COMMUNITY POLICING & PUBLIC CREDIBILITY

On the professional performance of the Dutch local police officer

1. Introduction

With the introduction of New Public Management, a new language was born. As a result work in the (semi-)public sector was understood in a new way, and in that sense it has certainly been a success (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). However, it was about more than just language: with these new words, new values became dominant leading to new practices. In fact, there has been a revolution in which the principles of New Public Management were accepted worldwide. According to Kettle (2000), this revolution comes down to the following axioms: a) an emphasis on productivity, b) the introduction of market forces; c) better services for citizens; d) the decentralisation of decision making; e) the separation of policy and implementation; f) justification with measurable results. Obviously, this far-reaching change can also be seen in the Netherlands. In this country, the business approach has been popular for many years. According to some researchers, business management has become the dominant model in large parts of the public sector. According to others, the model is even used in those environments where it is not really appropriate (Noordegraaf, 2004). In fact the relevance of New Public Management to the public sector is strongly disputed in the Netherlands and the doubts have only deepened due to the economic crisis of 2008/9.

In this article we want to establish to what extent these doubts apply to the police. More specifically we want to defend two interrelated ideas. Departing from empirical research into the behaviour of Dutch local police officers we claim firstly, that the concepts of New Public Management and other theoretical models of policing are not very appropriate to the practice of the police. It will be argued that such concepts and models only make sense in terms of management, but do not meet the demands of the public, nor those of the officers in the field. Secondly, we will try to demonstrate that applying the notion of public credibility is much more appropriate in this respect.

2. A business approach?

First, however, it is important to recognise that the language and methods of New Public Management have actually entered the practice of the Dutch police force (Jochoms 2006). By now, police organizations operate under the assumption that it is quite normal to see citizens or the inhabitants of a district as "clients", and there are regular surveys of the "satisfaction" of these clients. Managers and policy-makers consider safety as a "product" and believe there is a "market" for it. Organizational advisors examine whether the police are working "effectively" and where necessary make proposals for more "efficient" procedures. In many municipalities, "targets" have been introduced, or

the police are prepared to justify themselves with the help of "measurable results". Last but not least, "performance agreements" are made with the national government, in which police forces and police managers have made promises to deliver a number of particular performance targets. All this illustrates the fact that the theory of New Public Management has penetrated to the level of policy makers and managers. But what about the executive professionals? How do ordinary local police officers see the execution of their profession? Does the language of business management have any practical meaning for them? And how do they deal with the agreements or changes which are imposed on them by management?

These questions can be answered in terms of fact and in terms of principle. In terms of fact it can be seen that New Public Management means little for local police officers. Some officers explicitly state that they believe it is a bad idea to be managed on the basis of performance agreements. They are afraid that this will eventually undermine the distinctive character of the Dutch police (Straver 2009). Other officers know that their superiors have entered into certain agreements about results, but they do not take these agreements too seriously, and some officers think that making these performance agreements is a good idea in itself, but emphasise that it should not produce artificial results. In particular, they criticise making large numbers of arrests for fairly innocent infringements at the end of the year. Although the agreed upon targets may be achieved in this way, it will weaken the credibility of the police in the eyes of the public, rather than strengthen it (Flight 2006). In general, the agreements that have been reached meet with resistance and scepticism among executive professionals. Apart from these opinions, some research has now been done into the (f)actual consequences of these agreements (Jochoms, 2006; Hoogenboom, 2006; Van Sluis, 2006). Van den Brink et al. wrote about this in an earlier publication:

> "The general picture is that the effects are rather weak, both in a positive and in a negative sense. They have not made the police as manageable and result-oriented as the advocates hoped. At the same time, they had fewer negative or adverse effects than the opponents feared" (Van den Brink, 2007b: 35).

However, in this article more fundamental questions will be raised. It will be proffered that there is an insurmountable difference between the everyday activities of Dutch local police officers on the one hand, and the axioms of New Public Management, on the other hand. Some axioms do not correspond with the practical activities of officers, while others only correspond to a very limited extent.

In the first place, it is very doubtful whether safety can be described as a "product". Values such as safety cannot really be defined objectively, and insofar as it is an objective phenomenon, it is the product of complex processes which the police can only partly influence. Moreover, as Fielding (2005, p.465) points out, '[t]arget fetishism drives out the hard-to-measure'. In other words, care has to be taken not to neglect the "softer", less easily quantifiable approaches to policing. Secondly, there is no point in talking about "market forces" because the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force always lies with the police. In fact, this is one of the basic principles of the rule of law and in fact nobody is prepared to change this. Thirdly, there is certainly a distinction between establishing and implementing a policy on safety, but the relationship between

these two stages is less mechanical than the theory of New Public Management seems to assume. In reality, as an executive organization, the police exert a great deal of influence over the local government, which should draw up policy rather more independently. Fourthly, citizens can be described as "clients", but this only touches on one aspect of their relation to the police. From one point of view, they do use the services of the police, but as a subject and citizen they have a very different relationship with state authority. After all, they must obey the law and come into contact with the police when they break it. Citizens who are arrested may be described as "clients", but this is a rather ironic definition, which is certainly not intended in the theory of New Public Management. Simultaneously police would be hard-pressed to act purely as service providers. Fielding (2005, p.466) phrases it well when he writes that '[g]overnment has constantly to balance its function as servant of the public with its function as coercer of the public'. Fifthly, the effectiveness of the police organization is an important criterion, but never the sole criterion. Trevor Jones (Newburn 2003, p.641) is right in arguing that rising public expenditure on policing demands effective mechanisms of accountability and governance to ensure the required legitimacy for co-operation and information by the public. Reiner and Butler, however, are rightly cited to stress that evaluations of the most common police tasks can only be performed on the basis of the quality of the process, rather than utilising individual performance indicators for every aspect of policing (pp.647-648). Of course, one is obliged to use financial and personnel resources economically and, in this sense, the ratio of costs and returns is always relevant. At the same time, the business aspects must be weighed against other values such as legality, morality and public credibility. In fact, neither executive Dutch police nor citizens are concerned with management of efficiency per se. In that respect the claims of New Public Management and similar approaches to the management of policing seem to be rejected by the parties involved. Which brings us to the question how the practice of the Dutch police can be understood in a more positive way. To answer this question we should look at the theory of credible leadership as formulated by Kouzes and Posner in 1993.

