

European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research

Vol. 5, no. 4, 1997

Community Justice and Policing

Editorial

In the 1960s the semantic connection between community and policing was made for the first time. One of the reasons was the discovery that the impact of the police on the increasing crime rates was very small. The crime figures were rising and clearing rates were down. And above this the police did not seem to have any preventive effect on crime. From these days onwards the police in many western countries has become preventive, pro-active, community-based, problem-oriented or whatever new term has been invented. This example - a shift to the community - seems recently to be followed by a comparable move of the justice-institutions.

In the United States a development towards neighbourhood prosecution, night courts and community justice can be seen. In France the prosecution office has started with so called 'Maisons de la Justice'. In Belgium and the Netherlands comparable initiatives have been taken. In the meantime the ideas behind community policing have evolved towards informal justice. In this issue of The European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research the new directions in law enforcement are scrutinized. The issue is opened by Heike Gramckow who informs about the developments in the United States. Prosecutors throughout the US developed a variety of community oriented responses, sometimes in conjunction with community policing, sometimes independent of it. These efforts span the range from simple organizational adjustments to assuming a pro-active role in working with the community to assure neighbourhood safety. Just as the police created different forms of community policing, prosecutors have established programmes that reflect the needs of their own jurisdictions.

Considering the significant differences between European and American criminal justice and local government structures, there are, according to Gramckow, developments occurring in many European countries which require further consideration of the US experiences.

Anne Wyvekens points at the growing problem of delinquency and the feeling of insecurity it engendered since the 1970s in France. The shortcomings observed in traditional police and judicial responses led to an innovative new policy to prevent delinquency. It is characterized by an approach to urban security that is both local and global. The Maisons de Justice, which have emerged in the 1990s are an interesting example of the judicial facet of these responses. The notions described in this article are primarily based on a 1994-1995 study of the four Community Justice Centres run by the Lyons Court of General Jurisdiction (Department of Rhône).

In 1997, inspired by the French 'maisons de la justice' and the American community justice programme, a project was launched in the Netherlands under the title 'Justitie in de buurt', with the dual meaning 'neighbourhood justice' and 'justice nearby'. Hans Boutellier reports on the development of the project. He explains how this new idea was implemented by the Ministry of Justice. In addition, the pilots are described and some preliminary results are given. Finally the project is positioned in relation to the development of the welfare state. A liberal and pluralistic society is more and more dependent on law and the judiciary, according to Boutellier. This explains why justice

is playing a major role in social policy nowadays.

In Belgium, Justice is looking for a more constructive relationship with the citizen. The choice for community justice is the Leitmotif of two developments: experiments with 'Houses of Justice' and the establishment of 'Judicial Antennae'. The Houses of Justice aim to get a better co-ordination between the various para-judicial institutes, like child care and probation. The Judicial Antennae will be situated in problematic urban areas in order to stress the presence of Justice in these neighbourhoods. Both projects have different emphases and this proves, according to Peter Goris, that the concept of community justice can be interpreted in different ways. In his view the euphoria about the subject should be restrained, at least in some respects.

Despite the move to smaller, neighbourhood-based stations, the police remained up until the 1980s a relatively reactive force. Within the last decade, however, police activities have shifted to pro-active intervention. The police have become more active in the community, and have played a leading role in integrative work with other agencies and the public. This kind of policing has brought about a change in the ideas on and competence regarding 'doing justice'. Informal justice has become the mandate of the police officer as well. Alexis A. Aronowitz considers the development of community policing in the United States and the Netherlands. The issues of and problems surrounding police officers' increasing use of informal justice are examined. Frederik E. Jansen and Gerben J.N. Bruinsma present a new direction in the policing of organized crime in the Netherlands. This direction is on the one hand based on the results of a large-scale study on organized crime and on the other hand on the strategy of community policing. Some results of this criminological study in the Netherlands are briefly presented. Then the underlying assumptions of the new direction in policing of organized crime are examined. This section is followed by a brief description of the Twente region and the police activities which have been initiated against organized crime. Some preliminary findings will be presented. The philosophy of community justice is narrowly related to ideas on restorative justice. The last thematic article, by Norman S. Tutt, examines the extent to which the concepts of 'restorative justice' have been implemented into practice within the criminal justice system. The author identified six methods frequently cited as components of a restorative justice approach: mediation, reparation, compensation, community service, victim awareness education, and reintegrative shaming. Using a postal questionnaire the probation services of the United Kingdom and Ireland and social work departments in Scotland were surveyed to establish the extent to which these practice methods have been adopted.

In the section Current Issues attention is asked for the Canadian police which is also going through the transition of traditional to community policing. The changes have been under way for about a decade. For the past few years, this new concept has been tried out in some neighbourhoods of Montreal on an experimental basis. It will be implemented in the whole territory by 1998. In this section also the recommendations of the Leuven conference on juvenile restorative justice can be found, as well as a short notice about Semdoc. The Crime institute profile is about the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology.