

## Summaries

*Justitiële verkenningen* (Judicial explorations) is published eight times a year by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice in cooperation with Boom Lemma uitgevers. Each issue focuses on a central theme related to judicial policy. The section Summaries contains abstracts of the internationally most relevant articles of each issue. The central theme of this issue (no. 8, 2013) is *Looking at America*.

### **The crime drop in New York. On ‘what works’ and ‘what works not’ in crime policy**

*M.B. Schuilenburg*

This article describes the long decline of crime rates in New York, as analysed by Franklin Zimring in his book *The city that became safe* (2012). The author discusses and analyses the processes involved in ‘lesson drawing’ and the ‘policy transfer’ from New York to the Netherlands. Issues that are further addressed include the opportunities of prevention and the enforcement of ‘hot crimes’.

### **The product of design. American influence on Dutch urban safety policy**

*V. Lub*

In policy development and academic research on urban problems such as poverty, disorder and crime, the United States has served as a model country for the Netherlands for years. This article analyses two Dutch policies in the field of neighbourhood safety that are strongly influenced by American policy. It specifically focuses on the efficacy and applicability of social interventions, i.e. approaches that appeal to residents’ active involvement in the improvement of public safety and quality of life: resident representation committees (I) and neighbourhood watch schemes (II). Available research into the two policy cases illustrates that the ‘hard’ science from the United States can often be complemented with more qualitative information from the Netherlands. American research can thus be used to support Dutch policy designs, provided that knowledge is fine-tuned and contextualised.

### **Why do we look at America?**

*R. van Swaaningen*

Since the mid-1980s American recipes for the fight against crime and nuisance are very popular amongst Dutch policymakers. The question posed in this article is why they rather look at the United States than at European countries far more comparable to the Netherlands. The author answers this question by pointing at the popularity of neo-liberal recipes in general, an emotional historical bond marked by the time that New York was still called New Amsterdam and the liberation from Nazism in 1945, the (sometimes reluctant) acceptance of the US' role as 'the world's policeman' and a (mostly unspoken) belief that 'bigger is better'. Next, the author draws some lessons from research on 'how policy travels': 1) crime policies are always in much wider social policies and idea(l)s; 2) if something 'works' in country A it doesn't mean it also 'works' in country B; 3) policies are always adopted to national circumstances; 4) policymakers are particularly fond of simple messages and dislike nuances and criticism; 5) you can also look at the US in order to find out where 'we' don't want to go; and 6) you most of all learn more about yourself if you look at other countries. The author concludes with a plea for critical cosmopolitanism and a decolonisation of criminology from national biases.

### **Liberalization of drugs policies in the United States? Pot, crack and Obama's 'third way'**

*I. Haen Marshall*

This essay describes the most important recent events in the field of American drugs legislation covering the liberalization of cannabis policies in several states as well as the reduction of penalties for the possession of crack at the federal level. These developments are situated in a broader context of a complicated and big country with plenty of room for extreme moral views and a very punitive justice policy that targets Blacks and Latino's much more than the white middle class. The disproportionate impact of the punitive drugs legislation is an important driving force behind the trend towards liberalization, next to the high costs of maintaining an overcrowded prison system.

**The reversal of punitive justice policies in the United States? The implementation of specialty courts to fight prison overcrowding in Texas**

*M. Bachmann, P. Kinkade and B. Smith-Bachmann*

This article introduces and evaluates three different specialty court programs that are being enacted in a large Texas county to locally fight the growing tide of unsustainably high incarceration rates that is sweeping the United States. The study provides a brief description of the general dilemma of the American criminal justice system that, as a result of the widespread fear of crime and a mainstream news arena that favors grossly simplistic sound-byte-compatible get-tough policies, has become so immensely punitive and overburdening on public budgets that it is de facto no longer sustainable and in desperate need of immediate change. Faced with a situation of political stalemate on state and federal levels, county judges in Texas and other states are taking it upon themselves to bring about change in their local jurisdictions. Through newly designed specialty courts models, they seek to divert special-needs offenders away from the default incarceration track. The article evaluates the overall effectiveness of these new sentencing alternatives and identifies specific areas that need further improvement.

**A window at the North side? A characterization of judicial policies in Scandinavia**

*P. Kruize*

This article focuses on the question whether Dutch policy makers and researchers ought to look more often to Scandinavia for inspiration and less to the West (UK and USA). Scandinavian countries are also influenced by Anglo-American ideas about crime and justice, but at the same time the number of incarcerated persons has not changed dramatically while recidivism rates are low. Dutch policy makers and researcher do sometimes look at initiatives and practices in Scandinavian countries, most often Sweden. Dutch society shares many similarities with the Scandinavian welfare states and therefore it should be natural – according to the author – to benefit more often from Scandinavian experiences. Some suggestions are discussed in the article.