

# Empathy and Enforcement

Prof. dr. Gabriël van den Brink

Politieacademie  
Chair of Community Policing  
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## **In conclusion**

### *EMPATHY AND ENFORCEMENT*

#### *Findings from five years of research on community-oriented policing*

In 2005, after a preparatory phase of over six months, the lectorate of Joint Safety Studies of the Police Academy of the Netherlands was officially started. The lectorate was intended to produce and further knowledge concerning the ways in which the police, together with other societal actors, such as citizens, corporations and (professional) institutions sought to create a safer society. Now, after five years of such research, we have tried to accumulate this wealth of knowledge in a single volume. Our aim in creating this publication is to share our findings with a larger audience, but also, more importantly, to reach a kind of synthesis of the most prominent insights that came about through our research. Through this publication we hope to present our work to all of those who are interested in the field of policing, including practicing professionals and students at the police academy as well as other institutions. The book features several studies of community-oriented policing that have been conducted since 2005. Most of these studies were conducted by scholars within the lectorate in Joint Safety Studies at the Politieacademie. We also included a few studies by other researchers, as they are closely related to the topics addressed by the lectureship.

Considering the fact that the publication on which this article is based is written in the Dutch language, we have chosen to translate the final chapter, which is intended as a summary and preliminary synthesis of the outcomes of five years of research. As such, we hope to reach an even wider audience, possibly crossing our national borders. Since this article is based on the previously mentioned studies and consists entirely of their findings, we have chosen not to cite every finding separately and on every occasion. The original studies that are referred to in the larger publication are, of course, available in their original format (and language) and are cited in the literature references of this publication.

We begin with several comments regarding the way in which we have arranged this body of knowledge. The field of Joint Safety Studies

proceeds from the assumption that, in contemporary society, public safety is not exclusively a matter for the police. Although the police obviously play a crucial role, they must also cooperate with other parties. Partly for this reason, the police system in the Netherlands is undergoing a gradual transformation from a predominantly internally focused organisation into one that explicitly focuses on interaction with external partners. At the same time, the influence of particular internal considerations and processes remains noticeable, with the consequence that insights involving community-oriented policing can be categorised according to emphasis on internal or external aspects. A second development involves the actions of distinct professionals. We are becoming increasingly aware that public safety is not simply a matter of legal, institutional and organisational regulations; it also involves the way in which individual officers act in concrete situations. This does not eliminate the fact that collective processes can also play a unique role. Insights involving community-oriented practice can therefore also be categorised according to the analytic focus on the individual or the collective level. The combination of both questions generates a relatively simple overview of the most prominent components involved in community-oriented practice. The diagram below shows these aspects in relation to each other.

Diagram 1

#### Four aspects of community-oriented policing

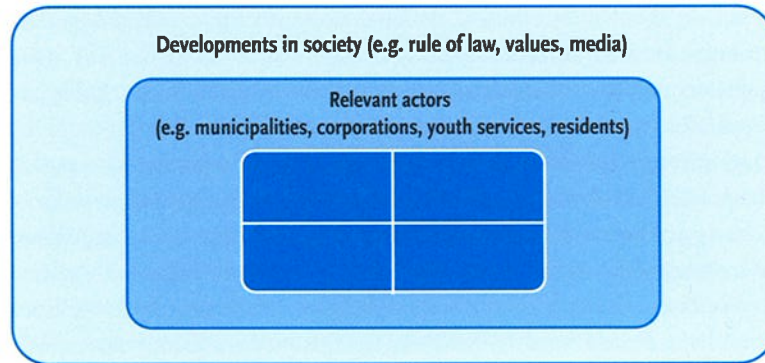
	Individual level	Collective level
External aspects	Professional execution Quality of enforcement in communities and the public domain	Integral safety Cooperation with professional partners
Internal aspects	Role of the supervisor Achieving qualitatively and quantitatively adequate results	Community-oriented practice Coordinating processes within organisations

We address these components in three sections. The first section focuses primarily on what individual community officers do (and do not do). What do their tasks involve? At what point do important differences emerge? How do community officers cope with local actors? The latter question recurs in the second section, with reference to the collective level. What type of relationship exists between a local police force and the local government? How do professionals in other organisations regard the police? Which matters should be taken into consideration in order to achieve productive cooperation? The third section presents a comparison of insights into internal processes. We describe how community officers in the Netherlands relate to their colleagues. How can the sometimes complicated relationship between community officers and their employers be described? What would be the consequences of adopting another form of operation?

These descriptions do not form an exhaustive overview of the topic of joint safety studies. We must also consider the social environment in which the police operate and the expectations that arise from this environment. We begin by discussing how the police interact with their most proximal surroundings. Section 4 addresses the following questions: To what extent do the police adjust their activities to particular neighbourhoods or citizens? Which attitude do they adopt with regard to ethnic minorities? How can the police provide support to people who wish to become involved in the interests of their own surroundings? The fifth and final section addresses the broader environment. How should we interpret the place of the police within the rule of law, and what consequences does this interpretation have for the legitimacy of the police? We further indicate relevant tendencies within the social climate in order to conclude with several observations concerning the relationship between the police and the media.

Diagram 2

## Netherlands Police: In the middle of society



This approach clearly shows that the performance of the police in the Netherlands cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon. It can be understood at the individual and collective levels only by paying close attention to the interaction of the police with multiple environments. We illustrate this in Diagram 2, which is intended to provide elementary insight into the current operations of general safety services in the Netherlands.

## In conclusion

### THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY OFFICER

In this section, we explain how community officers in the Netherlands do their jobs. Such descriptions should distinguish between three important components, which we identify as the informative, relational and normative dimensions. We then consider the possibility of creating a typology of community officers.

#### Informative component

The gathering of information has long been an important component of police work. Even such classic tasks as ‘catching crooks’ usually involve a considerable amount of detective work. However, criminal investigations are often characterised by a certain one-sidedness, in that considerable information from society goes to the police, while citizens do not obtain a good image of what the police do. For this reason, community-oriented practice strives to achieve reciprocity. This is the purpose of the principle of ‘knowing and being known’, which is quite popular within the police in the Netherlands and which has been applied in both urban and rural areas. It involves having the police gather information about what citizens do while informing citizens about what the police do. This has consequences for how officers acquire their insights. In many cases, they retrieve a number of facts from the databases or systems that are available to them. The decisive factor, however, involves being seen on the street, establishing contact with citizens, performing surveillance in the neighbourhood, making frequent visits and enhancing their knowledge about the community over a cup of coffee. These ‘coffee chats’ (as they are known in the police world) usually generate good insight into neighbourhood life. Citizens play a prominent role, as they actually serve as the eyes and ears of the police. In this way, any citizen who has something to say can report it to the police. This is particularly important for matters that require a certain level of confidentiality. Many citizens will tell what they know about suspicious matters only if they know that

this information will not be used improperly. One consequence is that the ability of community officers to obtain knowledge about the community is positively related to the quality of relationships with residents.

Despite the general acceptance of the principle of knowing and being known, the flow of information is not always reciprocal. Although most community officers know the residents of their neighbourhoods by name, the opposite is not always the case. For example, about half of the citizens of Amsterdam know their own community officers. The colleagues of these community officers (known in Amsterdam as 'neighbourhood directors') are unknown to most residents. Community officers maintain the most contact with active native-Dutch citizens. The same is true in cities like Rotterdam, in which the contacts of the police are largely 'old and white'. In other words, community officers talk primarily with native-Dutch citizens above the age of 50, while their exchanges with young people and non-white Rotterdammers are less well developed. Despite these shortcomings, this manner of working (knowing and being known) produces good results. Coffee chats often yield detailed information, thus allowing tensions to be identified at an early stage, so that the police can actually operate in the capillaries of society. As such, the general conclusion is that the police have a reliable image of the issues and that its information position is well developed.

#### *Relational component*

It is incorrect to think that the relationships between community officers and citizens are valuable only in terms of information. Dutch officers are characterised by a strong sense of social involvement in their communities. This manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, many officers do everything they can for their residents and are often available to them outside of normal office hours. They also offer assistance to citizens who who require extra attention (e.g. elderly citizens or former addicts). Many also prefer personal ways of relating to people; they are aware of the personal side of problems, and they do not like to adopt a distant or cold attitude. They attach great value to respectful treatment. Partly for this reason, they engage in activities that most outsiders would not immediately recognise as policing, such as visiting primary schools. On the one hand, this is a good way to help

children become acquainted with the community officer. On the other hand, it provides the community officer with an initial impression of the young people who will be growing up in the community in the coming years. The primary schools often appreciate such visits as well. Another example involves community officers who visit merchants who have experienced shoplifting incidents. Such visits are valuable even if the perpetrator is already behind bars, as they let the merchant know that the police are keeping an eye on things. In more general terms, merchants, business owners and other stakeholders appear to appreciate it immensely when the police come by to see them regularly.

This relational component thus involves more than simply collecting information. Community officers in the Netherlands strive to achieve sustainable relationships with the residents, whom they try to help in many ways. Some consider the development of such a bond of trust to be even more important than short-term results. The quest for involvement, however, can also be accompanied by problems. Community officers clearly have limited time available for this type of contact, while the need for help in the community is usually quite extensive. Another problem is that the police officers in the Netherlands are transferred once every five or six years. While this system of rotation is understandable in organisational terms, it is primarily disadvantageous to the community. Residents frequently comment that they do not appreciate it when their community officers are replaced. Because it takes years to build up a bond of trust, such transfers involve the loss of considerable experience and social knowledge. Knowledge about community life is never abstract; it involves such matters as which families live at which addresses, specific events that took place in the past and conflicts that exist between particular organisations. Such knowledge disappears whenever a community officer is transferred to or from a district, and it is this type of knowledge that allows community officers to act as parties that can play a mediating role in tensions or to be able to call citizens to order when they are engaging in anti-social behaviour. This type of intervention is possible only if the officer knows the community residents personally.

### *Normative component*

Although involvement and social relationships are very important, community-oriented practice also has a normative component. Officers must obviously maintain public order and issue citations for violations. There was a time in which police in the Netherlands saw the combination of involvement and repressive action as a dilemma. Some officers felt that good relationships with citizens could be undermined if they paid too much attention to enforcement. That time is now in the past. It is generally understood that both sides – the relational and the repressive – belong to police work. Most community officers consider it perfectly normal to issue citations. Should they ever have any doubts, their supervisors are sure to remind them. They even make agreements regarding the number of citations. Even most residents still consider it normal for their community officers to issue citations, and they have little respect for officers who make only a half-hearted effort to keep the peace. The normative aspect is also not limited to detecting crime and sanctioning violations. Maintaining order involves more than is prescribed by law. Officers must also act whenever the social order in their communities is disturbed, as in the case of public nuisance, menacingly loitering youths, harassment by neighbours or misconduct in bars and nightclubs.

