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Theories of Community Policing? What we need is a New Philosophy of Policing.

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It is obvious that we can no longer adhere to traditional forms of police work. Over the last years there has been a reappraisal of policing philosophy and the role of the police, which was more or less intensive or radical. Drives for greater efficiency, ideas like New Public Management and changes in workplace philosophies forced the police in most of the Western democracies to get away with the old-fashioned militaristic approach of policing. At least since the eighties, we had to learn that police do not and can not effectively control crime or criminal structures and dangerous situations, and that "prevention" through repression is rather ineffective. As a result, forces began to devise plans to evaluate police performance through local crime surveys and through police activity surveys with the view of improving the quality of policing at the local level.

In the early 1980's, the outlines of a new direction for policing, know as "community policing", began to emerge and take root throughout the United States and many other countries*. Since then interest in community policing has grown rapidly and police in many jurisdictions have developed and implemented some form of community policing. Police operations were more visible, increasing police accountability to the public; operations were decentralized to meet the needs of various neighborhoods and constituencies. Citizens were encouraged to take more initiative in preventing crimes and became partners with police, improving relations between the police and the public. Evidence from field experiments at the end of the eighties tested the theory that closer ties between the police and the citizens of the community, especially in the form of door-to-door con-

tact and foot patrols, raise levels of citizen satisfaction with police services, improve the quality of community life, and lower the levels of fear of crime. The appealing idea of extensive community involvement or citizen input into policing decisions has been widely promoted by police and academics as today's approach to public policing.

The different approaches to community policing have generated a considerable body of descriptive literature reporting mixed results. The lack of consensus on what community oriented policing actually can achieve is due, in part, to the variety of forms community policing takes, and the different interpretations of what constitutes community policing.

But what is Community Policing?

Community oriented policing is

- a guiding philosophy - not a single, static program;
- a philosophy responsive to the needs of the community;
- a philosophy that guides the entire police department;
- a different type of professionalism in policing.

There are two basic activities that are common to all community policing programs:

- (1) they establish strong links between police and communities to coordinate law enforcement with other services affecting the neighborhood's quality of life; and
- (2) they increase the ability of law enforcement to identify, analyze, and respond to community problems in systematic ways.

Community policing is promising because it builds working relationships with citizens resulting in:

- improved delivery of police service;
- improved police/community relations;
- mutual resolution of identifiable problems.

Community policing can better address problems and concerns of the community because it is a proactive, decentralized approach with strong commitment to crime prevention, reducing crime, disorder and fear of crime. By involving the same officer in the same community on a long-term basis, it leads to higher police visibility and long-term relationships between officers and the community which develop trust and cooperation among residents. It also requires a different police attitude.

Effects of Community Policing are

- initial increase in reported crimes;
- reduce fear of crime;
- increased citizen confidence and sense of empowerment;
- increased job satisfaction for police;
- decrease in targeted crimes

One important result of police reforms over the last years has been that we had to learn that the employees are the core of any service oriented institution. Not only because about 70% of the budget is used for salaries. The members of the force and not the leadership or the politicians produce the products, perform and communicate with the customers in the everyday business. They may spoil the image of the corporation, and even one member might damage the image of the total force. I will not comment on the question of police misconduct and the “rotten apple theory” today. But we have to keep this aspect in mind in talking about an appropriate philosophy policing today’s communities.

Community Policing does not solve all these problems, and is not a magic tool for today’s policing problems; but it might be a step in the right direction - and it seems to

be better to move on, than to wait for the “final solution”, for a “final” theory of policing. A community oriented strategy broadens the definition of an agency's function. It includes order maintenance, conflict resolution, problem solving, and provision of services, as well as other activities. Community oriented policing and community oriented (decentralized) government services seem to be a promising strategy to address the rapidly shifting needs of today’s societies.

Whereas different theories of what “Community Policing” means are discussed, the basis is quite clear: Community Policing is rather a **new philosophy** than just a new technique of police work. Police and communities are working together in **close relationship** to **name problems** in their community and to **find solutions** for these problems. But what is the difference between a new technique and a new philosophy? Simply speaking, a new technique (like DNA-Testing) can be introduced by “l’ordre de mufty”, by just imposing a new law or some new orders. A new philosophy means a total change of the thinking, the acting and the structure of the police force.