3. The theory of credibility

Kouzes and Posner reject the emphasis which is often placed on technical or instrumental aspects of leadership, and consider credible action in the first place as a social-normative affaire. Referring to empirical research, these authors claim that credibility always implies a combination of moral, political and professional values. Moral values refer to personal characteristics such as reliability and honesty. A person acquires credibility if he does what he promises, stays faithful to his aims and fights for his principles or ideals. Political values imply that a leader articulates a sense of direction, has a clear picture of future developments and is able to pass this picture on to others. Credible action means that you put forward a convincing story. A leader must indicate where we came from and where we should be going, so that different factions can all unite in achieving a single common goal. Finally, professional values also play a role. A leader does not have to know every detail of his organization, but he should have a general idea of its daily business. Furthermore, the processes of decision-making and discussion must be managed competently and fairly. As such, the conclusion is that

leaders can only acquire credibility if they are honest, inspirational and competent at the same time (Kouzes and Posner, 1993).

One could ask to what extent this theory applies to professionals of the police. After all, Kouzes and Posner focus predominantly on business managers and political leaders. However, the mechanisms they describe apply equally at lower levels of the organization, and it is possible to maintain that the police certainly do act as leaders at the local level. In fact, the local police officer is seen as an authority or leader by many residents. Bradford, Jackson and Stanko (2009) indicate that the public look at the police to 'defend community values and moral structures', trumping 'instrumental concerns about personal safety'(p.24). Therefore, a term such as credibility can certainly be used for the actions of the police in an analytical sense.

However, credibility should not be viewed as a fixed characteristic of certain functions or positions. Someone may have authority in a formal sense, but this says nothing about his credibility. Applied to the police, we could say that sticking to their formal task of law enforcement is not enough. To be convincing in their function the police have to interact with the public in a more positive way. Referring to the well-known reassurance gap, Fielding (2005, p.465) claims that

> 'the growth of a collective sense of enhanced risk [is not] engendered by dramatic incidents (…) but by the adoption of a managerialist, actuarial approach to social control by police managers and government. This has taken the police gaze off the fact that people comply with the law because the criminal justice system carries legitimacy, institutions with legitimacy have authority, and authority earns compliance. This renders a police/public bond founded on a commonality of purposes in a way that managerialism premised on the public as customers cannot.'

Although Fielding continues to state that legitimacy is derived from procedural fairness and fair outcomes, rather than credible action, the argument leading up to that point subscribes to the same notion of interactivity between action and expectation as a reiterative process. Similarly Bradford *et al*. (2008, p.3) claim that the legitimacy of an institution relies to no small extent on the personal assessment of its goals, practices and behaviours and those of the individual in question. In the end, other parties determine to what extent acts carry credibility. It implies a form of reciprocity between those who want to lead and those who want to follow. This is also relevant for the analysis of police action. In our opinion, its credibility does not depend on management or legal powers, or even on notions of efficiency and effectiveness, but on the capacity of the police to meet the expectations of the public. In the following sections we will attempt to establish to what extend this applies to the Dutch case.

4. Actions and expectations

In a general sense, credibility develops because actual products or behaviour comply with subjective values or expectations to a sufficient extent. In utilising this description, three elements come together. In the first place, this concerns *acts or behaviour* of which the process can be described in a more or less objective way. The police are engaged in

solving crime, writing citations, gathering information, maintaining law and order, providing assistance in emergency situations, dealing with young people who are causing a nuisance, regulating traffic, etc. In the second place, there are the *expectations of other parties* with regard to the police and the many subjective values which play a role in this process. These parties are quite diverse and comprise both local residents and local politicians, both native inhabitants and immigrants, both professionals in other organizations and the local media. Obviously, very different values play a role in terms of content, and in fact these are not always even very explicit. Thirdly, the actual behaviour of police officers have to *comply with these expectations to a sufficient extent*. But what constitutes "a sufficient extent"?

It is self-evident that the overlap between expectations and actions will never be 100 percent. Some tension between what the public hopes for and what the police actually deliver is inevitable and, in some cases, intentional. On the other hand, the overlap should not be too small either, as this would adversely affect the credibility of the police. Jackson and Sunshine (2007) point out that individuals evaluate the legitimacy of police authority on the manner in which it reflects their social status and personal identity. The way in which authority is exercised communicates the representation of certain normative group values (p.221). They found that people wanted to identify with police morals and values, and wanted the police to actively express the morals and values of their own community (p.228). Therefore, it constantly has to be examined which level of correspondence between police activity and public expectations is "sufficient". This cannot be established theoretically. It is better to ask the parties involved to determine to what extent public credibility is achieved in practice. To do so we will make use of data from six empirical studies related to police practices in the Netherlands. We will use these data to answer three more specific questions: 1) What do the practical actions of Dutch local police officers entail and what dimensions can be identified in these actions? 2) Which civilians and partners do the Dutch police come into contact with and to what extent do the police meet their expectations? 3) Which internal and organizational factors play a negative role in this respect and how could the credibility of the police be improved?

