

CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION IN POLICING

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today about the principles of community policing in the Netherlands. I would like to start by telling you what my point of departure is. I was actually not trained as a police officer and have never worked for the police myself. My background is more academic in nature and I have worked mainly as an historian and sociologist. But the practical side of police work has always fascinated me and it is very important in today's world. I believe that a mix of scientific analysis and practical knowledge is the most fruitful. And I like to see my position as a lecturer in Community Policing at the Police Academy in that light. You will recognise this interest in history in the structure of my lecture. I will begin with a brief look at the past and comment on the changes the job of police officer has undergone in the past 30 years (section 1). Then I will outline the approach the Dutch police take to community policing (section 2). I need to address the issue of the modern citizen and the question whether police work is organised in line with social reality (section 3). As an example, I will discuss the tension that arises

regularly between the police and citizens in the city of Amsterdam (section 4). I will finish with a look at the future by presenting three elements from our research programme on Community Safety (section 5).

1. Police in transition.

Let me begin with a brief look back at the changes that occurred in every sector of society in the Sixties. Those changes had dramatic consequences for the police, too. Ries Straver was, until recently, Chief Constable and experienced the entire period first hand. He recalls the mental chaos that permeated the mid-Sixties. He writes: ‘Confusion was rife. In the public administration, in the universities, it was everywhere. Even within the police. My bosses at the time had absolutely no idea how to deal with the unrest in society. It simply didn’t tally with their world view.’ And because they didn’t understand what was happening, they reacted the way they always had. Things soon got out of hand. As a result mass riots broke out in Amsterdam in 1966. A lot of police officers and civilians were injured. In fact, it was a clash between two eras. Among citizens a new mentality was evolving in which authority and government were no longer accepted without question. But the police clung to the old idea by which authority was imposed on the population from above. That is the context in which they viewed their task. The accepted

morality among the police was this: rules are rules and we act when they are broken. In fact, the enforcement of laws and rules became the police's primary task. But it wasn't long before the new spirit of the age penetrated through to the police. Ries Straver and his generation realised that there were many circumstances in the work of a police officer that could not be captured in rules or laws. In order to do their work well, there had to be some room to act. Not only at the top of the organisation but also, and especially, for the officers on the beat. The commission the government ordered to investigate the riots in Amsterdam supported that point of view. They wrote in their report that the police needed enough room to act so that they could keep time with the dynamic of the city. With that, they acknowledged that simply bashing people during public disturbances was a thing of the past. With hindsight, it is clear that there were many other types of disturbances occurring in the Sixties. It was a time when the original ideals of a democratic society were being reassessed in a contemporary way.

Nevertheless, it would take years for the Dutch police to renew its organisation. Only in 1976 did the authority crisis of the Sixties produce a new idea of police work. A report compiled by Ries Straver, Eric Nordholt and Jan Wiarda played a decisive role in that process. The report was entitled *Police in Transition* (*Politie in verandering*). The authors held fast to the traditional function of the police, but added new elements. In their eyes, the police were not

only responsible for protecting society, but also for creating the conditions for social renewal, 'to facilitate the realization of the essential values of our democracy'. In other words: rather than opposing the process of democratic change, the police should ensure that the process took the proper course. In doing so, it was necessary to reject their static idea of the legal order and their rigid concept of police work. The police needed to be flexible and involved in society. One manifestation of this idea was the choice to work with community teams. The real message of the report was that, in future, the police could do their job only if they were closely involved with the population. The duties of the police under the law and their organisational structure needed to be based on that idea. This implied a plea for socialisation of police work, accompanied by a new concept of identity. In the old identity, the police were no more than a sword in the hands of the authorities. A sword has no ideas of its own. It is a tool. But in the new concept, the sword needed to think for itself. The police remain subject to the authorities, but they needed to develop an own identity that was recognisable to the population. It would still be necessary to enforce the law, but that would no longer be the only task. In fact, police work was widened to encompass a range of acts that would foster the ideal of a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

That completes my summary of the changes that began in 1976. After the opposition and conflicts that naturally occur, those changes

formed the Dutch police force as we know it today. The principles of community policing played a leading role in the process. Today we have a whole new set of problems that will most likely lead to a new reassessment of police work. Community teams cannot deal with political murders, terrorist attacks and Internet-based crime on their own. What is more, the behaviour of Dutch citizens has undergone several striking changes in the past thirty years. But I'll come to that shortly. Right now I'd like to briefly talk about our approach to Community Policing.

