

Plural Policing

A comparative perspective

Edited by Trevor Jones and Tim Newburn

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

Plural Policing

Policing is changing rapidly and radically. An increasingly complex array of public, private and municipal bodies – as well as public police forces – are now engaged in the provision of regulation and security. It is, therefore, widely recognized that policing has become increasingly ‘pluralized’ in many countries. This relates to three key developments across the globe:

- The huge expansion of the commercial security sector since the 1970s
- The increasing ‘market pressures’ and importation of business management techniques from the private sector, coupled with increasingly strict regimes of performance targets and monitoring placed on state police forces
- The emergence of new forms of patrol provision that can be distinguished both from commercial security and traditional state constabularies.

‘Plural policing’ is now a central issue within criminology and police studies throughout the world, and there is a growing body of research and theory concerned with its extent, nature and governance. To date, however, this work has been dominated by Anglo-American perspectives. This volume takes a detailed comparative look at the development of plural policing, and provides the most up-to-date work of reference for scholars in this field.

Edited by two leading authorities on policing, and including individual contributions from internationally recognized experts in criminology and police studies, this is the first ever volume to focus on ‘plural policing’ internationally, and to draw together empirical evidence on its developments in a formal comparative framework.

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First published 2006 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN10: 0-415-35510-9 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-415-35511-7 (pbk)

ISBN10: 0-203-00179-6 (ebk)

ISBN13: 078-0-415-35510-0 (hbk)

ISBN13: 078-0-415-35511-7 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-00179-0 (ebk)

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1 Understanding plural policing

Trevor Jones and Tim Newburn

It is now commonplace for criminologists to observe that there is much more to ‘policing’ than what (state) police forces do. This is the clear conclusion from recent work in the sociology of policing that has shifted the former exclusive preoccupation with the (public) police towards a broader concern with law enforcement, order maintenance and regulation carried out by a range of governmental, commercial and community bodies. The past decade has seen a growing recognition in academic and policy discourses of what has been termed the ‘pluralization’ of policing (Jones and Newburn 1998; Loader 2000). It is generally accepted that, in many countries, ‘policing’ is now both authorized and delivered by diverse networks of commercial bodies, voluntary and community groups, individual citizens, national and local governmental regulatory agencies, as well as the public police (Bayley and Shearing 2001; Crawford *et al.* 2005). More recently still, and as a result of the proliferation of policing providers and authorizers, commentators have begun to move away from the focus on ‘policing’ and to talk of ‘security networks’ (see, for example, Shearing 1996; Johnston 2000; Johnston and Shearing 2003) and, indeed, of the ‘commodification’ of security and policing. It is becoming more and more difficult to think of security provision primarily in terms of what the public police do (Loader 1997), and the terminology of ‘fragmented’ or ‘plural’ policing systems has become well established within criminology and police studies.

Cross-national comparative analysis of policing

Despite the burgeoning academic interest in policing, there remains a relative dearth of rigorous international comparative research in this field (Brogden 1987; Mawby 1990). This reflects a broader lack of such research in criminology more generally, a subject which has remained ‘strikingly uncomparative’ (Downes 1992: 2). Although in some fields of study the basic tools of comparative research are relatively advanced – for example in economic analyses of growth, unemployment and labour markets – in criminology these tools remain relatively underdeveloped (Smith

2004). This relates to a number of daunting problems that face comparative researchers interested in the field of criminology. One of the key constraints on international comparative work is the lack of comparable data (Hantrais 1995). Perhaps particularly in the arena of policing and criminal justice, official statistics and other data are strongly shaped by national conventions and local organizational cultures, and there is huge variation between countries both in terms of the extent and nature of what is available and the reliability of existing data. This has been recognized in previous attempts to provide comparative national data regarding employment in policing and commercial security (de Waard 1999). Furthermore, such problems can be compounded by a lack of common understanding of central concepts, and differing societal contexts within which the objects of study are located (Hantrais and Letablier 1996). At a more practical level, another key problem for comparative researchers concerns the obstacles presented by lack of language skills. This may well be a crucial explanation behind the relatively ethnocentric approach of much UK and US policing research to date, given the general lack of foreign language skills among Anglophone researchers.

Despite these problems, the vital importance of cross-national comparative research is increasingly recognized within criminology. Comparative criminological research is essential in order better to understand similarities and differences within and between different jurisdictions, and to gain a deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts. In particular, key current debates within criminology about international convergence and divergence in criminal justice and penal policy highlight the need for more detailed international comparison (Jones and Newburn 2005). There is an important body of work that sees criminal justice systems as stubbornly parochial and primarily shaped by national and sub-national influences (Melossi 2004; Tonry 2001, 2004). By contrast, recent years have seen highly influential work focusing on major transnational shifts influencing societal structures and cultural sensibilities as the key explanatory factors behind developments in penal policy (Garland 2001; Christie 2000). A key objective for international comparative research is to develop links between these two important bodies of work (Jones and Newburn 2005). As Smith argues, 'the claims of ... grand narratives can be tested and refined only by the detailed development of comparative research' (2004: 13–14).

There is another important reason why comparative research is important. A number of recent analyses of criminal justice and penal policy have implicitly downplayed the importance of politics, in terms of the importance of both the agency of political actors, and the key influences exerted by the nature of the political and legal institutions within which they operate (Jones and Newburn 2005). As Edwards and Hughes (2005: 261) note in their persuasive call for more comparative analysis,

the problem of political struggle, obscured by much criminological research whether in the pragmatic tradition of mainstream American criminology or the grand narrative claims of critical criminology, is central to any understanding of the formulation, implementation and outcomes of control strategies.

In providing even an initial overview of the different structures and trajectories of policing systems that have developed within the context of contrasting national and local political and legal institutions, comparative research can begin to highlight the important contribution of political analysis in understanding how the policing landscape comes to be the way it is.

Given the considerable problems faced by comparative researchers, the current volume has relatively modest aims. The main aim of this book was to deliver a detailed and comparative overview of the international development of 'plural' policing. It was hoped that a volume of this kind could summarize the latest empirical material to illustrate and inform current debates about trends in policing, and begin to map out a field of research for scholars internationally. As the chapters that follow demonstrate, the problems of the availability and reliability of comparative data sources remain. This has somewhat limited the possibilities for detailed comparative analysis between countries at this stage. However, we feel that the book has succeeded in providing a summary of the best available information for each country, and as something that can act as the basis for the future development of a more sophisticated comparative approach.

In order to try to achieve a degree of standardization between chapters, contributors were asked (as far as data availability would allow) to follow a particular template. Not surprisingly, there was a degree of uncertainty about the precise meaning of 'plural' policing for authors whose first language was not English. The template thus outlined the kinds of policing developments in which we were interested, and which are outlined in more detail below. Each author was asked to provide a brief overview of the organization and structure of public policing in their countries, a summary of whatever data were available concerning the growth of commercial security, and a discussion (where relevant) of other forms of policing provision, including the activities of public regulatory and investigation agencies not part of established public police forces. The general definition of 'policing' that was adopted for the purposes of the book focused upon more formal manifestations of social control and regulation constituting socially recognized forms of policing. This follows a working definition that takes policing to be

organized forms of order maintenance, peacekeeping, rule or law enforcement, crime investigation and prevention and other forms of investigation and associated information-brokering ... undertaken by

individuals or organizations, where such activities are viewed by them and/or others as a central or key defining part of their purpose
(Jones and Newburn 1998: 18–19)

Although this definition excludes a number of less formal types of surveillance and social control, it clearly includes the various formal ‘policing’ activities undertaken by commercial and other bodies, as well as more ‘community-led’ forms of security provision that form a central part of policing activities in countries such as Brazil and South Africa.