4. Sources and methods

The six empirical studies which serve as the main basis of this article, were carried out in the Dutch police forces over the past two years. The first study describes to what extent the police have gained the trust of citizens and what factors play a role in this (Flight et al., 2006). The second study tries to identify the social integration of the Dutch police and how the various parties involved see this integration (Straver et al., 2008). The third study is focused on problem areas in the Netherlands, looking at issues such as safety and police action in some detail (Van den Brink, 2007a). The fourth study analyses the activities of local police officers in a specific region and is mainly concerned with the practice of community policing (Bervoets, 2008). The fifth study answers the question as to how the police operate in multicultural districts (Kleijer-Kool, 2008). The sixth study is based on anthropological fieldwork in which the author closely followed a number of police officers (Terpstra, 2008).

Apart from the subject itself, what these studies have in common is that they are not particularly concerned with the many concepts, models or systems which have been introduced into the Dutch police world with varying degrees of success. They do not focus on what is *said*, but on what actually *happens*. In particular they reveal the practical activities of the executive professionals in the Dutch police. For this reason, almost all of them rely on observation in the field. In addition, they conducted interviews with the police officers concerned, while in most cases interviews were also conducted with parties besides the police. Some of the studies mentioned also employed databases or data from surveys. Together, these six studies form a strong body of knowledge which provides a reliable picture of Dutch police practice. It should be mentioned that there was sufficient variation in social and regional context. In total, 48 departments participated in one (or more) of these studies. Some of the departments were rural, while others were located in medium-sized towns, and others still were situated in one of the four large cities. However, it is striking to see that the researchers did not find any significant influence of social or organizational circumstances on the execution of police work. The social context (rural, urban or metropolitan) hardly played any role in this respect, but the variation in police practices proved to be all the more significant.

6. Dimensions of police work

Now we can answer the first question mentioned above by describing the practical actions of Dutch police officers and the dimensions which can be identified in those activities. Although the work of local police officers in the Netherlands is highly varied, a number of characteristics can be observed. To put these in order, we propose to make a distinction between a *cognitive*, a *relational* and a *normative* dimension.

      The cognitive dimension relates to the way in which local police officers collect information. For this purpose, they use traditional methods such as surveillance or following up on leads from citizens. In addition, they have modern resources at their disposal, such as consulting a database or watching video recordings. But above all, the Dutch police make use of a procedure which is described as 'knowing-and-being-known' (Terpstra 2008). This means that the local police officer knows the local residents by name and nicknames as much as possible, while conversely, he also makes sure that he is known by them.[1] For example, he visits a number of permanent residents to find out whether they have anything new to say, or he takes part in local meetings to gauge the mood. He can visit the mosque, or go and talk to the imam. He goes to see a shopkeeper who has been attacked a number of times to get a feel for how the situation is developing. He gives presentations at the primary school so that he is known by young people and at the same time gains an impression of the new generation (Brink 2007a). Likewise during a surveillance operation, he can have some seemingly random conversations with local residents to find out what they have experienced recently. According to researchers, this way of working often results in a surprising amount of detailed information (Terpstra 2008). Furthermore, it is concerned with a particular sort of information. It is not so much a matter of figures or hard evidence, but of views and

---

[1] For the sake of legibility, we use the male form, but there are now also many women working for the Dutch police.

subjective impressions. As a result, the local officer often 'knows' what is going on in his environment better than the managers observing the district from a greater distance. The general impression is that the Dutch police have a good insight into local problems (Straver 2009). It should be noted, however, that these activities are not easily quantifiable and, as such, difficult to account for by the standards of performance measurement.

The second dimension is concerned with the way in which local police officers build up a relationship with residents, which is related to 'knowing-and-being-known'. In general, the Dutch police display a high level of social involvement. Amongst other things, this means that many officers put a considerable effort in for residents and are available for the district outside office hours. They perceive their task in very broad terms and are also concerned with the well-being of difficult or vulnerable citizens (Terpstra 2008). They try to diminish the social distance from the population and value a sense of respect. In this context, it is not surprising that they consider informal relationships and personal trust to be very important (Flight 2006). However, building up these sorts of relationships takes a lot of time. In deprived districts particularly, it may take years before the police are able to gain the trust of the district. Once this has been achieved, these well-developed relationships do, however, provide for added value (Terpstra 2008). This is one of the reasons why local police officers are sometimes reluctant to write too many citations. Some are afraid that maintaining public order too strictly could endanger their relationship with the residents and their shared sense of purpose (Bervoets 2008). In order to avoid the relationship with residents of the district becoming too close-knit, it is customary in the Netherlands for local police officers to be transferred to a new district every five or six years. Interestingly both residents and local police officers stress the disadvantages of this system. They believe that a longer-term relationship is important and state that a great deal of valuable knowledge is lost when local officers change districts (Brink 2007a). Obviously, this does not mean that all the officers working for the Dutch police are angels. Most officers simply realise that a good relationship with citizens has a professional aspect to it and they do not hesitate to use it when necessary (Bervoets 2008). Since they consider such a long-term relationship to be very important they tend to base their behaviour on this notion. Yet, again, it has to be noted that such activities do not translate well to a system of quantitative performance measurement.