In partnership with other agencies, but not alone, police is responsible for peace, order and security within the community. Police can, apart from their rather restricted genuine field of activity, to a wide extent serve as "detectors" of problems due to their daily contact with many parts of the population. Those problems could and should actively and publicly (if not sometimes drastically) be delegated or transferred to other actors in State and society.

Let me mention some consequences:

1. Personnel

Such a new philosophy needs a new role model of a police officer. Until today, in

many countries police officers often have the feeling, that their work is not very effective or efficient, highly wasteful, and bureaucratic. This feeling is often shared by politicians, resulting in mistrust and a steady call for more and closer regulations on the police. This mistrust is not based on the concern, that police might misuse their powers; it is mainly based on the feeling, that one does not really know what they are doing. In reality (and we learned that from a lot of empirical studies in most of the Western European States), the public has a much better meaning of the police than the police themselves suggest. But both the own feeling of the police themselves and the sometimes shown feeling of politicians and representative may result in a “drawing-back-syndrome” within the police: The more the police have the feeling that the public is not satisfied with their service, the more they draw themselves back and even hide themselves behind official regulations or other formal aspects – or they just escape in other, mainly private fields of activities, or they quit the job, although they are still on duty. Sometimes they even go into psychotic dungeons, escape into illness or act out their aggressiveness in the everyday contacts with the public. Police are also often in a role to defend themselves and to arrange intellectual retreat areas. But somebody who has to defend himself no matter what he or she has done, is not able to act positively, proactive and future-oriented. A self-confident police officer is more open to critic, more able to communicate frankly with the people, without hiding information or facts. We need such self-confident, well trained, police officers, who are able to communicate with people instead of just giving orders without any good reason.

And what does "efficiency", "effectiveness" and "professionalism" for the police really mean? The patrolman, the lowest man in the hierarchy - and usually the least well trained, educated and paid - is in the key position of exercising the greatest amount of discretion on criminal or possibly criminal activities. She or he is also the most active and most perceived partner in the interaction with the public and in communication

policing. He has wide discretionary power concerning if, when, why, and how to intervene in private affairs. If we talk about police reform and police philosophy, we have to keep this fact in mind and start every reform with a reform of police training.

2. Society

Late modern society and their institutions are organized in relation to fear, risk assessment and the provision of security. This is true right for most of the Western European societies and it will be true within the next years for the Eastern European societies as far as the "free economic market" (i.e. capitalism) is pushing away and displacing the planned economy (i.e. socialism) - with the result, that tight social bindings and communications between the people will disappear. Theft, fraud and other crimes will become widespread, and the people will call for a more powerful police and state again. This could be of great danger for those new democracies: If police are not able to cope with these problems, and if politicians blame the police for failing these objectives, the old fashioned system (and those who were in) may strike back by a counter-revolution. Community in late modern society is different. It is constituted by bureaucratic institutions and their communications media. These institutions and media fundamentally transform community as communications that involve sharing, tradition, quality human relationships, and local spatial arrangements. In the near future, Policing must face an increase in special interest group protests, with a corresponding increase in civil disobedience and violence. The unsolved problems of unemployment, poverty, homelessness will contribute to social turmoil, with a rising frequency of minority-related crimes, both in Western and Eastern European states.

Crime and especially fear of crime is a very important issue right now in many countries. The demand for help or intervention by the police has risen and is still rising. The rise of the criminal offenses, registered by the police, is only partly responsible for this,

but the readiness and/or capability of the citizens to settle conflicts by means of communication has decreased. Victims are less ready and capable of helping themselves. Official authorities are increasingly called in to clear and settle conflicts. The rise of registered offenses can be explained by this phenomenon. The "Make Believe Crime War" and the consequences have absolutely no empirical support, but they focus the public opinion to a "problem", which fits well into moral beliefs and liberates politicians from other problems and explanations, which are more difficult to be given to the public (e.g. unemployment, domestic violence, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency or political scandals). To view the social reaction against crime as a police monopoly is obviously untrue, as Jock Young pointed out already more than 10 years ago. Public opinion and informal social control have the central role, not only in defining what is crime, but also in maintaining social order.

3. Management and Structure of Police forces

The key words for management in the police are flexibility, shared power, autonomous teams and regional responsibility. Police officers of the future will be active problem-solving participants, particularly when given the necessary discretion, encouragement, and opportunities by their supervisors. Small work units, free-flow information, cooperation with private security institutions or even other private enterprises to run "Police Shops" (together e.g. with book stores, supermarkets or gas stations) are some other key words, challenging the former militaristic, bureaucratic structure of the police and the old conventional thinking of police representatives and politicians.