The discussion above shows that community-oriented practice is normative in several respects. It is interesting to note that many community officers perform their tasks in an explicitly normative way. Moral considerations play a prominent role in their work, beginning with the choice to go into police work. Many officers are characterised by a strong sense of social justice. They wish to protect society from evil, and they see their vocations in terms of good and evil. This moral approach also affects the decisions that they must make in their day-to-day work. Research has shown that many officers tend to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ citizens in their processes of observation. In practice, they divide society into two parts. On the one hand, they see a majority of conscientious citizens – people who may make mistakes now and then, but who have good intentions and should therefore be treated with some degree of compassion. On the other hand, they distinguish a minority of citizens who do not wish to behave; these people are best monitored and handled more strictly. Although outsiders may perceive

this moral perspective as somewhat random, such an interpretation is overly simple. The capacity to make distinctions between residents who do or do not behave often flows from years of practical experience. It equips officers with an intuitive compass that they often need in their ordinary work, particularly when they encounter uncertain or dangerous situations. It is therefore better to consider the normative component as an inherent component of ordinary police work, even though it remains necessary for officers to be able to justify their actions after the fact.

### *A variety of ways to perform tasks*

Despite the fact that all community officers are faced with the dimensions mentioned above, there is considerable variation in the ways in which they perform their tasks. The importance of this point is illustrated by the fact that it is addressed in all studies of the activities of community officers. As early as 1997, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations acknowledged the existence of considerable differences. In substantive terms, these differences involve various aspects of the job. I will mention only a few examples. While some officers spend most of their time in their offices, others are mostly active on the street. Some officers occupy a strong position within their police stations, while others lag behind their colleagues. There are also differences with regard to the attitudes that officers have towards citizens. While some provide their mobile telephone numbers to anyone who asks, others would not even consider being called upon at unexpected times. Some community officers relate to the residents of ‘their’ communities in a personal way, while others adopt a more distant stance. There are obviously differences in enforcement as well. While some like to respond more strictly to misconduct, others prefer to turn a blind eye to many situations.

One interesting question obviously involves the origins of these differences in working methods. The studies cited here are not conclusive on this point. There are many circumstances that could contribute to such differences. For example, community officers are confronted with highly diverse problems due to the nature of their work. They must enforce as well as assist; they must issue citations as well as gather information. It is not surprising that they do not all follow the same working methods. A further role is played by the fact that

the social environment is also characterised by considerable variation. Community-oriented practice in the rural province of Friesland has an entirely different accent than the practice in Amsterdam. The most likely explanation for the variation in working methods is that community officers have or receive considerable leeway to perform their tasks as they deem most appropriate. The manner in which they fulfil their tasks is determined largely by personal preferences and competences. There is little pressure from the organisation to work in any particular way. For a long time, most supervisors did not consider this a problem, although the situation has been changing recently. We can nonetheless state that community officers in the Netherlands receive considerable trust, not only from citizens, but from their supervisors as well. We return to the disadvantages of this freedom later. Let us first address the question of whether any order can be created in this chaos of behaviours.

### *Elementary typology*

Before we can develop a possible typology of community officers, we must recall that, in the Netherlands, a variety of terms have been used to refer to this function until recently. While they were known as community officers in some areas, terms used in other areas included community directors, area officers, network inspectors, neighbourhood sergeants and networkers. This abundance of terms underscores the existence of various interpretations of what community officers actually do. In the meantime, the decision has been made to speak only of 'community officers'. A comparison of efforts to outline the characteristics of community-oriented practice reveals that many authors arrive at a four-way typology. In a somewhat older study, Muir distinguishes between avoiders, forcers, professionals and reciprocators. In a later study, Van der Torre proposes a distinction between pessimists, law enforcers, social workers and pragmatists.<sup>1</sup> Yet other authors write about hard, reactive, professional and avoiding styles of policing. Another categorisation is applied in a more recent study of community officers in the Hollands Midden police region. This typology is based on a combination of two

questions. The first question involves how community officers interpret their tasks (i.e. exactly or flexibly). The exact manner refers to a more realistic approach, while the flexible manner reflects an idealistic approach. The second question has to do with whether community officers assign the most weight to their relationships with citizen or to the achievement of tangible results. The combination of these distinctions would produce four working methods.

It is daring to add yet another typology to those that have already been proposed. There is good reason to do so, however, given the three components that have just been addressed. The first of the three generates few if any differences. Nearly all community officers proceed from the principle of knowing and being known. This is understandable, as community officers cannot do their jobs without information. There are differences according to the other two dimensions. While some officers develop relatively strong relationships with their communities and consider communication with citizens of great importance, others are less outspoken in this regard. We can, therefore, contrast strong and weak performance in the relational area. A similar contrast applies to enforcement. Some officers choose a strict enforcement of norms, while others adopt a more permissive attitude. Strong and weak performance in the area of enforcement can thus also be contrasted with each other. The combination of these two oppositions produces the following categorisation.

### *Diagram 3*

#### **Typology of community officers in The Netherlands**

	Relationally strong	Relationally weak
Normatively strong	<b>Educator</b>	<b>Enforcer</b>
Normatively weak	<b>Social worker</b>	<b>Networker</b>

This typology can be explained as follows. Networkers are officers who work primarily from their offices and maintain few personal relationships with community residents. They spend relatively little time enforcing norms, although they engage in strong cooperation with other professionals. Enforcers are strongly focused on upholding norms and taking repressive action, while they develop relatively little involvement with individual residents. Social workers are the opposite of enforcers: service delivery and involvement play a large role for these officers,

<sup>1</sup> See for instance W.K. Muir (1977) *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press en E. van der Torre (1999) *Politiewerk: Politiestijlen, Community Policing, Professionalisme*, Alphen aan den Rijn: Samson.



while they are less concerned about the normative and repressive aspects of community-oriented practice. Finally, educators are officers who maintain strong relationships with residents while also paying considerable attention to repressive action and maintaining order. This categorisation largely corresponds with Terpstra's distinctions regarding styles of police action.<sup>2</sup>

### *Image of the community officer*

Various studies show that community officers in the Netherlands have a positive image, especially among community residents. Officers are often aware of this. They see that the residents appreciate their presence, and they encounter little mistrust. Nevertheless it can take some time before they have 'earned' the trust of the citizens. As soon as a community officer has been appointed, residents start to make comparisons with the predecessor, and these comparisons are not always favourable to the new officer. At the same time, comparisons are also made between individual officers and the police as a whole; these comparisons do tend to work in favour of the individual officer. This is particularly evident when things are not going as they should. In such situations, citizens like to protect their own community officers while directing their criticism towards the bureaucracy, management or the organisation. Be that as it may, the community officer appears to be a strong, resilient 'brand' in the Netherlands. The other side of this evaluation is obviously that expectations are often quite high. This is particularly evident in such matters as reliability and honesty. Although most residents understand that community officers cannot solve all problems, they do expect them to be honest about what is going on.

In fact, community officers must possess many more qualities, precisely because their jobs incorporate a variety of tasks. One need only glance at the Police Act of 1993 to know that this is far from simple. This law summarises four crucial tasks. The police must 1) prosecute and arrest suspects, 2) maintain the public order, 3) assist citizens in emergencies and 4) transmit relevant information. In the Netherlands, community officers must be able to perform each of these tasks, taking the current situation into account. Role shifts occur regularly as well. One moment,

community officers may be assisting citizens, while they are issuing a citation or taking forceful action the next. At times, they must use their weapons due to threat of escalation and at other times they try to obtain certain information without attracting attention. A community officer might be visiting old acquaintances to see how they are doing, only to be surrounded by drunken young people and being hit on the head by a beer bottle. As such, it is a job with a great deal of variation and challenge, and it is also subject to considerable scrutiny. Community officers who excel in only one area are likely to receive little authority. Although it is understandable that community officers often bring their own accents to this complex task, they are expected to meet high standards on every point.

### *Between citizens and the police apparatus*

Precisely because community officers fulfil a bridging function between the police organisation and the public, particular organisational changes have consequences for their public performance. One clear example involves performance management, which became popular within the police a number of years ago. Under the influence of the New Public Management movement, many people within the government, public and semi-public sectors became convinced that the way to win the citizen's trust is to operate according to the principles of business. The notion was that feelings of insecurity amongst the public could be decreased if the police could show the tangible results that they achieve. As a result, police forces established performance contracts and created quantitative targets. One of the regional police forces in which this occurred was in the Zuid-Holland-Zuid region. The management of this police force placed heavy emphasis on attaining concrete results, and the officers worked hard to make this happen. After a time, this working method proved less successful than had been hoped. Officers came to realise that the citizens' evaluations were not based solely on the results that had been achieved; they were also dependent on the manner in which those results had been achieved. Whether individual officers did their jobs well could not be established only by looking at the number of citations that they had issued. In fact, individual public officials must find a balance between the demands that are placed upon them by the organisation

<sup>2</sup> J. Terpstra (2008) *Wijkagenten en dagelijks werk*, Apeldoorn: Politie en wetenschap, pp. 323-334

and the expectations that are held by the citizens. In more philosophical terms, it is necessary to find a proper mix of the rationality of the system world (which turns on countable results) and the rationality of daily life (which depends on the quality of communication).

The emphasis on performance management makes it increasingly difficult to find this mix. According to the employees in Zuid Holland Zuid, achieving targets became an end in itself. It is relatively easy to 'hold employees accountable' as long as the accountability is based solely on numbers. These numbers, however, do not necessarily reflect the quality of the work. Moreover, some employees expressed the feeling that the numbers were being manipulated because of the financial consequences associated with them. They felt trapped between the world of daily life and the system world. The goal of community-oriented practice has always been to relate to the lives of citizens and to involve them in the effort to achieve public safety. Trust is less likely to arise from the ability of the police organisation (in the system world) to show that particular policy objectives are being achieved than it is to proceed from the ability of the police and citizens to get along with each other in the world of daily life. Some employees also felt that it would be better to stop working with targets altogether. It is necessary to find a better way of evaluating the quality of the services delivered by the police. Although the achievement of tangible results is an important component, police employees must also demonstrate many other qualities, including reliability, attentiveness, competence, honesty, fairness, democracy and integrity of action.

## In conclusion

### THE POLICE FORCE AND OTHER PARTIES

Important though the work of community officers may be, community-oriented policing comprises more than the performance of individual police officials. The functioning of the organisation is also important, as is the structure of cooperation with other organisations. We elaborate on this cooperation in the following section.