The third dimension is concerned with the way in which local police officers maintain law and order and the norms which they adopt. There was a time when this aspect of police work was given less attention in the Netherlands, but this is now a thing of the past (Brink 2007a). The local police officers who were surveyed agree on the importance of maintaining law and order. This corresponds with the current policy in which maintaining law and order is taken very seriously (Terpstra 2008). The police are more likely to close down drug houses or clear up marijuana plantations in the district (Brink 2007a). Violations of traffic rules lead to fines more quickly than in the past and the police check licences more strictly. For that matter, they are not only concerned with what is formally laid down in laws or the General Police Decree, but also with the informal rules which characterise social life. Therefore, local police officers also act to counter forms of anti-social behaviour and disorder (Terpstra 2008). They intervene when young people are causing a nuisance and warn residents who undermine the quality of life in the district with their behaviour (Brink 2007a). One interesting fact is

that the moral views of the local police officers themselves play an important role in all this. In general, it appears that police officers perceive the situation in their district in moral terms. They make a distinction between the majority of respectable citizens and a minority which constantly deviates from this norm (Terpstra 2008). This finding correlates with observations by Jackson and Sunshine (2007) who speculate that moral identification with the police by the public 'may be more complicated in areas of social and ethnic pluralism' (p.229) where a clear majority is lacking. Bradford, Jackson and Stanko (2009) found that people in such 'atomised localities', who felt that their community lacked cohesion in values and moral structures, nevertheless looked to the police to defend such values (p.24). Many local Dutch police officers do indeed see their work as a moral task. It is their responsibility to protect the good elements from the bad. This attitude does not exclude the use of force. On the contrary, it is precisely because most officers take the normative aspects of their work seriously that they are prepared to act forcefully (Terpstra 2008).

It is clear that combining these three dimensions is not always a simple matter. Tensions may arise between developing a relationship of trust and collecting information to make an arrest. In other cases, repressive action is unavoidable, but this can also put pressure on the personal relationships with residents of the district. There are also situations in which law enforcement is in conflict with obtaining information. In fact, local police officers constantly have to find a balance between these three separate tasks (Flight 2006; Bervoets 2008). It is, above all, a matter of combining the second and third dimension. Collecting and passing on information is a task which all local police officers have in common, but with regard to the other two individual tasks, there is more room for personal preferences.

On the basis of these preferences, it is possible to draw up an elementary typology of local police officers. Two aspects of their behaviour are important in this respect. In the first place, the extent to which officers develop a strong relationship with the residents of a district, and secondly, the extent to which they act normatively. There is a great deal of variation in both of these attitudes (Terpstra 2008). There are officers who continuously patrol their neighbourhood, know many of the residents and gather the necessary information this way, but there are also officers who spend a lot of time at the office, have few contacts in the district and mainly rely on their PC for information. As such, a distinction can be made between relatively strong and weak relationships. This variation applies equally in the other dimension. Certain officers prefer strong action, clear-cut norms and have pronounced views about normal behaviour, while other officers are more flexible in this respect. Consequently, a distinction can be made between more and less normative habits. The combination of these distinctions leads to an elementary typology as is shown below.

It should be emphasised that this classification is the result of the empirical descriptions that we have use in this article. It is based on differences which can be observed in the actual behaviour of Dutch officers. Nevertheless, there is a certain similarity with the classifications of other authors. An example is the distinction proposed long ago by Muir between 'professionals', 'reciprocators', 'enforcers' and 'avoiders' (Muir, 1977) or the classification made by Mastrofski and others between 'professionals', 'reactors', 'tough cops' and 'avoiders' (Mastrofski, 2002). This suggests that this typology relates to more than just a specifically Dutch phenomenon. It is related

	Strong relationships	Weak relationships
More normative	Educator	Enforcer
Less normative	Assistant	Networker

to the tensions which are inherent in the work of local officers, and which result in comparable choices in different situations or in different places. These choices have very little to do with the practices of New Public Management, except that they are restrained by them in terms of perceived efficiency by the standards of performance management. They are all the more so related to credibility. After all, the actual behaviour of local officers does not depend so much on targets which can be seen in objective terms, but on the subjective preferences which they reveal in their everyday work.

7. Expectations of partners and civilians

The second question that was posed relates to the expectations of partners and civilians and the extent to which the police manage to meet such expectations. We would argue that the credibility of action relies on this very interaction. For that reason, it is helpful to take a look at the parties with which the local officer comes into contact, and to come to a better understanding of the expectations they have of him.

      In the first place, district officers deal with local administrators and politicians. This is self-evident because the policy on safety and security is not determined by the police, but by democratically elected policy-makers. In theory the distribution of tasks is rather clear. The broad lines of policy are drawn up by the municipal council while the local government is concerned with its implementation. The police are responsible for executing this policy and have to ensure that the local government has sufficient information. However, things are more complicated in practice and many different interests, visions and networks are interrelated. In practice, the task of developing a safety policy is not adequately carried out by most councils (Terpstra 2008). Councillors do not have sufficient knowledge, or do not consider the policy on safety to be very interesting (Straver 2009). Officials and policy makers do have information, but deal with this in an administrative way: they prefer to make policy plans and do not always ask themselves what the actual effects of these plans will be, or how local officers can carry out these priorities (Bervoets 2008). In most places, there is a crucial role for the mayor. Sometimes, he has close relations with the police system and develops a strong policy on safety and security, but it also happens that the local government fails to do so, while the police carry out the real work (Straver 2009). All in all, relations between the police and government vary to a large degree and ambiguous situations can be seen in terms of credibility. (1) There is often a mental gap between those who draw up the

policy and those who have to carry it out. (2) In general, the police believe that the council works in a bureaucratic way and lacks a sense of urgency. (3) Municipal employees consider that the police are not interested in other priorities and think too much in terms of repression. In other words, there are significant differences in culture, between the police station and town hall, where the expectations of local government are only partly met by the police (Straver 2009). In terms of the political credibility, therefore, certain improvements have to be made.