2. Area-based Police Care

During a reorganisation between 1991 and 1994, the police were divided into 25 regional forces. In addition, there is a single Netherlands Police Agency that operates throughout the country. The Dutch police force employs approximately 54,000 people who serve a population of 16 million. On average, there is one police employee for nearly 300 residents, but that ratio varies from region to region. In a large urban area like Amsterdam, there is one for every 170 residents. The ratio in the more rural regions is 1 to 445. Three parties are involved in managing the work. A Chief Constable is responsible for the day-to-day management. The mayor of the largest town in the region is responsible for managing the forces. And finally, there is a Chief Prosecutor who serves as the local representative of the Public

Prosecution Service. Together these three – the Chief Constable, the mayor and the chief prosecutor – form the triangle that make public order and safety policy in mutual consultation.

Although regional forces form the central units of the Dutch police, the work is carried out on a much smaller scale. Every force consists of several community teams, groups of varying size that take care of their own district or urban neighbourhood. Most police officers operate within these community teams. Their work ranges from surveillance (on foot, by bike, car or motorcycle and sometimes on horseback), taking statements, offering emergency assistance, mediating conflicts between citizens, gathering evidence, directing traffic, investigating criminal acts, upholding public order and maintaining contact with the local population. In the Dutch language, the term for these activities is ‘Gebiedsgebonden Politiezorg,’ which means ‘Area-Based Police Care.’ This is the way most forces in our country approach community policing. The police officers on the beat are very important. They are responsible for a territory with about 5000 residents.

It is difficult to strictly define Community Policing. It is mainly a working method that has four characteristics. The first is the small-scale organisation of the police work. The officers are attached to a relatively small and well-defined area, the size of a city district or neighbourhood. In a densely populated region, the territory might

cover only a few streets. It is essential for the officer to know the residents in his or her district and for them to know their officer. We refer to this principle as 'knowing and being known'. Apart from the residents, officers should be familiar with the social life of their district. They need to know the background of certain behaviours, events and offences. And be able to distinguish between the primary and secondary issues. They know that the strategy that works in one area might not work in another. They also maintain contact with the key people or informal leaders to make sure he is informed of problems in time.

The second feature is that officers have a high degree of responsibility for their own work. They represent the national policy post that is closest to the public. Information comes in through them, and these officers are the ones who are mainly responsible for carrying out police work. That also applies to safety and liveability. That is why officers have broad discretionary powers. They decide how to deal with conflicts. Whether to take a statement or make an arrest, and how to treat the person involved. Local officers have always had broad powers in the Netherlands and that is necessary in their interaction with today's citizenry. Because there are always specific situations in which specific citizens display specific behaviours, officers need to be able to adapt their strategy. That is only possible if these local officers have enough latitude to evaluate the situation and act accordingly to their personal assessment.

The third characteristic is the problem-based approach. Officers identify clearly defined problems in the district and look for practical solutions. The problems can, of course, be very different in nature. In one case, the police might focus on a group of ethnic-Moroccan youths who display anti-social behaviour. In another case, they might try to reduce the number of break-ins. And in yet another situation, trafficking in women or drug dealing may be the problem. That calls for more than mere repressive action. The police also deal with the circumstances that cause or foster the behaviour. We have an expression for that in the Netherlands. It translates as this: we deal with the ‘front’ of the problem and not only the ‘back’ of it.

Prevention is important. Otherwise you’ll find yourself perpetually lagging behind. Ideally, the police do more than simply help to solve problems. They try to do their work in the district in such a way that certain problems don’t arise or at least don’t get out of hand.

The fourth characteristic is that the police seek to cooperate with others. The police are not the only agency that has responsibility for liveability and safety. Citizens have a real part to play, but I’ll come back to this later. The police also have to work with other professionals and institutions, such as schools, housing associations, youth workers, care organisations, social services, businesses and private security organisations. That is not always easy, because these professionals sometimes have totally different views on the problems.

A familiar example is that of nuisance caused by psychiatric patients or drug addicts. The police have to take the complaints of neighbourhood residents seriously, while care workers often put the interests of their individual clients first. Also, there are always bureaucratic problems that hinder the cooperation between various municipal services. Nevertheless, the fact is that, in the course of their district-based work, the police must call in other professionals.