#### *The ideal of programme management*

In the Netherlands, it has long been the general point of view that policing calls for an integral approach. Although the police obviously play a central role, they cannot do their jobs if other parties remain on the sidelines. This raises questions regarding who these other parties are and how they achieve cooperation. In community-oriented practice, the police are primarily involved with the municipal government, local merchants, community residents and various professionals. The professionals comprise a diverse collection that can include housing corporations, schools, youth services, welfare agencies, social services, regional newspapers, churches or mosques, depending upon the local situation. The municipal government assumes a special role amongst these partners, as it bears responsibility for directing the public safety and security policy. The police themselves have a preference for programme management, which is based on the notion that all parties perceive each other as equal partners, each associated with its own responsibility. In negative terms, programme management is a form of cooperation that does not involve internal hierarchy. It involves professionals of diverse background making their own insights, competences and instruments available to others. One decisive point involves the willingness of partners to exchange as much information as possible. Another point involves the internal division of tasks established in advance in a cooperative programme. Agreements are made regarding the specific contributions that each party will make. These agreements should take specific account

of local issues. The most appropriate way to function on a tactical and operational level depends upon the local situation. Finally, it is important for the cooperative programme to specify a number of measurable objectives. This allows the partners to account for their actions, not only to outside audiences but with regard to internal agreements as well.

The risk of this approach is that it will generate a reality that exists only on paper. The proponents of programme management are aware of this risk. For this reason, they stress that the method is less concerned with meetings than it is with achieving practical results. For example, it would make little sense to involve as broad an array of partners as possible. Programme management is limited to parties that have a direct interest, a clear mandate and are able to develop sufficient power to persevere. In addition, operations are more important than is the process of formal decision-making. Because true cooperation takes shape on the work floor and is based on mutual trust, short lines are important. Programme management is based on acting together instead of talking with each other. A final point about programme management is that it should be implemented in response to an urgent problem. It functions best when citizens, municipal officials and professionals share the awareness that there is a serious problem that cannot be resolved with the usual approaches. All parties should be convinced that cooperation is the only way to do something about the problem at hand. The success of this venture often depends on unorthodox pacesetters – impassioned people who have a heart for the issue and who do not place too much stock in formal procedures. These pacesetters could be either professionals or community residents. The most effective contributions are made by local authority figures who are willing to put their full weight behind the support for the cooperation. This demands a form of administrative or political courage that is not particularly common in countries like the Netherlands, where people are fond of adhering to formal procedures and engaging in broad consultation.

#### *Local governance and government*

To what extent is the goal of cooperation between equal partners realised in practice? Let us first chart the progress of cooperation between the police and the local government. Various studies have shown that these

two parties take each other seriously as partners and that the relations are usually favourable. Human factors continue to play a role in such cooperations, however, particularly in rural and urban areas. Because the police and the municipal government in large cities (e.g. Amsterdam or Rotterdam) involve organisations with thousands of employees, major interests are at stake. As a consequence, relatively minor disagreements on a personal level (e.g. between the mayor and the chief of police) can quickly acquire considerable weight. This can occur in rural areas as well, albeit for other reasons. For example, conflicts could arise because of the small scale of the organisations or the tight relations existing between the most prominent players. In addition to personal factors, task divisions can be a source of difficulties. While the direction of public safety and security policy formally rests with the municipal government, the police invariably play a central role, and cultural differences between the two organisations are common. The world of the police station is entirely different from the world of city hall. Police employees often feel that the local administration works in a slow and bureaucratic way. Although administrators may produce fine policy plans, they have no understanding of operations. Moreover, city hall often does not realise just what problems community residents actually face. For their part, many administrators, officials and policymakers question the way in which the police operate. They are likely to be unaware that the municipal government must weigh public safety against other priorities. Alternatively, they may feel that the police focus too heavily on repression. In any case, the fact that public administrators and police do not always look at the local situation in the same way can sometimes generate friction. At the same time, these types of differences are accepted by both parties, and they need not pose an obstacle to cooperation.

The way in which municipalities approach their role as director is likely to be even more important. Studies on this issues show that considerable differences exist. We are aware of municipalities in which they mayor, aldermen or both maintain a conscious course, although there are other cases in which this does not occur. A number of factors can play a role in the latter situation. For example, consider a city council that does not generate much interest in its public safety and security policy. This could be due to the fact that the municipality in question simply has few public-safety problems, or it could be because local administrators feel overruled by the actions of the national government or the Public Prosecution

Service. Finally, mayors in some rural areas hold a monopoly on public safety and security policy, making it unnecessary for other actors in the local administration to formulate their own opinions. In contrast, police officials sometimes tend to take over the public-safety agenda. This is understandable, given that policing is their day-to-day work and because they do possess the necessary insight. It remains undesirable, however, as it fails to challenge the local government to act in its capacity as the director of the public safety and security policy. In addition, it reinforces the tendency to view policing as a technical or professional affair, in which there is insufficient attention to the democratic embedding of concrete measures. This further complicates cooperation with other partners, including local merchants or citizens. The serious adoption of programme management requires public safety and security policy to be politicised to some extent. This does not mean that the actions of the police should become the subject of partisan political disagreements. It means that all relevant parties within the municipality should express their views regarding the priorities of public-safety programmes and that the police should be able to account for their own actions according to such programmes. The situation is changing in municipalities in which the local administration (e.g. assisted by additional authority on grounds of the BIBOB Act<sup>3</sup> regarding integrity on the part of permit holders and subsidy recipients) takes the director's task seriously. This places the police in a more operational and subordinate role.

### *Professional partners and networks*

Developing a joint approach to public safety requires the police to cooperate with other professional organisations as well as with the local government. The key issue often involves problematic behaviour on the part of young people. The situation in the Netherlands is gradually shifting from a model in which a variety of agencies (e.g. youth services, social work, rehabilitation, truancy officers, social services, housing corporations, sports associations, ambulant mental health care centres, volunteering programmes, welfare services, community health services) each determines its own guidelines for assisting families, young people or both. Each of these agencies is currently aware that a joint approach

is needed. For this reason, many networks have been formed to bring professionals of varying backgrounds in contact with each other. It is interesting to note that the police are nearly always included in these networks. This is an obvious choice, as the interests are usually parallel. On the one hand, the police must regularly call upon the services of other professionals. One example involves the arrest of drug addicts who have been causing a nuisance; these people actually belong in some type of social-service facility rather than in police custody. On the other hand, social professionals are often in need of the police as well. Whenever social workers or service providers see that their clients are not cooperating sufficiently, it can sometimes help to call upon the strong arm of the law. It is therefore quite common for the police and other professional agencies to join forces by engaging in frequent consultation or developing cooperative covenants. This is not without risks. Agreements regarding cooperation are easily put on paper, but this achieves little. Forming networks is fine, but it is an important to guard against an endless stream of meetings. The important point is that the cooperation takes shape within practice, and this is where many types of problems arise.

One of the most common problems is that professional organisations tend to look at situations from very different angles. From the perspective of the police, this is most prominent with professionals working in the areas of welfare, care or social work. Disagreements arise in connection with the definition of the problem, as well as with regard to the manner in which the problem should be addressed, the resources that should be used in addressing it and the underlying values from which the professionals do their jobs. For example, consider the case of a group of young trouble-makers. The police have the goal of maintaining public order; from this starting point, they have little patience with the behaviour of the young people involved. Most welfare workers, in contrast, do not consider loitering to be a problem in itself; they are likely to suggest that neighbourhood residents should try to be more tolerant. This difference is equally noticeable with regard to serious offences. For example, many social workers are hesitant to relay details out of the fear that doing so might endanger their relationships with their clients. The police are less sensitive to this aspect, and they tend to consider social workers as being entirely too soft. These differences are less likely to be based on personal preferences than they are to be closely related to particular occupational

practices. The contrast between community officers and social workers is a clear example, although it occurs between the police and other agencies as well. Such differences can also emerge when agencies are working on the same side of the problem. For example, although an outsider may think that the police and the Public Prosecution Service have a shared interest (e.g. the arrest and conviction of youthful repeat offenders), in practice, they are not always on the same line. If repeat offenders are back on the streets after only a short time, this can cause considerable irritation amongst police officials.

### *Conditions for cooperation*

Even though these types of differences can make cooperation more difficult, they do not constitute a reason to avoid cooperation. The real question involves which factors can encourage and which can impede a joint approach to public safety. Many studies have shown that the chance of success is the greatest when the lines are short and of a personal nature. People should remain cautious about networks that have a strong institutional character. It is better not to place excessive emphasis on meetings, formal decision-making, recording of minutes or similar activities. It works much better if police officials and other professionals cherish a certain trust, consult each other informally, develop personal ties, agree about the approach to concrete issues and pay regular visits to each other. Evidence suggests that the police are an attractive partner in this regard. Because they attach more emphasis to acting than to talking, because they have so much experience with emergency situations and because their work has a physical component, the police are able to provide a certain level of 'firmness'. This is indeed recognised by others, who usually consider the police as a reliable partner – one that keeps its promises, has good insight into the local situation and that can be counted on with regard to specific problems. Unfortunately, this evaluation is not always mutual. Police employees tend to think that their partners in the chain work around each other too much, that the exchange of information proceeds less smoothly than it should, that their partners understand little of the manner in which the police do their work and that their sense of urgency is underdeveloped. It is difficult to determine the extent to which these complaints are based on facts. Most likely, the

police and other organisations do strive to achieve sincere cooperation, although it is more difficult for them to let go of their own professional approaches than people at the administrative level realise.

Which circumstances make cooperation so difficult in practice? A number of factors can cause professionals to retreat into their own worlds, as is the case when cooperative projects fail to relate sufficiently to the professional's core tasks. Nearly all organisations in the public and semi-public sectors struggle with a shortage of time, capacity or money, and they tend to retreat into their core business when difficulties arise. This is exacerbated if the organisations are structured along the lines of the New Public Management and employees are expected to achieve measurable objectives. In this case, community officers are held accountable for the number of citations that they issue, social workers are held accountable for the number of families that they visit, teachers are held accountable for the number of students that graduate and judges are held accountable for the number of cases that they try. This businesslike approach is not conducive to a joint approach to public safety; it makes it more complicated. The same is true of cases involving excessive emphasis on the short term. Because informal contacts and personal experiences play a prominent role in the process, it simply requires time to build up professional networks and find real solutions. Moreover, it takes more time to maintain a network than it does to form one. It is therefore unrealistic to expect that the value of communal joint safety programmes will be visible immediately. It involves investments of which the 'utility' does not become evident for years. A final hurdle is that administrators or managers look at cooperation differently than operational professionals do. Operational professionals often find that cooperation in concrete activities can succeed, but that their supervisors stand in the way. This is not out of ignorance or ill intentions, but because they assign the highest priority to the interests of the organisation. On the other hand, many administrators and managers feel that they have made good agreements regarding cooperation, and that any problems are due to the inadequate performance of other parties.