Understanding pluralization

There are a number of changes that might reasonably be located under the heading of ‘pluralization’, but three developments in particular lie behind this term. First, a key focus in many countries has been the increasing size and pervasiveness of the commercial security sector. The proliferation of commercial security has both involved the spread of new technologies, such as closed-circuit television (CCTV), and also the incursion of the private sector into areas of activity more usually associated with public policing. Recent examples include the enforcement of parking and traffic regulations, the transport and guarding of prisoners and, most important of all at a symbolic level, the patrolling of public streets. Second, there has been the growing ‘commodification’ of public policing. Loader (1999) summarizes these changes under three headings: ‘managerialism’ (becoming more ‘business-like’), ‘consumerism’ (the re-presentation of public policing as a ‘service’ and of the public as ‘consumers’), and ‘promotionism’ (the increasingly professional promotion of the ‘product’). Relatedly, from the 1980s onwards we have seen successive waves of ‘civilianization’ and the beginning of discussions about possibilities of privatization. In addition, many countries have seen the emergence of forms of policing provision that can be distinguished both from commercial security and from traditional state constabularies. Key examples include the recent introduction of ‘community support officers’ and ‘neighbourhood wardens’ in the UK, the establishment of local municipal police organizations in France, and the introduction of police auxiliaries (*politie-surveillanten*) and ‘city guards’ (*stadswachten*) in the Netherlands. Finally, criminologists in some countries have come to pay increasing attention to the activities of a range of governmental regulatory and investigatory agencies undertaking important ‘policing’ tasks. The number and nature of activities of such agencies differ between countries. As Manning demonstrates, there is a relative plethora of such bodies in the USA, for important reasons relating to the unique features of US political and jurisdictional structures. These kinds of bodies also form an important part of the policing patchwork in the UK and the Netherlands. Although it would be mistaken to consider these bodies as fundamentally

new (Jones and Newburn 2002), they are undoubtedly a significant element within the broader notion of 'plural policing' that is the concern of this book.

These developments are affecting the vast majority of 'western' societies but, predictably, they are doing so in different ways and at differing speeds depending on the nature of the social, political and cultural circumstances in which they are taking place. To date, the literature has been dominated by research and writing from North America. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that there has been a significant element of ethnocentrism in writing in this field; too often it has been assumed that trends identified in the United States, or in Canada, are simply being (or are likely to be) replicated in Europe and Australasia (Jones and Newburn 2002). One of the core purposes of this volume therefore is to take a detailed and comparative look at the development of plural policing in order to provide an important update of, and corrective to, much extant writing in this field. Our primary focus in this volume, therefore, is simply to explore how what we understand as 'plural policing', broadly defined, is emerging and developing in a fairly broad range of jurisdictions.

The next important question then is which jurisdictions? A book of this nature can only hope to incorporate a relatively modest number of nations. What we have sought to do within the confines of a normal-sized volume is to provide an illustrative range of examples of plural policing from different continents and from societies with very varying policing histories. The United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are represented as they are undoubtedly the three nations where the bulk of extant work in the area of private and plural policing has been undertaken and which has dominated much of the criminological theorizing and research in this area. In addition to the UK, there are contributions on France, the Netherlands and on Greece which provide contrasting pictures of plural policing developments in Europe. Outside North America and Europe, there are also chapters exploring plural policing in Africa (South Africa), Asia (Japan), Australasia (Australia) and South America (Brazil). No doubt there are other jurisdictions that might have been added that would have allowed a slightly different perspective to emerge but, in our view, the selection here gives the most up-to-date and broadly comparative view of plural policing developments available.

The approach taken in the individual contributions is primarily descriptive rather than analytical and explanatory (though individual contributions seek to locate developments within their particular political and cultural contexts). The intention behind the volume is not to seek to take forward and develop any one particular argument about or theory of policing or to begin to reorient policing studies. Rather, the volume aims to provide an indication of the ways in which plural policing is unfolding in similar or contrasting ways in different jurisdictions. Now it might be suggested that the next logical step is to use this as a jumping-off point for

broad theorizing about how and why policing is developing internationally. We agree that this would be an important and timely project and, indeed, may well be something we engage in at another time. It is precisely the purpose of this volume that it at least provides empirical data and broad descriptive analysis of developments in individual jurisdictions that would enable such work to be taken forward.

Why has policing pluralized?

The first point we must make is that there has always been a fairly broad array of policing ‘providers’ in most jurisdictions. Despite talk of public monopolies and the like most jurisdictions have generally housed a variety of policing bodies. Nevertheless, there have clearly been some significant changes taking place in recent times – even if the extent of such changes is sometimes contested (Bayley and Shearing 1996; Jones and Newburn 2002). Commercial security is generally becoming more visible. In a great many societies the number of security guards and other officials has expanded massively. Similarly, the physical accoutrements of commercial security – alarms, closed-circuit television and so on – have also proliferated (though again this varies very greatly). Indeed, so extensive has commercial security become in some societies that it appears to have significantly outstripped the public police in its size and the finances that underpin it. Not only has commercial security grown substantially, but in a number of jurisdictions there is increasing use of a variety of alternative civilian forms of policing such as wardens, community guards and the like. Why are such changes taking place?