This is the working method the Dutch police describe as community policing. The characteristics of this strategy correspond closely to the criteria that David Barley formulated for this type of police care in 1994. However, we need to distinguish between the organisational model and the actual working method. Formally, the model of Area-Based Police Care was introduced in the early Nineties. But we see quite a bit of variation in how it is put into practice. In 1997 it appeared that only 15 of the 25 police regions were able to comply with the criteria for Area-Based Police Care. Certain units, such as the specialised services, went so far as to oppose the introduction of this working method. For that reason, community policing in the Netherlands is not so much an organisational or formal model, but a specific working method or practice that is characterised by a. small geographical units; b. a focus on concrete problems; c. cooperation with others and d. a key role for local officers.

An important point is the role that citizens play in this method. According to David Barley, this aspect falls under consultation. In the Netherlands, we try to strengthen that contribution in three ways. First, we gather information systematically by means of a National Police Monitor. This is a large-scale survey that is held every year and contains many questions about victim assistance, police action, feelings of unsafety, etcetera. This gives us a standardised measuring tool with which we can monitor developments in the perception of liveability and safety at neighbourhood level. Second, certain regions use panels of citizens. For example, the police in Deventer meet every two months with several representatives of the community. In that way, residents can give advice, exercise influence on policy priorities and evaluate the policy being pursued. However, this method is not applied everywhere. A third possibility is to involve citizens in certain police tasks. For example, the city of Utrecht has what it calls a Citizens Network. This is a telephone network of residents and businesses that the police can contact with the request to look out for certain people or vehicles, for example. However, the general impression is that the contribution of citizens should be improved and that their input should not be limited to filling in questionnaires.

I will close with two examples of an area-based working method that feature several of the characteristics I have described. A while ago the district of Zevenhuizen, in the northeast of the city of Apeldoorn, was being affected by severe degeneration. The problems surrounded

several apartment buildings that were built in the Seventies and housed over 20 different nationalities. The problems included poverty, anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and a rapid turnover of residents. The municipal authorities and the housing association were convinced that new investments in this district wouldn't help. If it had been up to them, they would have demolished the buildings within five years. But the local police officer refused to accept that and together with a welfare worker started looking for long-term residents of the neighbourhood. They appointed several 'gallery mayors' to organise meetings for the residents in groups of ten apartments. The different population groups would take turns preparing a meal for the other residents. At the same time, the gallery mayors served as liaisons for the agencies involved. The initiative was an overwhelming success. The residents were able to make contact with each other in a whole new way and the degeneration stopped. After some time, the director of the housing association complained: 'You mustn't make it too attractive. Nobody will ever want to move away.'

The second example is about a travellers' camp in Dordrecht that had gone to ruin. People on the site were involved in arms trafficking, hemp cultivation, dealing in stolen goods, illegal energy tapping and so on. There was little contact with the municipal authorities and the police. At a certain point the police cleaned out the camp with the help of the riot police. The sanitation department, tax authorities and power company were also involved in the operation. Afterwards, a

modular office building was set up at the entrance of the camp where two police officers were posted. After some time, when calm had returned, the building was painted in pastel colours and moved to the middle of the camp. This drew the children first and then the mothers. Contact was made. A few months later a kind of network had developed in the camp that gave the residents the courage to bring problems to the attention of the authorities and to stand up for themselves. In the end, the police withdrew and the local officer took responsibility for contact with the residents. This example is a form of ‘social recovery’. Sometimes order needs to be restored before relations can be normalised.

3. On assertive citizens

These examples illustrate that community policing in the Netherlands is sometimes successful. Yet we should not exaggerate the effects. Area-Based Police Care is – as I said – a working method that the police want to develop but has not been put into practice everywhere. Furthermore, there are powers at work in Dutch society that stand in the way of its success. That is why we should consider not only at what the police are doing but also the attitudes of Dutch citizens. This is important partly because other countries view the Dutch with increasing astonishment. Many commentators believe that we have become completely mad. The country that for so long had been the

primary example of a tolerant society was rocked by two political murders within a short period of time. In a country that once stood for religious freedom, there are people conducting a smear campaign against Islam. And while the Netherlands was one of the founding members of the European Union, a large majority of voters recently rejected the European constitution. I won't make excuses for what has been happening in the Netherlands, but it may be useful to point out a development that explains these events and has far-reaching consequences for police work.