### **Two examples**

The discussion above necessarily leads to the conclusion that cooperation is not so simple in practice. Nonetheless, there are plenty of examples of successful cooperation. It would be worthwhile to identify

the circumstances that play a role in such success. One such example involves the municipality of Hoofddorp, in which major problems had emerged in the area of integration. For a long time, the local government had adopted a wait-and-see attitude. The municipality did not perform its role as director adequately, and some felt that the government had even denied that any problems existed at all. The municipality was not the only institution that that faced complaints; the problems were not being addressed by the welfare agency or the housing corporation either. The police were perceived to have an insufficient capacity for empathy with regard to the migrants. The community council felt that they were not taken seriously at all, and the board of the local mosque evaluated the whole situation in a negative manner. Despite these factors, the police in Hoofddorp were able to turn the situation around. The supervisors formulated a treatment profile for young Moroccans, and all team members were required to attend a training course in multicultural skills. Finally, a community officer of foreign descent was appointed to work in Hoofddorp. Because he spoke Arabic, he could follow the conversations of the young Moroccans. He also sought out the young people himself. For example, he visited their school, dropped by the snack bar or participated in prayers at the mosque. He was aware of the specific sensitivities existing within the group, and he understood that some young people wished to discuss their problems only with a man and not with a woman. Because the community officer was not Moroccan, residents were less likely to label him as a traitor for fulfilling his function as a police officer. In addition, the young people had an interest in the actions of the community officer: he was able to bring them into touch with the outside world and form a bridge to other agencies. This example shows that cooperation can be achieved even under difficult circumstances.

The second example involves the riots occurring after the death of a resident in early 2007 in the neighbourhood of Ondiep which is located in the municipality of Utrecht. Very soon after the first disturbances had erupted, the police, the Public Prosecution Service and the municipal government joined forces. They had learned this lesson through previous riots. For example, action had not been swift enough in Den Bosch, and the rioters therefore had a free rein over the situation. One important factor in the case of Ondiep is that the partnership was not limited to the local triangle. Authorities and professionals also consciously sought

contact with the population. For example, they took seriously and acted upon all of the rumours and stories that circulated during the riots ('gossip management'). In addition, copious information was provided to community residents regarding details about the measures that had been taken. Finally, contact with the victim's family members was sought from the very beginning. Residents greatly appreciated the fact that the mayor paid a visit to Ondiep. The chief of police also went by to see the family. In addition to investing in the ties with the community, strong efforts were made in the area of maintain the public order. Fences were installed to isolate Ondiep from the outside world; many youthful rioters were arrested, and a system of cumulative fines was adopted. This created a convincing interplay within a few days, in which all actors played their respective roles, with the exception of the media. The core of this interplay consisted of a combination of empathy and enforcement. Although this combination is also present in other examples of police work in the Netherlands (see above), its strength is particularly evident in crisis situations. It is an illusion to think that such a combination can be achieved from one day to the next. It results from years of investment, and it is at odds with approaches that place the emphasis primarily on achieving spectacular but short-lived 'effects'.

#### *Individual relationships*

For community-oriented policing, investment in social relationships is of major importance. It is also necessary for the police, the government and other entities to adopt a long term perspective. In general, administrators and policymakers in the Netherlands are aware of this, despite the questionable ways that they act upon this awareness. Many believe that local public safety can best be promoted by strengthening social cohesion within neighbourhoods, ensuring that the residents develop their social capital, attempting to prevent segregation from increasing and working to create a more diverse population in disadvantaged communities. Such measures, however, are likely to be too global to be effective in the area of public safety. Moreover, 'social cohesion', 'social capital' and similar terms can raise questions. Their meanings are not entirely clear, and they are used in different ways by different authors. In reference to close social communities, these concepts are obviously accompanied

by disadvantages. Numerous examples exist of families, working-class neighbourhoods and ethnic groups that are clearly characterised by a high degree of social cohesion, but which also protect perpetrators from the police or discourage others from pressing charges. In fact, it is not clear what the promotion of social cohesion is actually intended to accomplish, aside from the vague notion that human relationships are important. The goals of attempts by policymakers to promote population diversity in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are equally indeterminate. In some cases, the goal of promoting diversity is pursued by a policy of demolishing social rental housing and constructing new owner-occupied accommodations. Although such policies are certain to attract a number of affluent residents to the community, that is about all. It is far from certain whether these new residents will promote safety within the community. Their lives simply take place in a broad urban area. It is even conceivable that such 'blending' could serve to increase the contrast between lifestyles, thereby underlining the disadvantaged position of the original residents. These types of policies are likely to be developed against the backdrop of two illusions. The first illusion is that it is possible to influence social life within a community by taking large-scale measures. The second illusion is that no action outside of these measures is needed.

In light of these issues, one of the studies we address proposes drawing distinctions between three histories or levels. The structural level involves the physical characteristics of a community and the economic characteristics of its population. On this level, the municipality, housing corporations and other actors are able to exert some influence over the neighbourhood, although such actions generally have little to do with issues regarding the current state of public safety. This is because influencing public safety has less to do with the control over physical or economic aspects of community life than it does with the state of social relationships at that time. For example, public safety can be increased by appointing community officers who know how they should relate to the residents of their communities. Another example includes reinforcing police cooperation with corporations, municipalities, sports clubs, schools, mosques, welfare agencies and other organisations. Yet another example involves assigning specific roles to citizens and local merchants in promoting public safety. Finally, we considered the operational level, which includes the day-to-day activities of police work (e.g. patrolling,

assistance, enforcement). The events that took place in Ondiep show that operational policing can be greatly assisted by establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship with the community. This cannot be accomplished, however, through 'blending', 'social cohesion' or other broad, global concepts. It can be achieved only when individual community residents and professionals address a number of specific problems and are willing to engage in long-term cooperation.

### *Normative engagement*

The problem with policymakers is that they often think on too large a scale, and usually from a short-term perspective. The opposite situation is preferable: small-scale thinking from a long-term perspective. This change is highly relevant for public safety and security policy. For this reason, the police should take two matters into consideration in their dealings with other parties. First, they should follow a consistent line in their own policy and maintain it over a series of years. Interim changes resulting from budget cuts, political elections or the appointment of a new chief can have disastrous consequences. The same applies to isolated projects that are intended to promote public safety but which are scheduled to end after a few years. It can take up to ten years for a particular approach to public safety to become 'grounded' within a community. Shifting to a new working method (e.g. from tolerance to zero-tolerance or vice versa) causes confusion for residents. The police should prove that they are a reliable partner, and this often means not giving an inch. Partly for this reason, the policy of transferring community officers between neighbourhoods every five or six years could be questioned. In and of itself, the policy is understandable, if only to prevent the ties between officers and neighbourhoods from becoming too strong. In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, however, the situation is different. In these contexts, rapid changes are more likely to amount to a waste of local knowledge and human trust. Furthermore, police and other professionals should form a more permanent structure for supporting the initiatives of residents in this type of community. It is wonderful whenever community residents wish to contribute their efforts in their own surroundings, but such initiatives often lack the necessary perseverance, as well as the necessary outside contacts

and support. In this regard, professionals from the police, education, healthcare, corporations or development work could be of much more assistance than is currently the case.

In addition to the long term, professional organisations should pay more attention to the normative side of public safety and security policy. Although the risk of anti-social or criminal behaviour is reinforced by economic and physical disadvantage, these behaviours are not totally determined by such factors. People living in bad neighbourhoods make their own choices regarding whether they will commit an offence. In Dutch society, in which true poverty no longer exists, this choice is largely dependent upon social-cultural and moral considerations. The studies brought together here show that these moral risks are underestimated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It is too easily thought that problems in the area of education, health, discrimination, addiction or aggressive behaviour can be resolved through the improvement of incomes or physical renovations. Improving the situation, however, requires offering cultural and moral perspective to individual residents as well. Professionals can contribute in this regard by helping residents improve their language skills or by assisting individual young people in their educational or occupational efforts. In more general terms, this involves providing solid support for normative matters (e.g. 'citizenship', 'common decency', 'getting ahead'), particularly in communities in which life has long been marked by poverty, illiteracy or segregation. The police also have a role in this regard. The combination of empathy and enforcement is particularly needed in these neighbourhoods. Partly for this reason, community officers should operate as 'educators' in these neighbourhoods. Succeeding in this task, however, requires more than the efforts of individual officials. It requires a connection in which multiple organisations cooperate, as well as forms of local leadership. The studies presented in the lectorate's book show that there is still much to be done in this regard in the Netherlands.

## In conclusion

### ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The realisation of the tasks that are mentioned here requires the police to meet a number of organisational conditions, on the level of the individual community officer as well as on the level of the police force as a whole. We therefore devote this section to the identification of principles that play a role in community-oriented practice. We also consider the extent to which the police in the Netherlands conform to these principles and how any problems could be addressed.

#### *Two models*

Although police work in the Netherlands is based on community-oriented practice, this model is not interpreted the same way in every part of the country. In theory, two models can be contrasted with each other. In the first model, the entire public-safety programme within a region is based on community-oriented practice. In this model, a relatively small unit assumes responsibility for all police tasks (i.e. intake, emergency assistance, enforcement, investigation). As a consequence, all team members are capable of providing public-safety services in the broadest sense, and they feel responsible for public safety within the unit's area. This model is similar to that which is known in the United Kingdom as community policing: a working method that involves broad authority for individual officers, a good integration in the community, a strong focus on preventative action, the assumption that citizens are approachable and a professional habitus on the part of the police. In the second model, community-oriented practice is merely a specialisation that serves to enhance ordinary policing. Although specific officials (community officers) are appointed to be particularly involved with community residents, these appointments have little influence on the rest of the police organisation. This model is related to what is described in the United States as the reform model: a working method characterised by a narrow interpretation of the tasks of an officer, a relatively large



distance from community life, a focus on the repressive aspects of police work (crime fighting), the assumption that citizens will ignore all laws whenever they get the chance and the fact that the police function as a centrally guided machine.

Available evidence suggests that a combination of these two models is preferred in Dutch practice. In some respects, the police strive to achieve a type of community policing, while in others, they are closer to the reform model. On the one hand, many police forces work with relatively small units (between 45 and 70 FTE) that bear comprehensive responsibility for the provision of basic police services. On the other hand, considerable variation exists with regard to the actual tasks of community officers or the influence of basic teams. In some cases, community officers occupy a relatively strong position within the team, although in other cases, they occupy a somewhat marginal place. Quite some time ago, the Board of Police Chiefs accepted a policy document specifying that each police force should develop its own vision on community-oriented practice. However, the variation that we have just mentioned indicates that this has yet to be achieved. Other objectives formulated in this document have also not been achieved on a national basis. For example, the number of community officers should be adjusted according to the issues and complexity of work in the community, there should be at least one community officer for each 5000 neighbourhood residents, community officers should be a permanent component of the basic team and individual community officers should be able to identify the incidents occurring in their communities, as well as the measures that are meant to address these incidents. Nevertheless, some of the ambitions of community-oriented practice have been achieved (e.g. community officers participate in networks of business owners, citizens and professionals or function as the forward-operating bases of the police within the community). It is, therefore, helpful to consider how the organisation of the police affects the actions of community officers.

