised control trials prior to the introduction of tasers shows that the profession is still not quite where it ought to be. The problem is not limited to the policing community. The topics that academics choose to look at are generally of little value to policing. They may be useful to society, but they are rarely useful to practitioners. The result is that practitioners are often barely acquainted with the academic literature.

The contrast between the health and policing professions is stark, because in healthcare best practice is established entirely around randomised control trials. Studies are sometimes small, but they are a necessity for establishing the efficacy of new techniques. The ratio of studies in healthcare to those in policing is striking. It is an astonishingly poor position for such a major public service to be in. The current state of policing is reminiscent of the 40-year gap between the discovery of a cure for scurvy by British doctors and the wide-scale implementation of it by the Royal Navy; change needs to pass through the entire culture of policing before practice catches up with theory. A viable framework for scientific research has yet to emerge. Carrying the healthcare analogy forward, equivalent bodies to university hospitals are entirely absent from the policing infrastructure, while the academics attached to police academies lack the status they deserve. Until the profession arrives at the point where it has clinical professors of policing, driving practice from an understanding of practitioner knowledge, it cannot advance much further.

However, partnership presents new opportunities for education. Significant shifts are taking place within European governments in terms of shaping institutions that were effectively created for a particular purpose, but are now coming to shape European policy. CEPOL, among others, offers valuable opportunities to exchange knowledge and develop an overview of policing across the continent. Other collaborations range from opportunities to gain qualifications in different countries to emerging research partnerships, such as the North Sea Collaboration that the Scottish Institute of Policing Research is driving. Partnership is becoming uniquely important in European policing, but there remains a need to move to a position where any significant piece of research in Europe is available

to the entire profession, using replicated data to strengthen the knowledge-base across Europe.

Police leadership is equally in need of change. Leaders are required who publish and understand research, because it is no longer possible to lead an organisation from a position of ignorance. The shortest meeting in the UK Association of Chief Police Officers was once the information management meeting, in which papers that no one could understand — and which were often devoid of meaningful content — were simply waved through. But contemporary policing demands that leaders are clear about their information needs; driving a different sort of practice and creating a different sort of outcome. Leaders must understand that the complex organisations of policing now require highly effective business skills, a highly developed sense of moral leadership, and a strong understanding of people, information and resource usage in their organisation. This requires an understanding of performance in a broader sense than the restrictive terms of the COMPSTAT era. It means understanding the demands on the organisation and how they are changing, in addition to understanding the needs of the people who are expressing those demands.

There are serious financial challenges to police leadership. Most European police services will find themselves facing cuts of between five and ten per cent. Politicians will want to protect the front line, but this begs the question of where the front line is in terms of modern policing. The last 30 years have demonstrated that uniformed officers cannot carry policing by themselves; analysts are required to task them effectively. So there is a sense in which analysts constitute the front line. But an integral part of the legitimisation agenda taking a professional approach in the administration of custody and detention suites. Working through the organisational structure of the modern police force, one might soon reach the conclusion that the only non front-line services are finance and human resources functions (although financial ineptitude is probably the fastest route to dismissal for a police chief). The situation does not lend managers a great deal of flexibility. Nevertheless, shrinking budgets will mean doing less in certain areas. Police leaders now face the challenge of weighing the quality of a given strategy, which proves particularly difficult in fields such as organised crime, which

currently lack a convincing framework for measuring the quality of response.

If the leaders of tomorrow are to successfully navigate a period of transition, they will require strong mandates; they will need to know where to get those mandates from, and how they are to be refreshed. They will also need to know how to establish strong networks, at both national and international levels. With these requirements comes a different professionalism for the organisation more generally. Policing still possesses traditional organisational hierarchies, along with the military symbols inherited in the 1820s. While some states are encouraging direct entry, it is still direct entry into a rigid management structure, where rank comes with an expectation of particular privileges and responsibilities. With predictive policing and radical changes in the way policing uses information, the profession requires flatter, more flexible organisations to confront the challenges that it faces.

This is the time for a new professionalism in policing. The profession is at a point where the industrial model of leadership, the military model of leadership, and the technical model of leadership employed over generations are no longer fit for purpose. Tomorrow's police chiefs will be expected to successfully balance the demands of crime, cost, confidence and community. This new professionalism requires four things: it needs a leadership that understands and embraces accountability; it must have at its core a strong focus on legitimacy, understanding the evidence about how it is delivered and how to provide a responsive service; it must successfully combine both innovation and an evidence base; and it must foster a degree of coherence across European policing. Great challenges now face policing, but the uncertainty of the contemporary landscape also promises a real opportunity for police leaders to shape a profession that can withstand the demands of tomorrow.