I am talking about the rise of a modern lifestyle dominated by egocentricity. This development began in the Sixties and continues today. One manifestation is the erosion of authority. Priests, teachers, doctors, police officers, mayors and parents have lost their traditional power. Today, citizens are very independent: people no longer see themselves as subjects or as inferior. They give their opinions loud and clear, do not hesitate to stand up for their interests and are generally distrustful of anyone who assumes authority. In that sense, our political freedom has increased. But there are other ways in which we have more freedom than ever before. For example, the increase in geographical mobility that is illustrated by the strong growth in car ownership and air travel. And the increase in social mobility. Modern citizens decide for themselves how to lead their lives and have detached themselves from collective frameworks, such as family,

church and social class. And let's not forget intellectual mobility, caused by the explosive growth of information technology.

These developments shouldn't be heaped together, but they have inspired a certain mentality that I refer to as the assertive lifestyle. This is an ambiguous term, because it indicates that the lifestyle places great emphasis on the equality of all citizens, but also implies a heightened sense of self-esteem. Modern citizens consider themselves autonomous. They feel no need to subjugate themselves to other citizens or political or cultural figures. They decide what to feel or think and base their decisions on their individual values. It would be incorrect to dismiss this mentality as a form of subjectivism on moral or ideological grounds. There are objective reasons that justify the heightened sense of self-esteem that many citizens have. We have only to think of the rising level of education. Most Dutch people are better educated today than just a few decades ago and are therefore in a better position to make judgments about themselves and the world. In addition, since the Sixties prosperity has gradually increased and our legal position has improved in many respects. Due in part to that, human rights have become much more than a legal formality. They have been ingrained in the everyday culture of broad sections of the population. In other words: the free, self-aware and emancipated citizen is far from being an illusion. This is reality, and sensible public administrators and politicians would do well to take it into account.

All this has consequences for liveability and safety, four of which I will identify. The first is that aggression among citizens in the public domain is becoming more common. Several aspects play a role here. For example, the psychological aspect: people who have a heightened sense of self-esteem are more likely to be violent. The line between assertiveness and aggressiveness is very thin. Assertive citizens take up a lot of space, physically and metaphorically. They want people to take them into account but find it difficult to do the same for others. They easily fall prey to what psychologists would call an affront to their narcissism. As a result, the most insignificant thing can cause an excessive reaction. Incidents of senseless violence are a notorious example of this. Economic factors also play a role. For example, the increasing pace of society. Day in and day out we are in a hurry, we are continually under pressure at work and we spend too little time relaxing. We are expected to perform and meet deadlines, which makes it very difficult to harmonise work and care. But let's be honest: not all of that pressure is coming from outside. It comes from within, too. Inner peace and high ambitions are not terribly compatible.

A third factor that causes irritation is that society has become highly heterogeneous in recent decades. We see this in the most visible forms of diversity, such as the presence of large groups of immigrants who maintain their own languages, customs and ideologies. But we

also see it on a smaller scale. There is great diversity in the methods and ideologies in the workplace, in the neighbourhood, at school and in child rearing. This is a growing source of annoyance precisely because most citizens make judgments from the perspective of their own norms and values. And finally there is the sociological fact that the public arena has become increasingly more anonymous and large-scale through the years. Economists say this is an inevitable development, but we mustn't forget that there's a price to pay. In social interaction, we encounter people who annoy us and with whom we feel hardly any connection. This fosters aggression, especially when there is no one around to supervise due to budget cuts or other reasons. In other words: the odds of clashes occurring between citizens in the public domain are increasing. This is apparent not only in stress and annoyance, but also in aggressive and anti-social behaviour. This is a concern for the public authorities. They have traditionally laid claim to a monopoly of force, but more and more citizens are calling into question that monopoly. They are in any case very concerned about safety and liveability and are calling for more severe penalties and tougher enforcement.

All this offers an explanation for certain events in the Netherlands that have astonished the international community. They ensue from a process of modernisation that has come about relatively quickly and has been rather intense. But the consequences don't end at the Dutch borders. Factors that have undoubtedly augmented them include a

high degree of secularisation: seventy-five per cent of the Dutch population do not belong to any church. And the high population density and degree of urbanisation tend to amplify people's experience of conflicts. Also, there is a relatively large number of immigrants, mainly from the least modernised countries at the outskirts of Europe. But social tensions and problems remained largely unacknowledged. This is because we treated them with extreme political correctness, partly due to the painful memories we have of our attitude towards the Jews during the Second World War. And we have an economy focused on trade and international markets, which means that economic fluctuations have a much stronger effect. When you take all these factors into account, you could say that the Netherlands is a tinderbox. A place where the tensions of modern life are mutually reinforcing and evoke feelings of dissatisfaction across society. You might well think that we've gone mad, but your country could well fall victim to a similar episode of insanity in the future.