#### *Position within the organisation*

A distinction must be made between the formal rules under which community officers must operate and the informal codes that are probably of equal influence on their behaviour. These guidelines are

largely determined by the corporate culture of the police station for which a given officer works. The research that was conducted clearly shows that many stations have their own ways of operating. At one station, considerable time is spent drinking coffee and exchanging insights, while colleagues at another station spend as much time as possible on the streets. While one station is characterised by high work pressure, another station is relatively relaxed. These codes have emerged over the years and are seldom made explicit, although they exert a remarkable influence on the activities and behaviour of community officers. Corporate culture serves a clear function: it helps to reduce uncertainty and ensures that colleagues provide each other with moral support. Colleagues who ignore such codes are sure to notice that their popularity amongst colleagues will rapidly decline. Corporate culture is also associated with a preference for avoiding the appearance of 'assignments'. Those wishing to have something done by someone else tend to appeal to the other's sense of collegiality. Involving a superior is avoided as much as possible. Only when the informal governance fails do people consider 'going upstairs'. The general tendency is to shield the work floor from meddling from above, and there is a preference for mutual consultation. Community officers who wish to direct attention to something in their communities can do so through the daily briefing. It is interesting to note, however, that many community officers prefer contacts of an informal kind, as occurs when they run into a colleague at lunch or in the hallways. This might seem to suggest that community officers occupy a relatively solid position within the police station. This is only partly the case. For example, the contact with the investigations division does not proceed smoothly in many cases. Community officers rarely involve investigators as experts. In many cases, the Criminal Information Unit (CIE) or the Regional Information Service (RID) do not relay information to community officer. Some detectives are afraid that community officers will unwittingly use the information to 'destroy' a case. The flow of information in the opposite direction is also not always optimal. Some community officers have difficulty involving colleagues from the investigations division, or they are hesitant in the area of criminal investigation. Such tensions are at play primarily when community officers and detectives work in different teams. In addition to the tensions associated with criminal investigations, tensions often arise between community officers and the emergency

assistance division. Examples include situations in which 'bicycle cops' ride through a community at high speed without making contact with the local population or when the actions of emergency assistance are contrary to agreements that a community officer has made with the residents. A background contributing factor is that many police officials (particularly young ones) consider real police work to involve 'catching crooks' or 'responding to reports'. They look down upon at the day-to-day work of community officers. Moreover, capacity shortages are usually accompanied by cuts in community work; emergency assistance simply has to take priority. All of these factors make the position of community officers within the police organisation weaker than outsiders might think. Various researchers have thus concluded that the internal position of community officers should be strengthened. Increasing their status and rewards are likely to be helpful in this regard.

### *Officers and supervisors*

Because community officers are not always well-integrated within the existing organisation, they are largely free to interpret their own jobs. Other factors play a role as well. For example, community officers spend a considerable portion of their time on the street and are therefore difficult to monitor. They must use their own judgment in unexpected situations. In such cases, the work experience that they have acquired is important; it plays a major role in determining how an officer will manage under difficult circumstances. Another factor at play is that, although officers do have to deal with policy, they also have to make their own decisions regarding how to apply such policies in specific situations. In some cases, multiple policy priorities apply, and officers have to decide on the spot which priorities have the most weight in given situations. Finally, when community officers find themselves in difficult situations, they must ensure their own safety as well as the safety of their colleagues. These factors combine to create considerable freedom of movement for community officers in the Netherlands. As stated previously, these factors also generate considerable differences in practice and allow sufficient room for personal preferences or moral images. At the same time, this freedom is an ambiguous matter. On the one hand, community officers are attached to their own interpretations of their jobs and are not eager

to receive strict guidelines from above. On the other hand, they would appreciate more focused guidance from their direct supervisors.

The latter conclusion is supported by a number of research results. In general, the management of community officers could be more solid. The issue is not that supervisors should prescribe exactly what their officers should do. Nevertheless, they could pay more attention to ways in which community officers can improve their performance as professionals. What is the intent of participating in networks? How can officers establish contact with citizens who are difficult to reach? The role division between team chief and community officer could stand to improve as well, for example with regard to communication with the municipality. Finally, supervisors should provide sufficient support for community officers who develop special initiatives. The previously mentioned situation in Hoofddorp provides a good example. Although the ultimate resolution of this problematic situation was due largely to the efforts of the community officer, he would have been able to do little without the support of his team chief. More specifically, the fact that the team chief in question provided his community officer with the necessary information was an important factor. The team chief also considered it important for his community officers to follow particular courses. Neither did he hesitate to approach other colleagues whenever they expressed themselves in a discriminatory fashion. These factors illustrate that the attitude of a supervisor can be of major influence. This is also clear from the incidents in Ondiep, in which the appointment of a new district chief quickly resulted in improved relationships with community residents. In other words, the fact that community officers in the Netherlands receive (or assume) considerable freedom certainly does not indicate that the actions of their supervisors do not matter. On the contrary, it made the difference between success and failure in some of the cases that we studied.

### *Types of management*

In addition to the needs that exist amongst community officers, it is helpful to consider the styles of supervision that are most appropriate to community-oriented practice. After all, this working method aims to ensure that the basic unit is well-equipped to respond to the specific

problems in their areas. It implies a high degree of autonomy, not only with regard to setting priorities (what will we address first?) but also with regard to operations (how will we address it?). This is not possible within a strongly centralised form of management. Partly for this reason, leadership and management should find a balance between two extreme forms. At one extreme is a style that facilitates by allowing considerable leeway for community officers and other members of the basic unit. At the other extreme is a style that disciplines by imposing a number of strict production agreements on the officers. Although management does take place, it is focused largely on the broad outlines of the job. While particular objectives must be achieved, community officers should also have a voice in the manner in which these objectives are to be achieved. A similar balance should exist within both the basic unit and the larger whole. In many cases, the management of the police force makes agreements with the national government, or particular objectives or priorities are established at the level of the local police force. This raises a number of questions, including the relative compatibility of such objectives with the priorities that emerge from the local situation.

The collection of studies we address suggests that the second task seldom leads to problems in practice. In general, urgent matters at the local level are relatively easy to combine with priorities at the level of the police force. In the Netherlands, community-oriented practice is apparently more than a model that exists only on paper. In any case, the police give serious consideration to local issues with regard to public safety. It seems more difficult to fulfil the first task. In general, police employees do understand the need for performance agreements. They also like to achieve concrete results that show that the police are reliable. At the same time, they express the perception that performance-based management has been pushed through rather forcibly. Moreover, the connection between the agreements that are made and the local situation is not always clear. We have already mentioned the objections that were expressed in the Zuid Holland Zuid police region. Similar objections have been heard in other regional police forces as well. For example, the perverse effects of an over-emphasis on strict performance management were mentioned, as was the fact that the citizens' trust depends not only upon numerical results but also upon the manner in which those results are achieved. The fact that nearly everyone complains about the emphasis on citations in the final months of the year is a good illustration. This

is apparently seen as the epitome of non-credible action – by officers as well as by many citizens. These details lead only to the conclusion that the most appropriate balance between management from above and acting according to the demands of the situation has yet to be found in the Netherlands.

### *Aspects of business operations*

Despite the importance of management, we should not forget that a police organisation is also confronted with questions regarding business operations. Planning and control take place, personnel policies are carried out and the budget must be well balanced each and every year. In the ideal situation, business operations should be in the service of community-oriented practice; in practice, however, the police exhibit many traits of a classic bureaucracy that is strongly characterised by functional hierarchy and the quest for rationality. The latter point is often translated into a plea for process-oriented and planning-based practice. In practice, this often creates tensions, as many public-safety issues emerge in unexpected locations or at unexpected times. This poses a paradox for the police organisation. On the one hand, a decidedly rational operational strategy is unavoidable. On the other hand, community-oriented practice is always accompanied by some form of improvisation. The tension that emerges is particularly tangible under conditions of capacity shortage. In such situations, the most relevant question involves where such scarce capacity can be applied most suitably. Practice has shown that a shortage of personnel quickly comes at the cost of community-oriented practice. This is understandable in part: emergency assistance always takes priority, and community officers can always postpone their visits by a day or two. In addition to emergency assistance, capacity is often assigned to criminal investigations as well, as the work pressure is usually high in this division. The consequence, however, is that personnel shortages resulting from budget cuts, sick leave or high work pressure in other departments have repercussions for the community. This has been recognised by police employees as well as community residents. Even when they do not hold to the suspicion that the police are retreating into their core tasks, community residents often complain that the police are not on the street enough. We consider this a

point of serious concern. It is not possible to maintain that a presence in the community is essential in the name of community-oriented practice while simultaneously pulling out of the neighbourhood for reasons of a managerial nature. To do so would be contrary to the previously described plea to develop more long-term relationships.

It is also contrary to another ambition that has high priority with the police in the Netherlands: improving the management of information. Some even wish to make a complete transition to Information-led Policing (IGP). Ideally, this model involves the systematic study of all available information before decisions are made. This systematic analysis should not take place only on the strategic level, but on the tactical and operational levels as well. The flow of information should not proceed only from the top down, but in the opposite direction as well. Once again, community officers should play a crucial role in realising these ambitions. On the one hand, they should ensure that all insights regarding the community and its residents are relayed to the basic unit. Partly for this reason, the previously mentioned Referential Framework prescribes a community scan. On the other hand, community officers should ensure that information from the police is relayed to the citizens. The studies that have been addressed also show that this hardly ever takes place. Even when community officers do bring in many reports about the community and its residents, these reports are hardly ever processed in any systematic way. Most community officers exchange the knowledge informally with colleagues in the canteen or through other personal encounters. It is interesting to note that they often mould this knowledge into the form of stories that are a mixture of objective information, moral judgments and personal experiences. They form a rich source of insights, as long as they are about people, although they are far from the systematic analysis that is the goal of IGP. Our preliminary conclusion is, therefore, that the quest for rational business operations within the police is unmistakably subject to certain boundaries. On the level of information management as well on the level of the deployment of personnel, the police are faced with an erratic reality. Good police work is more likely to depend on improvisation than on rationalisation. It would also be wise to coordinate the business models with the practice of community-oriented policing and not to aspire to follow the opposite path (as is often the case under the influence of the New Public Management).

## In conclusion

### INTERACTION WITH THE COMMUNITY

The referential framework for community-oriented policing specifies that the police should cooperate with businesses and citizens, in addition to local administrators and professional agencies. It even mentions 'structural contact' between the police and the neighbourhood, and it recommends that the police should focus particularly on citizens who develop their own initiatives in the area of public safety. Relevant questions involve the extent to which this objective is being achieved in the Netherlands and which measures can be taken to strengthen the contact with community residents and businesses.

#### *Types of neighbourhoods*

It is necessary to make a distinction when answering these questions, as public safety is strongly dependent upon local circumstances and demands varied action. For this reason, one of the studies we address features a typology of neighbourhoods. The first type is the 'upper-class neighbourhood', which is characterised by a prevalence of spacious homes, a high level of prosperity, residents who are capable of taking care of themselves and who feel involved in public matters. The police are not very active in this type of neighbourhood, not only because there are usually fewer problems, but also because the residents are capable of handling a variety of problems by themselves. Much can be accomplished by offering information or maintaining a website. The second type of community is the 'middle-class neighbourhood'. In this type of neighbourhood, problems are also usually not too serious, although it is important for the residents to be active. They tend to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, have fewer financial resources available to ensure their own safety and they sometimes complain that they have little contact with their neighbours. The police can strengthen the sense of security by making their presence known on a regular basis, and they can stimulate residents to do more for their neighbourhoods. For example, residents

can be encouraged to form neighbourhood committees, participate in networks or otherwise develop initiatives. In this context, the focus is less on providing advice or identifying problems than it is on support of citizens.