There are a number of possibilities. One is simply that there are increasing constraints on public police expenditure and that, as a consequence, other forms of provision have expanded to fill the gap that the police are unable to fill themselves. A second is that there has been some form of deliberate transfer of functions from the public to the private sector – in effect, a process of privatization of some public police functions to private security. A third is that the changes we are witnessing in policing somehow reflect other structural changes, for example in the nature of urban space. In this scenario the changing nature of the spaces being ‘policed’ effectively creates opportunities for, or even requires, the spread of private forms of crime control and order maintenance. Finally, there is the related, but broader, possibility that broader shifts in the structure and nature of ‘late modern’ societies have created a set of circumstances in which plural policing proliferates.

It is not the intention of the contributions to this volume that we should seek answers to this complicated question. That would require a further, undoubtedly longer, book. Nevertheless, in what follows, some general trends can be identified. First, whilst it is not possible to argue that there has been some simple shift toward commercial security as a result of public fiscal constraints, it is nonetheless clear that in most jurisdictions the demands on

public policing bodies have increased hugely over the past half century. In part this is because of what appear to be generally rising crime rates. In addition, in many societies there has also apparently been a growing and more generalised sense of insecurity in recent decades. Indeed, arguably no realistic expansion of public police resources in recent times would have been likely to meet the demands that have increasingly come to be made on policing.

A second important trend affecting many, though not all, of the jurisdictions covered in this volume has been the neo-liberalization of social policy and, more particularly, the attraction of privatization as a means of restricting public spending and refashioning the shape and functioning of the state. Interestingly however, even in the UK – arguably the nation at the forefront of the privatization movement (Feigenbaum *et al.* 1999) – direct privatization of public functions can only account for a very modest element of the changes identified here. Although the period of expansion of commercial security in the UK coincided with a drive towards privatization and contracting out by central and local government, direct privatization of policing itself was responsible for only a small proportion of the growth of employment in this sector. Similarly, as Prenzler and Sarre illustrate, public policing in Australia has been largely insulated from either outsourcing or commercialization of functions. In countries such as France and Greece, the more limited expansion of commercial security can be linked directly to deliberate policies of the government that reflect a more cautious approach within these countries' respective political cultures towards the privatization of what is perceived as one of the core state functions.

South Africa, however, is something of a contrast in this regard. Although the South African state did not engage in a process of direct privatization of public policing functions, Shearing and Berg argue that the Apartheid regime in the 1970s and 1980s consciously used and stimulated the private security sector as a means of protecting its interests in a situation of heightened political conflict. Again, in contrast to the proliferation of private security in liberal democracies, the spread of commercial policing bodies in Brazil has been directly linked to the very particular and dramatic nature of crime and insecurity in its major urban centres. Not directly stimulated by central government, private security has expanded in significant and novel ways (car-armouring for example) as a result, Wood and Cardia argue, of entrepreneurialism and a search for self-protection under conditions of heightened insecurity.

A more fundamental potential explanation for the increasing complexity of contemporary policing was offered in the 1980s by sociologists Shearing and Stenning (1987), then based in Canada. They argued that the expansion of commercial policing in North America was related to the growth of shopping centres, leisure and educational complexes, hospitals and private residential developments such as gated communities – all privately owned and privately policed. Increasingly, in late modern societies, our public life takes place in these areas – what Shearing and Stenning

termed 'mass private property'. In this sense, the 'natural domain' of the police is shrinking, and that of commercial policing is expanding. About 30 years ago we tended to live in traditional public street-facing houses, shop in town centres, spend our leisure time in public parks and open spaces. Over recent years, we have increasingly tended to live, work, play and shop in privatized environments; areas that are generally protected by private police/security. This argument is intuitively attractive and it clearly identifies an important explanatory element within the growth of commercial policing – especially as Manning shows in relation to the US and Rigakos and Leung also acknowledge in Canada.

At a broader level still, a number of writers have observed a range of social developments that gathered pace in the latter part of the twentieth century that have contributed to a generalized sense of 'ontological insecurity'. Increasingly, social life is shaped by and organized around perceptions of 'risk'. Such developments include: labour market restructuring and the virtual disappearance of secure lifetime employment; growing social and spatial mobility that has weakened the individual's ties with local places; the decline of participation in intermediate level institutions such as trade unions, local shops, churches, community groups and clubs; growing economic inequality and social polarization that leads to a heightened sense of (and fear of) the 'other'. Whereas people used to see themselves primarily as members of one or more groups, increasingly people are defining their life goals in terms of individual personal development and fulfilment. The increased privatism and individualism of social life has clearly expanded opportunities for many people in a host of ways. But it has also eroded traditional bases of trust and stability, and individuals have increasingly become 'disembedded' and insecure. It is argued that these processes have contributed significantly to the growing demands for commercial policing. A related argument concerns the notion of 'commodification' – the tendency for the expansionist dynamic of capitalism to recast 'goods' that were previously viewed as arising naturally out of collective social life as 'commodities' that can be bought or sold by individuals in the market place. This, it is argued, has been particularly visible in the field of security, which is increasingly packaged and marketed to consumers by a burgeoning commercial security industry (Loader 1997). Ironically, this process is self-perpetuating. The more we see uniformed security guards, the more we hide from others behind security fences and ever more sophisticated alarm systems, the more afraid and insecure we are. It is like scratching an itch that simply gets worse.

Why is pluralization important?

Should we be concerned about such changes? Why are the changes that appear to be affecting policing important? There are a number of responses to such questions. First, and as we observed at the outset, we are witnessing

some important changes to the nature and shape of public policing. For David Bayley and Clifford Shearing (1996, 2001) such changes represent a watershed in the evolution of our systems of crime control and law enforcement. As we have argued elsewhere (Newburn 2003), notwithstanding disagreements over how such changes should be interpreted, Bayley and Shearing's arguments provide us with a hugely important frame of reference for thinking about the future of policing. At the heart of this lies the fracturing of the idea of a state monopoly on policing. The growing visibility of private security, the increasing responsabilization of citizens and communities, and the growing corporatization of public policing bodies all complicate both the perception and the reality of policing.

However, and as the individual contributions to this volume make clear, it is vitally important not to overstate the degree of similarity in the changes taking place cross-nationally. Not only do individual nation states have very different histories of policing, so, no doubt, do they have different futures. That is not to say that there are not important similarities. All the jurisdictions included in this volume, though varying considerably, are witnessing growing pluralization of their policing structures. These trends are being played out in different ways in different places and this, again, is another reason for studying, and comparing, the process of change in policing. Although broad, structural forces can be identified which cross national boundaries and affect policing and other systems internationally, it remains the case that 'local political cultures' (Newburn and Sparks 2004) play a crucially important role both in mediating and moulding particular developments. Part of the rationale for this volume therefore lies in the recognition that cultural context is vital – systems are changing in different ways in different places. Put in a different way, it is possible to identify both convergence and divergence in contemporary developments in policing, just as it is in other areas of criminal justice and penal policy. In this, as in other areas, there is a tension between work that focuses on the broad sweep of change, seeking to provide generalizable theories and accounts of change, and work which takes a more particular, often empirical, approach to contemporary developments. Both approaches are important. The former provides frameworks for identifying and understanding trends. The latter, and the primary approach taken in this volume, provides rich empirical data allowing broader theories to be revised and refined.

The final reason that we should be concerned about pluralization is an ethical and normative one. As with all social change, questions inevitably arise as to how such changes are assessed and whether, crudely, they are perceived to be socially harmful or beneficial. Many commentators have raised considerable concerns over privatization and pluralization in the crime control arena (Loader 2000; Ryan and Ward 1989). To the extent that the changes taking place appear to be the product of broad, globalizing forces, it often feels as if change is all but inevitable and unstoppable. It is in this context that empirical studies of local political cultures become all the more

important. The variation that is apparent in the chapters that follow should very quickly give the lie to the idea that we are *all* inevitably headed in one particular direction. Broadly speaking, we repeat, there may be commonalities. However, what is clear from looking in detail at particular societies is that there are also countervailing trends and sites of political and social resistance. For those interested in thinking about how the future(s) of policing might be moulded in particular directions such detail is, we think, of huge value.

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