4. Interaction in Amsterdam

This illustrates why unsafety has been such an important issue in the Netherlands for the past ten years. But it also illustrates the difficulties you encounter when trying to develop community policing. In some cases, fundamental tensions could exist between the categories of residents that an Area-Based Police Care presupposes

and the attitudes of many modern citizens in reality. It is therefore a good idea to look at the interaction between citizens and the police in large urban areas. To do that I use a study that Bas van Stokkom recently conducted on verbal abuse in Amsterdam and in which that tension is clearly illustrated.

To begin with, it appears that things that cause annoyance, such as verbal abuse, public urination, degeneration and anti-social behaviour have a demoralising effect on the general public. They cause people to display avoidance behaviour, which further undermines informal social control in neighbourhoods. It becomes increasingly difficult to call people to account for their behaviour. And those who do, get an earful. That aggression is often focused towards professionals who perform their work partly in the public arena. The groups that fall victim to verbal abuse most frequently are train conductors (96 per cent) police officers (87 per cent), prison guards (77 per cent) and social service employees (69 per cent). Aggression is not only widespread, but often manifests itself in totally unexpected ways. Research into aggression against the police has shown that minor occurrences, such as physical contact or flippant remarks, can prompt excessive reactions. Furthermore, the general public sometimes turn on the police to prevent someone being arrested. So, it is not only criminals, addicts and psychiatric patients that display aggressive behaviour. Apparently, in many cases the slightest provocation causes members of the general public to become aggressive.

In response to these developments, the Amsterdam police gave the problem of anti-social behaviour high priority. The Streetwise programme was launched in 1997. The aim of Streetwise is to deal with offences that have a negative impact on the city's social climate. The police promote civil forms of interaction in the public domain and inspire citizens to combat disruptive behaviour by others. In addition, the police try to strengthen their own authority. I'd like to emphasise that this strategy is not a form of zero tolerance. It is not about the letter of the law. The aim is rather to promote public civility. In that respect, the police attach great importance to correct conduct towards citizens. Caring if possible, firm if necessary – that is the best approach. But in practice, the general public have little patience for the police's strategy of targeting minor offences and display great resistance to it. Citizens who are stopped by the police don't acknowledge their authority. They feel humiliated or feel that the officer on duty doesn't take them seriously. That results in a lot of complaints against the police. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for people to verbally abuse and insult officers. Some even physically resist or try to assault officers.

A detailed analysis of letters of complaint (from citizens) and police reports shows that there are three main points of contention between citizens and the police. First, many regard police checks and arrests as a form of interference. It goes against their sense of self-esteem or is

seen to be an unjustified violation of their integrity. Second, some see verbally abusing or insulting police officers as a way of expressing their own opinion. They regard it as a justifiable way of expressing their annoyance. In any case, they don't believe there should be limits to their freedom of expression. Third, people believe strongly in the principle of equality: citizens and the police should be on an equal footing. Citizens have no intention of subordinating themselves to authority and don't realise that, at the moment of interaction, the police officer represents the public interest. The characteristics of an assertive lifestyle play a dominating role in the daily practice of enforcement. The police can try to promote civil behaviour in public, but the type of citizen on which they are basing their efforts is probably very rare.

Nevertheless, Bas van Stokkom shows that this conclusion is too pessimistic. Much depends on the way the police operate. You can handle situations in a way that guarantees trouble, or you can take a different approach. What is the difference? The tone and attitude of the police officer plays a major role. It can be necessary to fine someone, but a friendly attitude makes a huge difference. If an officer begins the discussion in a harsh or forceful manner, he or she can expect resistance. The use of physical force is also counterproductive. The police reports show that the following factors contribute to escalation: making value judgments too quickly, not showing sufficient respect for the citizen involved, the use of handcuffs or

other means of coercion, taking an unclear, ambiguous position, showing disdain or making flippant remarks. Furthermore, the police must always be aware of the role that bystanders play. There is less risk of escalation when an officer is dealing with one individual. A situation can get out of hand if there is an audience. The letters of complaint from citizens show that they are especially sensitive to public humiliation. They complain about displays of power by the police, offensive treatment and accuse officers of acting in a rigid, authoritarian or dogmatic way.