Furthermore, local officers increasingly work together with other professionals such as employees in youth care, housing corporations, social work or the social services. They take part in all manner of meetings, aimed at solving specific problems and improving the quality of life in districts. The diversity of parties has become quite extensive, but in most cases, the local officer is one of the central participants (Terpstra 2008). With regard to this field, it is necessary to make a distinction between formal and informal aspects. In a formal sense, most of the time everything looks wonderful while networks exist and agreements are being made. But in reality every thing depends on the effort of individuals and their personal relations (Straver 2009). In addition, cultural differences can again be found. These differences exist, above all, between the police, on the one hand, and professionals in welfare work or youth care, on the other hand (Brink 2007a). The latter are attached to their own working methods based on a different definition of the problem, sometimes have difficulty with the repressive side of policing and want to maintain the relationship with their client as long as possible. Specifically, the following problems arise. (1) In general, the police are seen as a reliable partner: a party which provides sound information and keeps its promises (Straver 2009). (2) Many local officers consider that social workers have an attitude that is too soft and cling to outdated points of view. (3) There is a risk of endless meetings, which means that valuable time and energy are lost. Furthermore, it is all too common for agreements not to be put into practice. (4) When problems arise, the organizations involved are mainly concerned with keeping their own house in order. (5) The different professionals are not always prepared to exchange relevant information with each other. As such, the following conclusion can be drawn: although cooperation is not always unambiguous, the balance is usually favourable for the police. The actions of the local officer often meet the expectations of other partners to a reasonable extent (Brink 2007a). In regard to their professional credibility, the Dutch police can be fairly satisfied.

The third party with which the police are confronted obviously consists of civilians. In this respect, a distinction must be made between the general views of the public regarding policing and the expectations of residents in a specific district. Bradford *et al*. (2008, p.2) describe this distinction as the difference between the concepts of 'trust' and 'confidence':

'If trust is something you *do*, and confidence is something you *have*, then trust is about the relationship between you and individual actors in the criminal justice (and about your behaviour and your experience) while confidence is about your assessment of the processes and activities of the criminal justice system at a much broader and personally remote level. Confidence involves attitudes towards effectiveness, fairness and perhaps also some kind of value alignment (the police understand the needs of our community and have 'our interests' at heart, although of course different

people, in different contexts, may place more or less weight on each of these attitudes).'

With regard to the views of the general public, the police in the Netherlands still inspire a reasonable amount of confidence. More than 60 percent of the population claims to have confidence in the police and this percentage has been reasonably constant for a number of years (Flight 2006). Most citizens believe that you can count on the police when it is necessary. However, it is striking that this opinion is much less favourable when people actually come into contact with the police, a finding which, as Bradford *et al.* point out, is replicated in several independent studies (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2002; Allen *et al.*, 2006; Skogan 2006). Whether or not citizens would themselves differentiate between trust and confidence, negative contacts in particular do result in a more negative opinion of the police.

On the other hand, citizens also reveal a sense of realism. They understand that the police cannot solve all the problems and that certain priorities must be adopted and generally accept their enforcement of the law when they are the ones breaking it. Moreover, considering the fact that only a small percentage of (serious) crime is detected and an even smaller percentage is dealt with successfully, it is actually rather surprising that approval ratings are as high as they currently are. This apparent discrepancy could well be due to the fact that the police are not strictly expected to be classic thief-takers by the public, but rather more like representatives of the community, as Bradford and his co-authors point out. Skogan (2006) claims that the police are mostly judged on their 'bedside manner', the way in which they handle interaction with civilians rather than the outcome of such interaction (p.104). However, his findings that both positive and negative encounters would be detrimental to public confidence in the police, do not hold when the notion of confidence is refined. A threefold categorisation along the following indices (a) effectiveness of the policing in dealing with crime; (b) fairness or integrity of the police; and (c) the extent to which the police engage with the local community' (Bradford, Jackson & Stanko 2009, p.27) shows a more positive correlation when positive encounters occur between police and public. Myhill (2004) lends some support for this theory in a review of community engagement research focusing on the UK and USA. His findings also show that police-community relations can be improved upon when specific community engagement strategies are adopted.

Returning to the the image of the Dutch police we can conclude that it is fairly well received amongst citizens. In general, this also applies to the residents of specific districts. Opinions about local officers are predominantly positive and many residents appreciate their presence (Bervoets 2008). At the same time, there is a need for improvement on certain points. (1) Quite a large number of residents want the police and government to listen to them more carefully. They would like to have a measure of influence over the policy on safety and security, particularly when it concerns their immediate environment (Flight 2006). (2) The accessibility of the police continues to be a difficult point. Many residents do not appreciate the introduction of a central telephone number and they have had bad experiences reporting crimes (Straver 2009). (3) It is very important that people are phoned back when they have made a notification (Brink 2007a). It can happen that the police do not respond to a notification or respond too late, but in that case they must give an explanation. (4) There is a general need for more uniforms in the street. However, residents do want the officers to be deployed in places

and at times where it is necessary (Flight 2006). Furthermore, they expect a more alert attitude from the local officer. All of this illustrates that the relationship with citizens can also be ambiguous. Fielding (2005, p. 467) points towards comparable observations, suggesting that people are 'increasingly disengaged from established institutions, and accord less legitimacy to the state'. Simultaneously, however, they want the authorities to do more to 'address their sense of risk':

> '[…] policing appears to be a prime means by which the public seeks to assuage anxiety about that distinctly post-modern condition, a pervasive feeling of insecurity and risk (Erikson and Haggerty 1997).'