The third type of community is the 'disadvantaged neighbourhood', which regularly appears in the news. These communities are characterised by a prevalence of residents with low incomes or who are dependent upon welfare benefits, the presence of older, inexpensive housing and many complaints regarding social conditions (e.g. litter on the streets, domestic violence, drug abuse and loitering youths). This category comprises many more than the forty neighbourhoods that were recently designated as 'Vogelaar communities' (in reference to the community-improvement policies of Ella Vogelaar, a former Minister of Integration and Housing). They include neighbourhoods in which the public order is continually threatened and in which there are problems maintaining the social or moral order. It is clear that the police cannot limit their activities to providing information or helping citizens under these circumstances. Considerable attention is devoted to maintaining order. In some cases, the police must even engage in 'social recovery', ensuring the availability of sufficient personnel in the community, tolerating no violations of legal regulations ('zero tolerance') and leaving no room for ambiguity regarding who is in charge in the public spaces. These communities are also characterised by situations in which the police would not hesitate to apply their monopoly on violence (e.g. responding to rioters, disbanding criminal organisations or arresting suspects). These situations illustrate that the various facets of police activity (investigation, enforcement, assistance and information) are distributed unevenly across neighbourhoods and citizens. The more severely the legal, social and moral order is damaged, the heavier are the resources that are applied by the police. Although this conclusion is not very remarkable, it is important to state in order to dispel any illusion that the police should act the same way under all circumstances.

#### *The eyes and ears of the police*

While most of the studies we address concern the functioning of the police in disadvantaged communities, one aspect is relevant for all

communities: the role that citizens play (or can play) in gathering and relaying reports, particularly those regarding crimes in progress. Results of one study show that the vast majority of all arrests are made as a result of such reports, accounting for between 80 and 90 per cent in some regions. We also know that a considerable number of citizens have been witness to a crime (approximately 1 in every 5 Dutch people, or 2.6 million citizens each year). Approximately half of these citizens were witness to multiple incidents. The actual total of all crimes observed by citizens is 4.6 million each year. Although citizens report only 0.6 million crimes each year, this is still a substantial number, and these reports are of considerable assistance to the police. It would therefore not be an exaggeration to state that, in most cases, citizens act as the eyes and ears of the police. At the same time, it is clear that the current reporting system does not always function as it should. Far from all of the observations made by citizens are processed by the police in an effective manner. For example, the alarm number (112) is only rarely used for reporting crimes. Most people in the Netherlands appear to think that the slogan for 112 ('When every second counts') refers only to life-threatening situations. In reality, every second counts just as much regarding reports of crime caught in the act: the more quickly the police are notified of a crime, the greater is the chance that the perpetrator can be arrested. In this respect, the use of 112 has considerable potential for improvement. A campaign has also been proposed to make it clear that the public truly does play a role of great importance. Citizens should be less reserved about calling 112, but they should also be aware of the type of information that is useful. For example, it could make a major difference for callers to be able to describe the appearance of perpetrators, their vehicles or the direction in which they have fled.

Such a campaign would assist the police in two ways. First, it would increase the chances of catching the perpetrator and strengthen the investigation. On average, only 6 of every 100 crimes are ever solved. Although this percentage is higher in serious cases, it is important to note that such crimes are much less common. The percentage of crimes that are solved would be likely to increase considerably if citizens were to relay their observations to the police more frequently and if the police would improve the manner in which they process these observations. The latter is necessary, as the campaign could otherwise generate both a higher number of reports and a higher level of dissatisfaction amongst

citizens. This is currently a precarious matter, as far from all citizens who make reports are satisfied with the way in which the police react. The average level of satisfaction among citizens who do not make reports is greater than it is among citizens who do report crimes. This difference can be partly explained by the type of reports that are made. Reports made by crime victims are more likely to lead to dissatisfaction, as victims are more likely to feel that little is being done about their complaints. The reverse is true of reports made by people who have witnessed crimes, who could be acting more out of a sense of civic duty than out of self-interest. In general, these informants are more often satisfied with the reactions of the police. Aside from this difference, the studies mentioned here also show that most citizens are satisfied if they are called back after they have made a report. This type of follow-up requires little effort on the part of the police, but it has a major effect. It greatly increases the likelihood that this citizen will provide information again should the situation arise. In contrast, people who make reports and hear nothing easily lose their trust in the police. This situation should always be avoided.

#### *Accessibility and visibility*

Despite the continued importance of reports made by telephone or internet, the police should be on the streets even more often in specific neighbourhoods. This is particularly true in areas in which citizens are troubled by major disadvantages. Results from the studies that have been conducted on this type of neighbourhood show that many residents would like for the police to be more visible on the streets. They would like for the police to patrol more, and they tend to feel that community officers should not be too soft in their actions. They are particularly likely to think that the police should respond when situations truly threaten to explode. Not all residents have had the same experiences in this regard. Some tend to exaggerate the events that they report out of fear that the police will not respond adequately. Others keep their reports short and businesslike in the confidence that the police know what they need to do. A remarkably high number of shopkeepers are among those who do not feel that the police respond well. They tend to be bothered by drug users, aggressive customers or loitering youths, and they would like for the community officer to come immediately after they have called. They

feel that their personal safety is being threatened, and they are sensitive to the negative reputations of their neighbourhoods and their potentially negative effects in terms of their turnover. This can explain their irritation when the police fail to act quickly enough. Ordinary citizens are likely to be affected by other things. For example, they could be annoyed by officers who remain in their vehicles without making contact with the public, by 'bicycle cops' riding through the neighbourhood or by the attitude of officers walking the streets in pairs. It is tempting to write off these types of dissatisfaction as a matter of taste or subjective preference. They do make clear, however, that community residents do sometimes hold to fairly explicit perceptions and expectations that partly determine the way in which they view the police. It would not be a bad thing for community officers to be more aware of the way in which public perceptions take shape. They would be wise to take into account the theatrical aspects of maintaining the public order. Compared to other countries, the police in the Netherlands could stand to pay more attention to their 'public performance'.

In addition to their authority on the street, the police should improve their availability. This problem is particularly relevant in disadvantaged communities, as residents are not necessarily comfortable with modern communication. This was illustrated by the situation in Amsterdam where, at one point, a single central number was introduced for the entire city. This development was obviously premised on improving efficiency. In the Indische Buurt ('Indian District') and similar communities, however, the central number created a number of problems. For example, the residents could not express themselves well in Dutch, and older residents referred to details in locations that were familiar to them, without realising that the operators had only a global idea of the area. In other examples, residents called with vague reports, only to be transferred endlessly within the system. It is therefore not surprising that these residents longed to return to the time in which they could just show up at the community posts in their own neighbourhoods. In more general terms, such forward-operating bases do seem to respond to a need amongst citizens, who fear that the police will retreat out of their communities. They thus consider it highly important to be able to contact their own community officers directly. They also expect these officers to listen when residents come to them with certain problems. Once communication takes on an impersonal or more indirect character, the

public's trust in the police can come under pressure. The conclusion that the police should seek contact with citizens who have called after reports have been made applies extra strongly in this context, as there is often an ambivalent attitude towards the government in these neighbourhoods. For this reason, police official and other public servants would do well to show that they are there for the citizens.

### *Contact with ethnic minority groups*

The discussion above should not be used to conclude that community officers do not perform adequately in the eyes of the public. On the contrary, the image of community officers is generally very positive, as observed above. Officers notice this as well, as when they refer to the strong reputation of neighbourhood directors and the fact that they are admired by many residents. From the other side, it is difficult to meet the often high expectations held by all of the residents. As shown in the sections above, community officers have a wide spectrum of activities and they are approached by highly varied groups. They are there for the residents and local business owners, but they are also there to provide recommendations to the housing corporation, to provide services with information about particular youths or youngsters or to help social services resolve conflicts with particular clients. This is not to mention the many questions that they receive from their own organisations. It is not surprising that community officers sometimes feel as if they are being flooded with an endless stream of requests. They are under constant pressure to meet all of the expectations of colleagues and the outside world. They complain about the fact that their activities are dictated by the latest trends or that they never have the chance to get around to their actual jobs. Despite the importance of the principle of knowing and being known, it also involves an inherent risk of overburdening the police. It is not without cause that some officers are not available outside of their normal working hours. Before they know it, they could be completely swallowed up by their work. For this reason, it is also important to have what it takes to do this type of work. For example, community officers should be able to shift gears very quickly. One moment, they could be helping vulnerable citizens, and the next they could be tackling a violent offender. They should have the necessary empathetic skills, but they

should also be able to give an unshakeable 'no' from time to time. In short, the job is as difficult as it is attractive, and it is more appropriate for the more experienced and more socially oriented police employees than it is for young novices with hardly any experience.

Even more experienced community officers sometimes encounter problems that they cannot resolve, as in the context of relating to ethnic minorities. Most of the studies show that the networks of native Dutch community officers are relatively one-sided. The contacts are often limited to older white males who are involved in their communities. This is true even in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which are characterised by a relatively large number of young ethnic-minority residents. Although the police in the Netherlands do maintain contact with a number of immigrants, such contacts do not always constitute a strong network. It is helpful when the officers themselves are of minority background, although such officers are still in short supply. In many places, it is difficult for the police to develop relationships with certain ethnic groups or their informal leaders. Nonetheless, these relationships have crucial meaning. Some of these groups close themselves off from the police, possibly motivated by bad memories of the brutal actions of the police in their home countries. They do not wish any external meddling; they do not want any problems within their own groups, and they do not like to press charges. This defensive attitude can also be observed amongst some young people of minority background. A number of them give little heed to the police, or they dare community officers to act with more force, knowing that the Dutch police prefer not to do so. Others may play a cat-and-mouse game with local authorities in order to see how far they can go. In some neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, groups of young people even see the police as the enemy. Under these circumstances, it is impossible to work as a community officer. Everything that the Dutch police propose to do with regard to their dealings with ordinary citizens appears to have a negative effect on these youths. A similar mistrust plays a role in problem communities that are populated by a large native Dutch underclass. The underlying problem is not the ethnicity of particular groups but their inadequate loyalty to the rule of law in the Netherlands. The reinforcement of this loyalty could be one of the 'educational' elements in the work of community officers.