For that reason as well as professional reasons, some people think police officers should refrain from displays of power. There are two unprofessional reactions to recalcitrant citizens. First, displaying a dominant or coercive attitude that puts the citizen in a subordinate position. Second, playing the mirror, whereby the officer gives the citizen a taste of his own medicine, for example by displaying a hostile, disdainful or sarcastic attitude. Remember, this is not about moral issues, but technical and professional considerations. It appears that many police officers base their reaction on the behaviour of the citizen they are interacting with. People who treat an officer with disrespect are more likely to be ticketed. The opposite is also true. Officers who behave in an authoritarian fashion provoke resistance from the other party. By the same token, a cooperative attitude can de-escalate a situation. In other words: the citizen's behaviour strongly influences the police officer's reaction. A police officer is

more likely to take a repressive stance when a citizen is disrespectful. Apparently, many officers cannot resist the temptation to follow a tit-for-tat policy.

According to Bas van Stokkom, police officers should be above that. As professionals, they should realize that displaying hostility undermines their authority. They need to know that their work can affect people's sense of self-esteem. For that reason, avoiding hostility is a basic skill that police officers should have. But, in my opinion, that amounts to a reversal of the burden of proof. It may be more sensible for officers to take a firmer approach to citizens who misbehave. That would at least send a clear signal about the reality of the situation. They are responsible for their own actions, including the consequences those actions have for a police officer's response. If responsibility for avoiding conflict rests only with the police officer, the citizen is free to maintain the belief that he has suffered a personal affront. It is true that issuing a fine or making an arrest can turn into a moral showdown. Both parties feel compelled to protect their own status. The 'attack' by the one must be parried by the other. What is at issue for police officers is their authority and for citizens their sense of self-esteem.

I recognise that confrontation is difficult, but that doesn't mean officers should avoid it. In the long run, the public will probably realise that, in the public domain, police officers and citizens are not

equals. The experiences in Amsterdam show that this is the case. By issuing several thousand tickets the police have been able to reduce the number of cyclists without backlights on their bikes. Citizens are more compliant with traffic rules, and the number of offences such as public urination has decreased. After a time, the public get used to the situation and this illustrates that confrontation is not always in vain. To put things into perspective, I'd like to point out that in most cases, problems between the police and the general public are rare. Verbal abuse is the exception rather than the rule. But the example also shows that – even in Amsterdam – a campaign of civilization is doable. The aim is to enforce social norms in a sensible fashion. Sensible because the circumstances and proportionality need to be taken into account, but enforcement must be taken seriously whatever the situation.

5. Future projects

Ladies and gentlemen, I began with a brief look at the past and then spent a lot of time talking about the problems we face today. I would like to close by looking into the future and saying something about three aspects of community policing that we need to develop further. I will base my remarks on three research projects that we will be conducting at the Netherlands Police Academy in the coming years. These projects have both a scientific and a professional side. They

will therefore be carried out in close cooperation with professionals from the police and social services and from the field of urban development. They touch on three aspects of Area-Based Police Care where we are currently failing.

The first project is about problem districts in large cities. The point of departure is the idea that there are many urban districts that are caught in a downward spiral due to an accumulation of risk factors. In general, all the processes that affect social relationships in a district should be regarded as risk factors. More specifically, we can look at demographic factors (such as ethnic composition and mobility), economic factors (such as low incomes and the disappearance of small businesses), urban planning factors (such as monofunctional city districts and the share of rented housing) and cultural factors (level of education and use of media). Our hypothesis is that the sense of unsafety increases as more of these processes take hold and reinforce each other. The research project aims to answer questions such as the following: a. What is the specific gravity of the different risk factors that are identified in the literature? b. What are the consequences of the accumulation of risk factors? c. What can we say about the way in which various risks reinforce each other and cause a downward spiral? d. What role does perception (both internally and externally) of this kind of development play? These questions appear to be relevant to the police because they have a specific task to perform in each phase of that downward spiral. In the first instance,

the police serve as observers: in that role they must focus attention on processes of degeneration that put liveability at risk. Secondly, the police help to correct that development by offering support to citizens or processes that strengthen the social fabric. Thirdly, the police have the task of warning or advising other actors that influence the social climate in the neighbourhood (housing associations, business owners, project developers, municipalities, catering establishments, etcetera).