Terms like "Defensible Space" and "War on Crime" support the impression, that crime and public non-security are the results of militaristic, armed conflicts to be solved by more and stronger weapons on the side of those, who are "the good ones". But in a complex, modern world conflicts can not be handled by means of weapons and power

alone. Responsible leaders are relying on policing rather than “weaponing” such situations. Those who are responsible for the local safety should not trust in “more of the same”, as Paul Watzlawick called this phenomenon of trying the same, but harder instead of trying something new and going a more sophisticated way of problem solving. Community Policing includes the aspect of “Rational Policing”, and “Rational Policing” means to assess the organizational capabilities of the force, to identify critical issues, threats, and opportunities by assessing the present and expected future environment in which police function. Success should be measured by public values, produced by the police and not by clearance rates, numbers of convicted criminals and so on. Policing must be a political active business. Police should not wait for the politicians to decide what has to be done after special (and very often momentary) problems occur; they should approach the public and serve its demands.

Every organization sooner or later experiences the need to review its organization and procedures, and to check its mission and objectives against the daily realities and socio-economic changes of the society it is supposed to serve. The need to introduce or intensify skills of police officers is conditioned by a number of external and internal factors. These factors have a direct and continuous influence on police activities, and the effectiveness and the efficiency of the agency, and they have to be evaluated on a regular basis.

4. Training

Highly educated officers and better trained personal do not per se guarantee better cooperation and communication, but training and education is a sine qua non factor on the way to improve the quality of police work. As highly educated police officers could become frustrated in their jobs, grow cynical and look for formal or informal ways out, changes must occur not only in the recruitment, selection and training programs, but in

the organizational environment as well. Otherwise, new personnel will have little chance of surviving in the organization. The pressures for conformity are so strong that a new officer will either be forced into the police subculture, with the values and orientation of the larger group replacing his own, or his life will be made so unpleasant he will decide to resign. Police today are more highly trained than ever before, and the quality of the training has probably never been higher. Nevertheless, the positive relationship between training and enforcement seems to be evident, but this effect is not studied very much. The benefits of the training for institutions are generally more assumed or served as an important legitimating function for headquarters, than empirically demonstrated, and empirical studies have focused on officers' attitudes rather than actual behavior. A recent study showed, that the impact of training depends on organization-level considerations. Training has a significant positive effect in agencies that provide a supportive environment, but fails to have an effect in agencies that are otherwise indifferent or hostile to the intentions, the officers are trained for. The effect of the training therefor depends on the opportunities, afforded by the institution to apply it, on supervisors, who encourage the trained person and the intention, and on its relevance to the prospects for career advancement. The supervisor philosophy "Go out there and don't get into trouble" is not a good one, to encourage well trained and educated police officers (it is not a good one anyway). What is necessary is the institutional and personal (by the supervisor) value, given to the intended activity. The supervisor must "live" what he or she wants to be happen.

5. Community Policing as a Reform in Police Philosophy

- Community Crime Prevention and Community Policing are main reforms in crime prevention strategies, developed during the last years. Both have implications for police management and the philosophy of policing. While the reform itself is targeted towards crime and public order, emphasizes police-

community relations and local crime analysis and environmental analysis, the background philosophy is based on a distinct set of values within the police force and the understanding, that crime prevention is a task for all members of a community.

- Community policing is a comprehensive approach suggesting a multi-causal view of crime and a multidimensional approach to crime prevention. Problem oriented policing, team policing, and finally community policing are terms, reflecting the changing of the philosophy of policing during the last years. This change is a tremendous challenge for the internal system of the police, because the main structures of leadership, as the structure and the form of the organization have to be changed. This includes attitudinal, organizational, and sub-cultural changes. The keywords are participation, decentralization, motivation in working together with the community to solve problems of crime and related social ills.
- The police officers view of his or her role and his occupational culture are very influential in determining the nature of policing. As Manning points out, the basic source of police trouble is the inability of the police to define a mandate that will minimize the consistent nature of their self-expectations and the expectations of those they serve.
- The development into a more citizen-responsive force and oriented to a closer relationship with the community has to be real rather than superficial and therefore requires a significant change in philosophy, a reordering of priorities, and potentially massive restructuring of police organizations.