Generally speaking local officers meet the expectations of the public, but on a number of specific points, they do not meet these expectations to a sufficient degree. In that sense, the social credibility of the Dutch police could be improved upon.

8. Relation to other methods

Before moving on to the third question concerning organizational obstructions, we will take a look at the way in which the actions of Dutch local police officers relate to other models. As stated above, public credibility of the police is often a precarious matter. There are so many expectations that it seems almost impossible to meet them all at the individual as well as the organizational (Soeparman 2009). Therefore it is not surprising that new models or working methods are proposed from time to time. Whether these models and methods are actually used as they were intended to be used, and deliver what they were intended to deliver, is highly doubtful. With this in mind, it is useful to take a look at three methods which correspond to some extent to area-related work in the Netherlands: problem-oriented policing, disorder policing and reassurance policing.

According to the first working method, the police should not restrict themselves to incidental problems. They should gain a greater grasp of the backgrounds or causes which play a role in the development of these problems. This is said only to be possible if systematic research is carried out into these backgrounds (Goldstein, 1990). Bearing this in mind, the *Frame of Reference for Community Policing* proposes a district scan (Van Os, 2006). However, in practice, this sort of systematic research does not lead to many helpful results. Most officers see the district scan as a formality and thus merely as red tape (Terpstra 2008). Even if they use it, they have the scan carried out by one of the students and often fail to do anything with the results. There is not much interest in the ambitions of problem-oriented policing to work in a more preventative way either. In general, Dutch local officers take action following an acute incident. They consider it a moral duty to respond to incidents in their area as much as possible and, as such, give high priority to these instances. However, they do acknowledge the importance of information to their work but to gather such information they depend to a great extent on the insights which they gain through their contacts with local residents. They consider this sort of knowledge just as good and sometimes even better than the knowledge which is obtained from a greater distance (Terpstra, 2008). Compared with the norms of problem-oriented policing, this way of gathering information does not meet its standards. On the other hand, with the help of strategies such as knowing-and-being-

known, local officers are able to collect very detailed and useful information. This illustrates that executive personnel do not always have to embrace a new model to do their work well.

A comparable argument applies for the model of disorder policing. This working method goes back to the theory of broken windows and prescribes that the police should combat forms of antisocial behaviour as much as possible (Kelling & Coles, 1997). The idea is that modest forms of disorder such as broken windows, litter in the street, or bad behaviour, adversely affect the quality of life in districts. These signs give residents the feeling that no one is taking any notice of their environment and generally have a very discouraging effect. If these forms of disorder are allowed to continue, it quickly leads to a downward spiral in which fewer and fewer residents make an effort to invest in their environment, with the result that the quality of life declines even further (Skogan, 1990). One of the tasks of the police should then be to act immediately when there is a risk of the physical, social or moral order to be disturbed in any way. They must act systematically against minor offences, drug addicts, dealers and other people who cause a nuisance, and give notification of any vandalism as quickly as possible so that the damage is repaired. This procedure is not always applied systematically. However, once again the core of this model – rapid enforcement – certainly is adopted in practice. The Dutch local police officer has taken the enforcement of law and order increasingly serious in recent years. Nuisances are accepted to a lesser extent than in the past and specific problem groups are fairly closely monitored. Some young people are even given special VIP treatment, which in this case stands for Very Irritating Policing (Terpstra, 2008).

Finally, there is the model of reassurance policing in which the police devote a great deal of attention to the sense of insecurity of citizens. Examples include the so-called "signal crimes" which act as a signal for local residents that the order in their environment is disturbed (Innes et al., 2002, 2004). This is one of the reasons why reassurance policing assigns a greater influence to local residents. For example, because the residents can indicate which problems they consider most urgent and the police take this urgency into account. This third model is not particularly popular in the Netherlands. Although many officers say that they consider greater participation by citizens to be important, they do not attach a great deal of value to this in practice. They do attend the district meeting or the discussion of residents, but that is, above all, to collect information themselves, not to strengthen the contribution made by the residents (Terpstra, 2008). At the same time, Dutch police officers tackle the conflict regarding feelings of being unsafe in an entirely individual way. In fact, they are constantly reassuring the public, but they do so with the resources available to them. They try to be as close to the citizens as possible, demonstrate a high degree of commitment, try to make many personal contacts and develop lasting relationships with local residents. This is one of the reasons why Dutch citizens have a great deal of confidence in the police and why local police officers in particular are given a great deal of credit (Brink 2008).

9. Organizational problems

Finally, the third question of which organizational factors have a negative influence on the credibility of the police should be addressed. Four points require attention in this respect.

In the first place, there are questions about the way in which local officers spend their time. In the opinion of a number of respondents, they spend too much time at the office and not enough time in the streets (Flight 2006). At the start of his working day, the officer first has to consult his emails, read messages in the business system, participate in a briefing or gather information from colleagues. At the end of the working day, he must make entries into the system himself, record his activities and pass information on to colleagues. He takes part in numerous meetings either in the administrative or in the professional field (Bervoets 2008). In fact, there are only a few hours left to carry out surveillance in the streets or go and visit residents (Terpstra 2008). M. Hough is referenced to say that the police have changed as an organization from 'a parochial and local set of police forces to a complex bureaucratic organization', leading to a diminished visibility and accessibility (Jackson & Sunshine 2007, p.219). The same goes for the Dutch police and if the aim is to meet the expectations of the residents of the district, it is necessary to break down this working pattern.