The second project focuses on how we can increase citizen involvement in maintaining safety. The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) recently drew attention to the many initiatives that citizens introduce to improve liveability. However, a distinction needs to be made in this respect between types of districts. Besides disadvantaged neighbourhoods, initiatives are taken in middle class and even privileged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. In the latter case, the residents tend to plan activities themselves, while initiatives in the underprivileged areas usually come from the housing association, the police, social services and other social actors. In that respect, we use the term social recovery. It is clear that the police fulfil a specific role, but that role can be highly variable, depending on the type of neighbourhood. In one case, it is restricted to giving advice, in another case the police need to take on a more encouraging role and in yet another, it may be necessary to restore public order. The general message of the Council's recommendation is that the public authorities should encourage

initiatives introduced by citizens and that the various professionals should assist in carrying them out. The question is what specific contribution can the police make in that area. More concretely, the following questions arise: a. Can a typology of districts be compiled that is relevant to the working method of the police? b. How is police involvement in these districts valued by the residents? c. What functions should be given priority in these districts and what are the consequences for the legitimacy of police involvement? d. How can the police improve their knowledge of the social process in the districts and how do they deal with the area of tension between information and interpretation?

The third project concerns the interaction between the police and other professionals. Area-Based Police Care presupposes cooperation between the police on the one side and professionals in the areas of social work, health care, education and welfare work on the other. Right now, a range of problems arise in these partnerships. Firstly, there is a cultural difference in the sense that the police have to take firm action against people who ignore social norms while aid workers tend to take a caring approach. You could say that this a hard approach versus soft approach situation, but that is only partly true. The police do sometimes take a heavy-handed approach, but nevertheless they are very willing to provide care. At the same time, care providers could perform their work better if they were to take a firmer stance as a rule. It would be better for every professional to

find a balance between hard and soft than to divide up these elements between two professional groups. Another point is that while agreements are made, they are not always put into practice sufficiently. Using the ‘urban marines’ as an example, we see that this problem can be solved only with the involvement of a powerful and experienced leader. For that reason, we need to find an answer to the following questions: a. What circumstances or factors will help police officers and care professionals speak the same ‘language’ and bring them closer together on issues of safety? b. Should the normative component in the performance of professionals be reinforced and, if so, which norms should given priority? c. How can we ensure that normative and verbal agreements between professionals are converted into practical acts ? d. What special skills and methods should we develop for young immigrants who are at risk from a process of exclusion or radicalisation?

We hope to acquire new knowledge about the practice of Area-Based Police Care with regard to these issues. But we also want to discover new functions of knowledge itself. This is actually a new topic that is relevant in each of these three projects. It follows from the fact that we are moving towards a knowledge-based society. Knowledge is undergoing a shift in status from being a useful tool to a matter of strategic significance. This is putting police work in a different light. With a view to legitimacy, conceptual clarity and effective operation, we believe it is desirable to distinguish between three main functions.

First, there are tasks that are directly related to the enforcement of the law, such as maintaining public order and arresting offenders. Second, there are tasks connected with protecting socio-economic interaction and solving the related problems. Third, there are tasks related to gathering intelligence and using it to improve social safety. These three tasks have a history. Maintaining public order and enforcing the law can be regarded as the most traditional of police functions. That is partly why attention was focused on these areas in the Sixties. Later, police work underwent a process of socialisation. As a result, the police paid more attention to their place in society and their task was expanded. In addition to enforcing the law, they began providing forms of social services.

In recent years, a third function has been added. The police realise that they occupy a special position in society in terms of information. Policy-makers and the general public are coming to regard information more and more as a strategic resource. For example, the transition to a knowledge-based society brings a new set of challenges to the work the police carry out. That is why the functions of observing, attention-drawing and warning have become much more pronounced in recent years. All things considered, the police have three very different tasks to fulfil: with their monopoly on the use of force, they enforce compliance with the law, they provide services by assisting citizens and they acquire knowledge about what is going on in society. It is very likely that the tasks of gathering, processing and

disseminating information will become even more important in the near future. An interesting development is that the police are more actively engaged in controlling the knots in modern information flows. This is a new way of working, whereby the police focus not only on geographic locations, but also on flows: flows of vehicles, flows of money and goods and – last but not least – the information flows that are of great importance in the modern world. These information flows present new dangers and incentives to crime and the police must be on their guard in that respect. This adds a whole new dimension to the concept of Community Policing.