- There must be a greater coordination of police and other agencies within the criminal-justice system in order to increase the benefits to the client and break down the isolation of the police. An organizational change must lead to lower hierarchy, less specialists, better coordination of police work. It is necessary to bridge the chasm between the police and many hostile segments within the public, a process that could be facilitated by the creation of a community-relations division within police departments, but Community policing is nothing which can be delegated to just some officers or some divisions. We have learned from empirical evidence, that C.P works in police forces, where the total force stands behind the new philosophy, and it does not work in forces, where some specialists are asked to deal with C.P., and the rest of the force is doing “business as usual”.
- By re-organizing the police force into a community oriented, decentralized and independent organization with participatory management we can get both satisfied customers and satisfied employees. But police must engage in community-based processes related to the production and maintenance of local human and social capital. The one and only way to deal with the public concerns is to develop tailored programs for individual areas. We must not assume that each community has the same problems or that each community should respond similarly to certain problems. An open system of policing will find tailored solutions for a small world or neighborhood - within an institution which acts and behaves as a learning institution.
- There have been several attempts to define community policing, and community policing is described as family of reforms. The following characteristics are important:

- ☞ To solve problems, where they appear = local approach
- ☞ To solve problems by creative means and with unconventional measures, when necessary = creative approach
- ☞ To solve problems by analyzing the structural causes and not sticking on individual explanations. A view of all underlying factors and available means of creating safety, not just those related to traditional police work = structural approach; problem oriented policing
- ☞ To look at problems from a more general point of view and not only from a crime-fighting and repressive approach. Safety orientation means: Creating a safe community is considered more important than mere control of crimes or compliance to norms = multi-factor approach
- ☞ To solve problems together with others; police must cooperate with all individuals, institutions and groups in an community (private security services included); police should deny responsibilities where others are more competent or have better resources for solving a given problem. A broad strategic co-operation with other authorities, communities and people is needed = division of labor approach
- ☞ To see police as a part of the community (pars pro toto) = cooperative approach
- ☞ The police takes the initiative and is not captured by sheer reactive meas-

ures after crimes have been committed or calls for service have been received = proactive approach

☞ To decentralize police organization = decentralized approach

☞ To-be-named-characteristics ... = work-in-progress approach

As the complexity of workload is not only increasing, but also changing by time, police work and police training must be constantly on the move. Contents and targets have to be changed and adopted to new circumstances and advantages. The increasing workload in volume and complexity imposed upon the police agencies and the budgetary restrictions imposed by the authorities require an optimal use of the limited resources. As a result senior police staff members at different levels need to master modern management skills and techniques to run their organization efficiently. They must at least have a good understanding of these techniques and skills. Under the C.P.-Philosophy, a Holistic Approach is necessary. Communication and conflict solution abilities are as important as the knowledge of law, social sciences and police sciences. There is a need to review the organisation and procedures and to check the mission and objectives against the daily realities, routines, and socio-economic changes in the society the institution is supposed to serve. Many police agencies are mainly bureaucracies functioning at the organisational level. Quite a few are essentially static organisations running by structural inertia with little managerial capability. Others suffer from organisational gravity. A police reform must provide tools and knowledge to break this circle of bureaucratism. The exchange of information and experience between police institutions all over the world might support the transition processes in different police forces. Everybody may learn from everybody. The different activities of European Institutions like the Council of Europe, the EU, Europol, Interpol or the Association of European Police

Colleges have to be coordinated in a better way that it is done until now.

As “Cop Culture” and “Police Culture” is not the same, police managers and politicians should learn to distinguish between the individual culture of the members of the institution, established over time and between peers, and the “official” culture of the institution. Changes in “Police Culture” (like C.P.) are useless, if the “Cop Culture” stays the same or even contradicts the community oriented C.P.-Culture.

And be aware: A Fool with a Tool is still a Fool! A reform a training which provides just tools without delivering the necessary philosophy and understanding of one’s own role as a police officer as an integral part of the community is not only useless, but dangerous for our societies.

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For an more elaborated version of this paper (literature included) see my article: Community Policing – Training and Education. How to Break the Wall. In print; available on my homepage: www.ThomasFeltes.de .

* Parts of this paper are taken from Heike Gramckow, Joan Jacoby: Community Policing: A Model for Local Governments. In: D. Dölling, Th. Feltes (Hrsg.), Community Policing. Comparative Aspects of Community Oriented Police Work. Holzkirchen (Felix) 1993, p.27-40 (zip-download available via my homepage)