Secondly, the credibility of local police officers is negatively affected by the position which they have in the organization. Some colleagues look down on working on street level. They consider that "catching villains" is the real police work or think that working on street level leads to few visible results (Terpstra 2008). This is one of the reasons why the exchange of information between the local officer and his colleagues can sometimes be unsatisfactory (Brink 2007a). In other respects, intra-organisational relations can be uncomfortable as well. In a number of forces, the investigation department hardly makes any use of specific expertise, contacts or insights of the local officer (Bervoets 2008). When information from the street level does find its way to the investigation department, the local officer oftentimes does not find out what happens to his information (Straver 2009). Finally, relationship with colleagues in the emergency services sometimes give rise to problems, for example because these colleagues do not know about the arrangements which the local officer has made with the residents of a neighbourhood, or because the plans of a local officer are affected by more urgent matters (Bervoets 2008). At any rate, it only rarely happens that a local officer has a central position in the office and this can undermine his credibility outside of the organisation as well.

Thirdly, there is insufficient leadership at the local level. In this respect, there is a paradoxical situation with regard to the local officer. On the one hand, he considers his autonomy to be very important and is not waiting for directives from the top. On the other hand, local officers complain that the expectations of their team chief or leader are not clear (Terpstra 2008). The above-mentioned variation in the way in which tasks are carried out is partly the result of a lack of leadership. It is possible that many leaders allow their local officer too much room to manoeuvre (Straver 2009). In some cases, instances of leadership are not visible enough. Maguire (2000) points to research showing that new styles of policing only became visible 'on the ground' when senior managers showed their full commitment to these ways of working. 'Radical restructuring of posts and roles, extensive training, and significant redistributions of available resources' (p.332) were necessary to prove such commitment. Furthermore, the division of roles between the team chief and the local officer is not always clear. The

team chief expects the local officer giving him the right information and likes contacts with local government to go through him. This means that tactical matters would fall under his competence, while the local officer is concerned with operational matters. But in many cases, this division of roles does not work and it is actually the local officer who has the closest relationship with municipal employees (Bervoets 2008). These circumstances can seriously jeopardise the public credibility of the police.

Finally, there is a fourth factor which has negative consequences for the credibility of action. Many Dutch police forces are confronted with a chronic shortage of capacity (Brink 2007a). In the cases that were examined, there are so many complaints about this problem that it sometimes appears as though more personnel could solve all difficulties (Straver 2009). Obviously, this is a deceptive observation, but nevertheless, too much pressure at work, frequent absenteeism and a big turnover of personnel certainly have their disadvantages. The most urgent cases have priority, while the work of a local officer can usually be postponed for a few days. So there is a risk that these activities are pushed to a less important level. This does not go unnoticed amongst the citizens. When reorganizations or cutbacks are made, they immediately notice that the police are less frequently present on the street and are less easily accessible (Bervoets 2008). These observations show that measures which may be intended to improve the effectiveness of the police, make credible action more difficult in practice.

10. Conclusion

To summarise, community policing in the Netherlands does not appear to comply with the requirements imposed by the three models that were discussed, but at the same time effective components of those models are constantly involved in the practical activities of the Dutch local police officer. This is clear from the three dimensions in which these activities are described: the capacity to gather detailed information (cognitive dimension), a high degree of social commitment (relational dimension) and a clear willingness to enforce the law (normative dimension). These three characteristics form the professional core of community policing, although the emphasis may differ, depending on the person and situation. Of course there is room for further improvement with regard to this type of professionalism, but it is not necessary to embrace new models, systems, programmes or concepts for this purpose. In fact, the introduction or imposition of abstract models probably affects both the executives of community policing as well as its recipients adversely. Miller and Rose (2008), addressing the subject of *governmentality*, write that:

> 'Programmes presuppose that the real is programmable, that it is a domain subject to certain determinants, rules, norms and the processes that can be acted upon and improved by authorities. They make the objects of government thinkable in such a way that their ills appear susceptible to diagnosis, prescription and cured by calculating and normalizing intervention.' (p.63)

However, they also reach the conclusion that such programmatic ways of perceiving reality tend to 'complexify the real', while the causes at a street level 'escape those

bodies of knowledge that inform government programmes'(p.71). Thus, by creating a solution for one programme, problems are created elsewhere. It seems much more sensible, therefore, to develop the professional core of actual police work and remove a number of organizational obstacles. This will be of greater benefit to public credibility than the introduction of new methods or a new system. Professionalism, after all, is more flexible and effective in addressing the gap between expectations and actions than any programme or model could be. This applies all the more to the introduction of methods such as the New Public Management, as the axioms of this model are in direct conflict with "good policing".

Gabriël van den Brink
Misja van de Klomp

Bibliography

Bervoets, E. (2008) *Bij de tijd: wijkagenten in Hollands-Midden* (Sign of the Times: local police officers in Hollands-Midden), The Hague: COT.

Bradford, B. et al. (2005) *Trust and Confidence in Criminal Justice: A Review of the British Research Literature*, Social Science Research Network.

