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## Evaluating Community Policing in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>

In this article we shall present an overview of research in the field of community policing in the Netherlands. Before we go into the problems of establishing the impact of community policing, we shall describe the organisation of the Dutch police system. Without at least some knowledge of the system, it is hard to follow the developments that have taken place over the last decades. After that we shall discuss the developments in community policing in the Netherlands and its current state as to, for instance, how it is organised. Next we shall look into the research that has been carried out to try and measure the results of different versions of community policing in terms of internal and external effects. The significance of the results and indicators of efficacy, as well as the current developments of community policing will be discussed in the last section.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As in several other European countries, community policing has become a leading concept in policing in the Netherlands. Without exception, all 25 regional police forces in this country have implemented some kind of community policing. No chief constable seriously questions the existence of community policing in his or her force at this moment. This does not mean, however, that community policing is functioning without debate. On the contrary, there is much discussion regarding, for

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1. This article is a result of the Dutch contribution to the project ‘Finding a common evaluation methodology of the impact of community policing reforms in Europe’ undertaken by the European Commission within the scope of the OISIN 2 Program.

instance, the effectiveness of community policing and the role that community officers should play. For many years, these discussions were focussed on the question of how to improve community policing. But the last couple of years the topic has changed. It now concerns the question of whether community policing will 'survive' in the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup> This change is mainly due to the fact that in recent years in the area of public safety in the Netherlands the emphasis has shifted from preventive policing strategies to repressive and disciplinary ones. As far as the present central government is concerned, the police should move away from prevention and conflict resolution into the direction of apprehension and detention programs, zero tolerance and other hard-line strategies, preferably with measurable results. The 'hard-liners' consider community policing to be too soft and no longer an adequate answer to society's needs. The opposing positions between 'believers' and 'critics' of community policing has stimulated research into the results of community policing in order to find out whether or not it is an effective strategy to improve social safety.

During the long history of community policing in the Netherlands, research usually focussed on definitions of community policing, on how it was implemented, organised and put into practice. Also, attention has been paid to the place of community police officers in the organisation, their task, their relation to other departments in the force, their relation with external partners, et cetera.<sup>3</sup> Studying the effects of community policing on the level of crime and feelings of insecurity received less attention, not least because it has turned out to be very difficult. The relation between the means (community policing strategies) and the goals (a drop in crime rates and an improvement in feelings of security) is very complex.<sup>4</sup> This is made even more complicated by the fact that both community policing and its objectives are often defined in abstract and imprecise ways, so much that it has been suggested that community policing should not even be tested.

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2. This discussion does not only take place in the field of community policing. A comparable system exists in the field of the public prosecution (entitled 'Justice in the neighbourhood'). The Minister of Justice has proposed to skip this system due to budgetary constraints. At this moment the Minister is in debate with Parliament who strongly emphasised the importance of 'Justice in the neighbourhood'.
  3. R.J. Beumer, M.J.B. Kavelaars and M. Kruissink, *Gebiedsgebonden politiewerk; een verkenning* (The Hague 1997). P. Klerks and O.J. Zoomer, *Gebiedsgebonden politiezorg; basis voor vernieuwing?* (The Hague 1997). O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts and C.D. van der Vijver, *De gebiedsgebonden zorg als uitdaging* (The Hague 2002).

## 2. THE POLICE IN THE NETHERLANDS

Policing in the Netherlands has been primarily a local affair since the beginning of the nineteenth century. In each municipality the mayor is responsible for public order and he controls or, as it is usually said, he has 'authority over' the police in his municipality as far as public order is concerned. Apart from the mayor, there is another official who has authority over the police. As in most other European countries, the public prosecutor is responsible for upholding the penal law and he is in charge of the police as far as the process of law enforcement is concerned. The mayor is responsible to the elected community council for his policy in the field of public order, whereas the public prosecutor is (through the hierarchical organisation of the Prosecution Council) controlled by the Minister of Justice, who is answerable to the national parliament for his policy.

Since maintaining public order and law enforcement often coincide, the mayor and the public prosecutor have to co-operate when executing their authority over the police. Together with the local police chief, this takes place in the so-called *tri-partite consultation*. This consultation should be seen as the policy-defining 'body' for the police at the local level.

It is however not just the *authority* over the police which has had strong local ties for a long period of time. In the period from the Second World War until the beginning of the 1990s, the local orientation of the police was underlined by the fact that municipalities with a population of 25,000 inhabitants or over<sup>5</sup> had their own police force (smaller municipalities were policed by the State Police). This meant that the *administration* of the local police organisation was also in the hands of the mayor.<sup>6</sup>

When looking at the history of policing in the Netherlands, it is obvious that the role of central government has of old been quite limited; the powers of both the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Justice were, as it is usually said, 'at a distance'. For instance, when problems in the field of public order are too big to be dealt with by individual mayors, the Minister of Home Affairs can centralise the authority over

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4. W. Broer, C.C. Schreuder and C.D. van der Vijver, *Eindbalans organisatieverandering politie Haarlem. Resultaten na drie jaar werken met wijkteams* (The Hague 1987) pp. 48-49. O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts en C.D. van der Vijver, *op. cit.* pp. 102-104.