### *Participation opportunities for citizens*

There are also citizens at the other end of the spectrum in the sense that they have a high degree of involvement in the happenings of their communities. For example, they may be active in residents' committees or participate frequently in neighbourhood meetings, thereby easily coming into contact with the police. Many community officers attend this type of meeting, in uniform in order to show that they can be approached in their professional capacity. Visits to neighbourhood councils or residents' committees allow them to relay certain information from the police to the population. Nonetheless, many officers do not have a positive opinion of such visits. First, they consider these platforms insufficiently representative. They encounter primarily the well-known older white males, and it is not always clear that they are speaking for the neighbourhood or for themselves. Second, the meetings are usually boring, characterised by the endless repetition of a variety of details. For these reasons, some officers attend only a part of such meetings. They make a conscious point of arriving at moments at which 'their' problems are being addressed, so that they can get away quickly thereafter. Visits to this type of meetings cost considerable time and sometimes offer little in return. The most prominent reason that officers attend them anyway is that they provide a relatively easy opportunity to hear what is going on. Community officers sometimes use these meetings to try to explain to residents the choices that the police have made or their own priorities. In most cases, however, the information that flows from the police to residents is much more limited than is the information that flows from residents to the police. The attendance of community officers at these meetings is actually little more than a form of information gathering – although they are useful and even necessary, they show little of the reciprocity that should characterise the relationship between the police and citizens.

This is particularly regrettable, as citizens themselves hold to a different view. They would prefer to play a more active role in the local public safety and security policy. They would like to work with officials to consider ways of addressing problems in their neighbourhoods, and they are willing to invest time and effort to this end. Many community residents are not satisfied with the indirect character of the decision-making process. Once every four years, they participate in elections and

must then wait and see whether the representatives elected to the city council actually do act in their interest. Even when these representatives do so, it is far from certain that the most urgent problems will be addressed. After all, the implementation of the public safety and security policy is a matter for the municipal executive board. Particularly in large cities, residents perceive considerable distance between the executive body and the local issues. They try to gain additional influence through the community council. When the community council itself has become a part of the status quo, they try to represent their interests by forming action committees. Residents are usually quite willing to participate in surveys, citizen panels or similar activities. It is therefore appropriate to wonder whether the police have the appropriate attitude towards these citizens. In fact, they are leaving a broad reservoir of potential partners untouched. It is understandable that many community officers are not eager to give citizens more influence in the area of public safety, their schedules are busy enough after all. Nonetheless, active reciprocity is accompanied by new opportunities that do not complicate but actually help the work of the police. Experiences from the United States show that these arenas offer more potential than can currently be observed in practices in the Netherlands.

### *Activating citizens in disadvantaged communities*

These opportunities primarily involve the support of active citizens. It is important to realise that every neighbourhood has residents who are willing to get involved. Although they constitute a minority and are not always representative of the entire population, these citizens can play a constructive role. They are concerned about such matters as crime, nuisance or anti-social behaviour. Although they would like the police to do something about these problems, they would also like to address these issues themselves. They are 'doers', who feel that official agencies operate in a far too bureaucratic manner. They prefer an assertive approach. They would like to contribute to a more liveable environment, and they hope that their efforts will be appreciated. On the latter point, they are, however, likely to be disappointed. Their efforts are in conflict with the usual manner in which most governments solve problems, which is characterised by two prominent features. First, the government



is primarily interested in short-term projects. Although they may be willing to offer support for citizen initiatives, such support is of limited duration. One consequence is that many projects designed to support active citizens are discontinued after only a few years. In many cases, this can have disastrous effects, as it can cause residents to feel abandoned by the government, making them reluctant to take the initiative in subsequent opportunities. Second, governments often conceive their own solutions and then present them to citizens. This can have equally disastrous results; solving problems from the outside prevents the emergence of a sense of connection within the neighbourhood. Although this sense of connection does exist in many cases, it eventually becomes stranded under a flood of bureaucratic procedures and professional considerations. In both cases, the professionals, the government or both present a vote of no confidence; they do not actually believe that citizens are capable of working towards public safety in their environments, or they accept the efforts of citizens only if they comply with the conditions that they have established.

Experiences in the United States have shown that another way is possible. One specific example involves the type of cooperation with citizens that has been practiced in Chicago for more than fifteen years. In this city, community meetings are held each month in which issues of public safety are discussed by the police, community residents and development workers. Although the citizens who participate in these meetings do not comprise an accurate reflection of the entire neighbourhood, they do contribute information. One decisive feature of this system is that it involves long-term cooperation, which allows sufficient trust to emerge between all of the parties involved. Another point is that the residents have a true voice: police and development workers take the preferences and ideas of citizens into serious consideration. A similar working method is conceivable for the Netherlands. It would involve establishing a permanent cooperation between the police and other professionals who have set the goal for themselves to provide active assistance to residents, in both words and action. The professionals involved should act decisively, but with the primary purpose of reinforcing the residents in their efforts for the community, and not with the goal of furthering their own professional interests. The police play a crucial role within this type of cooperation. They should develop a bond of trust with active citizens; they should be permanently visible,

accessible and approachable; they should act decisively with regard to problems in the area of public safety, but they should also attribute just as much value to the initiatives that residents develop themselves. More specific examples could include the formation of a 'community quartet', in which professionals from the police, development workers and the housing corporation cooperate with the community manager to address important problems. In the process, however, the development of a gap between this quartet and the local population should be avoided at all costs. The cooperation of these professionals makes sense only if they are successful in reinforcing active citizenship amongst neighbourhood residents.

## In conclusion

### INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY

In the previous section, we considered the manner in which the police react to their own environment. This discussion largely concerned community residents and other local partners. The police also relate to society as a whole, however, as well as to public agencies that are at a greater distance. This involves another type of interaction, as discussed in this section.

#### *The police and legitimacy*

We begin with a general question regarding the roots of the legitimacy of police action. Why should public servants be allowed to use force against citizens, and in what way can they account for their actions? This point is best clarified by looking to the past. Because the police fulfil a crucial role in the rule of law in the Netherlands, it is inevitable that the various steps in the process of state formation are reproduced throughout their operations. Four phases can be distinguished.

The first phase stems from the 19th century, when the government had little or no involvement in society. It nonetheless decreed a number of elementary laws and ensured that the public obeyed them. When necessary, the police were expected to use violence to enforce this obedience. This phase reflects an old and elementary task of the police: the exercise of physical force in order to protect the rule of law. It is expressed primarily in the prosecution and imprisonment of criminals. The next step lasted until the end of the Second World War. In this period, the government no longer limited itself to legislation, shifting its focus to ensuring additional social justice. The tasks of the police were thus expanded: in addition to catching crooks, the police were expected to maintain the public order. Among the implications of this shift was that they fulfilled a neutral role in social conflicts. The third step comprises the period between the Second World War and the 1970s. Many regulations appeared within the framework of the welfare state to

assist citizens in the case of unemployment, illness, old age and other setbacks (financial or otherwise). In the extension of this development, the police acquired a new task. They were expected – more strongly than in the past – to help citizens in emergency situations and to develop forms of social services. Finally, beginning in the 1970s, citizens have more often expressed the desire to have a stronger voice in policy. They demand openness regarding the affair of the state, and they request attention to their own ideas. Citizen pressure received strong support from the new information technologies emerging on the market. As a result, the tasks of the police were extended once again: they acquired additional tasks in the area of information and were expected to provide recommendations to the government (local, regional and national).

The tasks that are summarised in the 1993 Police Act are thus rooted in history. Criminal investigation, enforcement, assistance and advice reflect the development of the rule of law in the Netherlands over the past 150 years. To illustrate, one of the studies we address used the image of sedimentation: these four tasks can be interpreted as ‘layers’ that emerged at different times but are all still present. This image is also important with regard to the legitimacy of the police. This legitimacy cannot be reduced to only one of these four layers. If the police were to be involved exclusively in investigating crime and pay no attention to providing assistance or maintaining the public order, they would have no authority at all. This would obviously also be the case if they were to provide assistance but do nothing in the area of investigation. In other words, legitimacy emerges only when the repressive, normative, responsive and informative components of police activity are combined appropriately. This does not simplify the job. In practice, a balance must always be sought in which one of the components is strongly present without factoring any of the others completely out of the equation. For this reason, the activities of individual officers must be in balance with the functioning of the police organisation as a whole. Local circumstances play a major role in the determination of this balance, particularly with regard to individual officials. This is never the only consideration, however, as the presence of sufficient legitimacy for police activity is also dependent upon social considerations. The public expectations, public administrative procedures, media operations and other such matters play a role in this regard.

### *Trust in the public*

It is common knowledge that feelings of insecurity amongst citizens are not only dependent upon crime in the objective sense. These feelings are just as related to such factors as age, lifestyle, media usage and earlier experiences. Less familiar is the fact that this applies to trust in the police as well. The proponents of business-like practice are fond of proposing that the trust of citizens is determined by the performance that the police deliver. They are thus also in favour of measuring and increasing such achievements. It is highly debatable, however, whether such a relationship actually exists. Research shows that more than 70 per cent of the population in the Netherlands trusts the police, and this percentage tends to remain reasonably constant. Although the share has fluctuated over the years, it shows no structural decline. Furthermore, the police enjoy more trust than do other institutions, including the House of Representatives, the church or the media. Moreover, the police in the Netherlands do not perform poorly in comparison to other countries. Although trust is higher in some countries (nearly 90% in Denmark and Germany), it can also be much lower. In general, there is little reason for pessimism in this area. We undoubtedly belong to the group of countries that are described as ‘high-trust societies’: countries in which citizens trust each other, where there is little corruption, where there is a healthy economy and where democratic traditions have firm roots. In geographic terms, most of these countries are located in north-western Europe. They have fewer problems with situations that are commonly found in south-eastern Europe, where society is more strongly characterised by poverty, corruption, authoritarian relationships and mutual distrust. These conditions produce another type of police, as illustrated by the histories of Greece, Romania and Turkey. In comparison with these countries, the Netherlands has reason to be relatively satisfied.

Nonetheless, there is something remarkable at hand. Even though trust in the police is relatively stable and high, it appears to be impaired whenever citizens actually come into contact with police officers. Contacts with the police sometimes have unfavourable outcomes. Moreover, such contacts do not always have the same effect. When contact with the police proceeds smoothly, the trust of citizens is not enhanced. When contact is negative, however, many citizens lose their trust in the police. The latter can also result from other factors. For example, many people

may be confronted with a negative story about the police. Living in one of the four largest cities can also play a role, as can a generally negative opinion of social development. In general, a portion of the population is quickly discouraged. It takes only a minor incident to make them express their disappointment. This attitude is certainly not shared by everyone. A portion of the population is quite positive about the police. This has little to do with the achievement of good results. It would be wise for the police to take this into consideration. They should exercise caution with the portion of the Dutch public that allow themselves to be discouraged by minor setbacks. They should certainly not pursue these citizens too vigorously in the hope that they will change their opinion in light of the achievement of particular targets. The group of citizens that do already trust the police is large enough to render such an effort redundant.