Bradford, B., J. Jackson and E.A. Stanko (2009) 'Contact and confidence: revisiting the impact of public encounters with the police', *Policing and Society* 19(1): 20-46.

Brink, G. van den (2007a) *Prachtwijken ?! De mogelijkheden en beperkingen van Nederlandse probleemwijken* (Beautiful neighbourhoods?! The problems and limitations of Dutch problem neighbourhoods), Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker.

Brink, G. van den, M. Straver, P. Tops (2007b) 'Management als rookgordijn' (Management as a smokescreen), in: *Bestuurskunde* 16 (2007) 4, pp. 33-40.

Brink, G. van den (2008) *A Credible Judiciary: Judges Bridging the Gap. The Annual Lecture for the Judiciary 2008*, The Hague: Council of the judiciary.

Chambon, L. (2006) 'De rellen in de banlieus. Alleen een Frans verschijnsel?' (The riots in the precincts. Only a French phenomenon?), in: Lectoraten (2006) *De rellen in Frankrijk* (The riots in France), Apeldoorn: Police Academy, pp. 16-34.

Fielding, N.G. (2005) 'Concepts and Theory in Community Policing', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 44(5): 460-472.

Flight, S., A. van den Andel, P. Hulshof (2006) *Vertrouwen in de politie. Een verkennend onderzoek* (Confidence in the police. An exploratory study), Amsterdam: DSP-groep.

Goldstein, H. (1990) *Problem Oriented Policing*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hoogenboom, B. (2006) *Operationele Betrokkenheid, Prestatiesturing en Bedrijfsvoering Nederlandse Politie* (Operational Involvement, Performance-led and Management of the Dutch Police), The Hague: Elsevier Overheid.

Innes, M., N. Fielding, S. Langan (2002) *Signal Crimes and Control Signals: Towards an Evidence-based Framework for Reassurance Policing*, Guildford: University of Surrey.

Innes, M. et al. (2004) *The Signal Crimes Perspective: Interim Findings*, Guildford: University of Surrey.

Jackson, J. and J. Sunshine (2007) 'Public Confidence in Policing: A Neo-Durheimian Perspective', *British Journal of Criminology* (47): 214-233.

Jochoms, M. et al. (2006) *Op prestaties gericht. Over gevolgen van prestatiesturing en prestatieconvenanten voor sturing en uitvoering van het politiewerk* (A focus on performance. On the consequences of performance-led management and performance covenants for the management and execution of policing), The Hague: Elsevier Overheid.

Kelling, C. & C. Coles (1997) *Fixing Broken Windows. Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in our Communities*, New York: Touchstone.

Kettl, D.F. (2000) *The Global Public Management Revolution*, Washington: Brookings Institute.

Kleijer-Kool, L. (2008) *Handhavers van de vrede of heroveraars? Politiestijlen en conflictpotentieel in Nederlandse multiculturele achterstandswijken* (Keeping the peace or reconquering? Styles of policing and potential for conflict in multicultural deprived neighbourhoods in the Netherlands), The Hague: Boom Juridische Uitgevers.

Kouzes, J., B. Posner (1993) *Credibility. How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Maguire, M. (2000) 'Policing by risks and targets: some dimensions and implications of intelligence-led crime control' in *Policing and Society*, vol. 9, pp.315-336.

Mastrofski, S., J. Willis and J. Snipes (2002) *Styles of Patrol in a Community Policing Context*, in: M. Morash and J. Ford, eds. (2002), *The Move to Community Policing: Making Change Happen*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 81-111.

Miller, P. and N. Rose (2008) *Governing the Present*, Polity Press: Cambridge.

Muir, W. (1977) *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Myhill, A. (2004) *Community engagement in policing: lessons from the literature*, London: Home Office.

Newburn, T. (ed.) (2003) *Handbook of Policing*, Collumpton, Devon: Willan Publishing.

Noordegraaf, M. (2004) *Management in het publieke domein. Issues, instituties en instrumenten* (Management in the public domain. Issues, institutions and instruments), Bussum: Coutinho.

Os, P. van (2006) *Frame of Reference for Community Policing*, Apeldoorn: Police Academy.

Osborne, D. & T. Gaebler (1992) *Reinventing Government. How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*, Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Skogan, W. (1990) *Disorder and Decline. Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighbourhoods*, New York: The Free Press.

Sluis, A. van, et al. (2006) *Cijfers en stakeholders. Prestatiesturing en de gevolgen voor de maatschappelijke en politiek-bestuurlijke relaties* (Figures and stakeholders. Performance management and the consequences for the social and political-administrative relationships), The Hague: Reed Business Information.

Soeparman, S. & G. van den Brink (2009) 'Waakzaam én dienstbaar. Geloofwaardige politiële verantwoording als paradox of duivels dilemma?' in: H. van Duivenbode, E. van Hout, C. van Montfort & J. Vermaas eds. (2009) *Verbonden verantwoordelijkheden in het publieke domein*, Den Haag: Uitgeverij Lemma pp. 113-132.

Straver, M., R. Ulrich, G. van den Brink, P. van Os, C. Wiebrens, F. Pieters, H. Quint, R. van de Wal, J. Smeets (2009) *Maatschappelijke integratie van de politie. Een vergelijkend onderzoek in zes gemeenten*, (The integration of the police in society. A comparative study in six municipalities), Apeldoorn: Police Academy.

Terpstra, J. (2008) *Wijkagenten en hun dagelijks werk. Een onderzoek naar de uitvoering van gebiedsgebonden politiewerk* (Local police officers and their everyday work. A study into the execution of community policing), The Hague: Elsevier Overheid.