#### *Stricter enforcement*

The indications given by the public should not be taken lightly. Certain shifts do indeed have social significance, as was the case with the increasing demand for stricter enforcement that developed in the 1990s. Various observers feel that the police had previously paid insufficient attention to maintaining order. The general opinion was that they had presented themselves too much as social workers, had adopted an overly soft attitude or had been too eager to go along with the culture of tolerance that has characterised the Netherlands since the 1960s. An additional factor could have been that the police themselves attached considerable value to social service and wished to distance themselves from the authoritarian element that had long coloured their activities. Be that as it may, around the turn of the century, a process was set in motion in which the exercise of authority, public decency, codes of conduct, social norms and similar matters once again acquired a positive connotation. The Dutch police had to go along, with the consequence that the officers of today are much stricter in the exercise of their activities than their counterparts were one or two decades ago. In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, one warning is enough; those who do not obey risk losing their freedom or possessions. Activities are equally thorough with regard to dealing with marijuana-growing operations: a raid is immediately followed by dismantling and pressing charges. There

is no room for negotiation when citations are being issued. In many places, young people are asked to present identification at the slightest provocation.

Although claims are occasionally heard that the police place excessive emphasis on repression, the majority of the population is less concerned with this. Many people are even calling for an even tougher approach to anti-social youths or people who show too little concern for their fellow citizens. It is interesting to note that it is always the so-called other who is said to be acting anti-socially. Upon receiving a citation, most citizens immediately question the priorities of the police. It is apparently not easy for people to admit that they sometimes make mistakes. This goes to show that there is still room for improvement. There is even reason to argue that the police should expand its role as educator (as discussed earlier in connection with disadvantaged neighbourhoods). Mutual agitation between citizens is likely to continue to increase, for a variety of reasons. Both spatial and social mobility have increased dramatically, as have differences in culture and lifestyle. Those who interact in society are in a great hurry, and they are less willing or less able to take others into consideration than they were in the past. If these tendencies continue, the chance of conflict or tension will only increase. The outcome could be that people will become less tolerant of deviant behaviour. This already seems to be taking place in the Netherlands, and it is worthy of note that this tendency has been observed in other North-West European countries as well. It is becoming evident in various ways, including the heated debate over citizens of foreign origin. The police are faced with the question of how they will work within the context of these tensions. Should they indeed adopt an educational role? How can they maintain peace within society? These are difficult questions that merely underscore the ongoing changes that are taking place with regard to the legitimacy of police activity. The balance between the repressive and responsive elements should be re-considered continually, and the spirit of the times has a powerful voice in this process.

#### *Social integration*

While these questions can be answered in various ways, there is one condition that the police must always meet: there must be social

integration. A police system that focuses on only one of the actors and maintains insufficient contact with other parties will sooner or later be at the mercy of social tensions. There are major differences in this regard between the systems in the Netherlands and in France. The French police stand at a considerable distance from society. They are aware that they are part of a centrally controlled system that does not hesitate to use repressive resources in cases of social unrest. Community policing, community-oriented practice and similar approaches receive little support in France. The consequences became painfully obvious when massive riots broke out in the Parisian suburbs in late 2005. Although police intervention restored order to a certain extent, it was accompanied by enormous material and social damage. Such action would be considered to be unacceptable in the Netherlands, for two reasons. First, the police and the government do not wish to retreat from disadvantaged neighbourhoods on this scale. Second, the Dutch police would respond differently to any riots that might erupt. This could explain there has been no large-scale ethnic rioting in the Netherlands, despite increased tensions.<sup>4</sup> The police explicitly want to be present in the capillaries of society, and they do not want to take the side of one party in the conflict. They consider themselves a 'police for everyone'.

This principled choice obviously does not mean that everything is as it should be. The study of social integration within the police shows both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths include the fact that the police maintain little distance from the population in the Netherlands, that they consult with local government regularly, that they participate frequently in professional networks and that they are generally well informed about local issues. There are also clear weaknesses, and these deserve additional attention. First, municipalities interpret their function as director in the public safety and security policy in different ways. In some places, the municipal executive board maintains firm control while the city council is well informed, but this is not always the case. Second, major emphasis is often placed on the technical aspects of police work without arriving at a democratic exchange of ideas regarding matters of principle or social priorities. Third, despite the best of intentions, additional effort is needed with regard to relationships with citizens of foreign origin. There

<sup>4</sup> Adang, O., R. van der Wal en H. Quint (2010) *Zijn wij anders? Waarom Nederland geen grootschalige etnische rellen heeft*. Apeldoorn: Politieacademie.

are obviously two sides to this issue. Internally, the police force should strive to increase the share of employees with a foreign background. Externally, the police should increase and expand upon their contact with various ethnic groups. Fourth, the police should more frequently cooperate with those citizens or professionals who make a difference in local circumstances. This corresponds to the recommendation that was noted earlier in the discussion of support for active citizens. Fifth, the police should develop a better strategy towards the media. We will return to this last point shortly.

### *Multiple accountabilities*

It is necessary to note that the quest for strong social integration also has a darker side. This becomes apparent upon examining the manner in which the police in the Netherlands account for their actions. In essence, this takes place in two ways: 'vertical accountability' and 'horizontal accountability'. The difficulty, however, is that both forms can be broken down into a number of sub-processes, thus producing a highly complex whole.

In the vertical direction, four sub-processes play a role.

- 1) With regard to enforcing law and order, the police are directed by the Public Prosecutor.
- 2) The mayor is in charge whenever enforcement involves the public order.
- 3) The direction of business management is assigned to the police force manager (usually the mayor) and performed from a central location.
- 4) Administrative matters must be accounted to the executive body of the police force, which comprises all of the mayors within a police region.

We restricted this list to contacts between the police force and the closest authorities, as these actors must subsequently report to a number of authorities above them. For example, the Public Prosecutor reports to the Minister of Justice and, through this position, to the House of Representatives. The regional police force manager is accountable to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs, and so forth. The police

must also account for their activities in a horizontal direction. Four sub-processes play a role in this direction as well.

- 1) The police must deal with the manner in which ordinary citizens evaluate those actions.
- 2) They must be able to explain their performance to the various professionals that they encounter.
- 3) They should be attentive to the requirements of other organisations or institutions with which they have relationships.
- 4) They must be able to explain their performance to the broader public, while monitoring a number of symbolic or moral values.

The police should situational, professional, institutional and moral considerations that frequently are intertwined in the process.

It is not strange that tensions and even paradoxes regularly emerge in this complicated process. For example, citizens pay attention primarily to the question of whether individual officers adopt the right attitude. How were people treated? Was the current situation taken into account sufficiently? Was the reason for the action sufficiently clear? In other words, citizens form their judgments primarily according to situational logic. This is often in conflict with the institutional logic that confronts the municipality and other bodies. For the municipal executive board or city council, the police must answer largely different questions. To what extent were all of the administrative and legal conditions met? Was the action consistent with the policy of the local government? How do we feel about the costs of the action? In addition to the inherent complexity of the entire system, the incongruence between vertical and horizontal accountability appears to be growing. This is because a previously unheard of level of transparency has emerged in recent years. As soon as a particular incident occurs in District A or in Municipality B, it is reported in all media. In addition to description of the facts, such coverage addresses the question of how these facts should be evaluated, whether they are part of a trend, which measures are needed and who should be approached about them. The media then produce an extra edition, questions are asked in the parliament and the Minister formulates a number of policy resolutions. This can create a large gap between an event that started as a local difficulty and the issue that later heads the political agenda as a serious social problem. Charting the proper course that will avoid both the Scylla of reassurance ('keeping the issue under

wraps') and the Charybdis of indignation ('exaggerating the issue') is not an easy task for the police.

### *Communication and media*

This brings us to the last way in which the police communicates with the society around them. How do they relate to the media and processes of public opinion formation? Results from all of the studies we address indicate that this relation is quite troublesome. Nearly everyone is convinced of the need to improve external communications. Most community officers do occasionally write articles for the local newspaper or make statements at public meetings, but their public performance is generally seen as weak, and officers tend to share this opinion. They regularly complain that the media portray them in an overly negative manner, and they would like to see more attention being paid to the positive developments in the area of public safety. This is true of individual community officers, as well as the entire police organisation. The events in Ondiep provide a striking example. While the actions of the police were relatively successful, the image in the media was predominantly negative. This was disturbing to the community residents, the police and the local government. All of these parties felt that the media were trying to create sensational news through only seemingly serious reporting. Partly for this reason, various community residents refused to talk to the media. This was also the reason why the local triangle (i.e. the police, the Public Prosecution Service and the local government) decided to open its own channel to the public after a time. For example, the residents received various letters explaining the background of the actions of the police. The extent to which these accusations of the media were justified, however, is open to debate. In fact, a remarkable shift emerged from the reports regarding Ondiep. Although the media had initially focused on rioters and unrest, they later delved more deeply into the social background of the events. In this way, Ondiep underwent a complete metamorphosis in the public perception: what began as a stage for violent public disturbances ultimately proved an ordinary working-class community with problems that ought to be addressed in a serious manner.

This example illustrates that the police are far from where they should be with regard to public image-formation. In Utrecht, the agendas of local authorities bore hardly any resemblance to those of the media. Only on one point did the police and the municipality have success in directing the reporting: when they invoked the image that the unrest could have been caused by rioters from outside. This image allowed the hermetic closure of Ondiep to be presented as an attempt to protect the community from foreign troublemakers. To date, however, it is not clear whether the invocation of this image was a conscious decision or a lucky coincidence. In more general terms, it could be argued that the police should be much more conscious in the way they deal with image-formation in two respects. First, the police should develop a professional communication policy. The activities of the information division often have the wrong effect, due to their strong focus on management and control. Direct contact between operational police officials and journalists would be more productive. The police should realise, however, that journalists have their own agenda and professional considerations. There is room for improvement in this respect, for the police force as a whole, as well as for the performance of individual officers. Second, there should be less emphasis on numerical and statistical information. It is frequently said that we are living in a visual culture. In practice, however, the police tend to deal with visual images in a rather amateurish manner. There is room for a world of improvement with regard to the presentation of police activities. The public is more sensitive to imagery than it is to quantifiable performance agreements. This is an important point to remember if the goal is to reduce the feeling of insecurity in the Netherlands.

### *In Closing*

The preceding discussion shows that community policing is a multidimensional concept. Many of the dimensions have been addressed in this book, drawing upon the work of various researchers in the past five years. We have paid considerable attention to area-based practices and the acting of community officers. Nevertheless, as the entire complex of underlying studies shows, good policing – whether it is performed by community officers or by community teams – depends upon the link between two primary building blocks: the ability to show

empathy and the ability to enforce. It is thus necessary to understand the feelings that exist within the community and amongst those involved. But it is also necessary to set boundaries and take strong action whenever needed. Our hope is that this volume will contribute to the professional development of the police in the Netherlands and of all who have a heart for police science.

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Berust op een brochure die in 2007 werd geschreven door Peter van Os en Angélique van Campen. De volledige titel luidt *Programmasturing. Een overzicht van praktijken en denkbeelden* (Apeldoorn: Politieacademie)

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### More information

[monique.wiltink@politieacademie.nl](mailto:monique.wiltink@politieacademie.nl)

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