5. Later this changed into 40,000, since too many new municipal (and expensive) police forces had to be founded. And shortly after that, it was forbidden altogether to found new forces – a couple of years later (in 1993) the system of regional police forces was introduced.

6. The fact that smaller municipalities were served by the State Police did not interfere with the authority over the police. Mayor and public prosecutor also had the authority over the State Police in 'their' territory.

the police. Apart from that, certain administrative matters are dealt with at the national level, such as establishing police strength, wages, weapons and uniform.<sup>7</sup>

This system changed substantially with the Police Act of 1993, which made an end to the division of the police into state police and municipal police. Since April 1994 the police are organised in 25 regional police forces. This implied a substantial organisational and functional concentration and centralisation of power. Nevertheless, there was no fundamental break with the past, in the sense that the authority is still in the hands of mayors and public prosecutors. The regional forces are independent legal entities that can still decide many things without interference from central government. The mayors and the public prosecutors still play a role of considerable importance although, due to the centralisation, their room for decision-making has become smaller. And their power is expected to diminish further in the years to come.<sup>8</sup> Nowadays, the Ministers of Home Affairs and of Justice formulate goals for the police at national level and, starting in 2003, management contracts between both ministers and the forces have been formulated. These contracts prescribe what activities the police are supposed to fulfil and what goals are to be reached.

The history of the police clearly shows that, although decentralised power has diminished over recent years, the origin of policing is to a large extent locally oriented. As a result of this orientation, developments in policing in the Netherlands have always shown a picture of *diversity*. Each municipality was, for instance, free to implement policing strategies in whatever form and within whatever context they chose. This also holds true for community policing. As a consequence, different kinds of community policing have developed. On the one hand chief constables and mayors are eager to learn from their colleagues and borrow their ideas when they come up with something new that is clever or challenging. On the other hand, they never want to *copy* those ideas identically because, as they argue, circumstances in their own municipality are 'always different from those elsewhere'. This means that general trends are easy to distinguish, but there are substantial differences in the developments of community policing between the police forces. As we will show later, there is no single form of community policing which prevails. Or, to put it another way, the way community policing is put into practice is still being developed. A 'definite state' of community policing, that is generally considered the best way to organise it, does not exist. Due to changes in the problem of crime, the needs of society, and organisational possibilities, each police force keeps on adapting to the changing external and internal conditions.

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7. Police have always been paid from the national budget. Municipalities having a municipal police force received an annual remittance from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

8. Many foresee the end of the system of multiple police forces and expect that the Netherlands will have a national police in the near future.

### 3. A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF COMMUNITY POLICING

#### 3.1. Beat constables

The history of community policing in the Netherlands shows three distinguishable types. Shortly after the Second World War police forces started implementing a system of *beat-constables*, and during the sixties and the seventies this spread relatively quickly. In 1977, some 50% of all police forces had a system of beat constables in some form or another.<sup>9</sup> Beat constables were police officers who worked alone in their neighbourhood, without any duties in the field of reactive patrol and criminal investigation. Their tasks were conflict resolution, being the ‘ears and eyes’ for the rest of the organisation, controlling public order, solving problems that might otherwise get out of hand, prevention, et cetera. Maintaining the law was a part of their task but it was not emphasised and in the case of a criminal incident mediation was often considered a more appropriate answer than repressive action. Beat constables usually were not particularly enthusiastic about the repressive aspect of their task but their superiors wanted them to play a role in repressive strategies such as writing tickets or passing information to the criminal investigation department (CID). Apart from the beat constable, the uniformed branch in the sixties and the seventies of the last century consisted of reactive patrol (police officers with the responsibility to respond to calls for service), and preventive patrol, meaning that police officers could be deployed on the basis of a project or a problem-oriented approach.

#### 3.2. Neighbourhood team policing

The system of beat-constables was a type of community oriented policing that was restricted to one specific function – the rest of the organisation was not affected. This was different with the introduction of the *neighbourhood teams* in the beginning of the eighties. The neighbourhood team system was introduced in the Netherlands in 1977 by the Project Group on Organisational Structures (POS) in their report ‘A changing police’.<sup>10</sup> It was put forward as a new concept – or a new paradigm – of policing that had to replace the much-criticised traditional bureaucratic police system. The ‘traditional’ police system (beat constable, preventive patrol, reactive patrol and criminal investigation department) showed ‘too many different faces’ to the public and was too bureaucratic and too ‘unfriendly’ to the citizen.

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9. Centrale Politie Surveillance Commissie, *De wijkagent bij de Nederlandse politie* (The Hague 1979).

10. Projectgroep Organisatie Structuren *Politie in Verandering* (The Hague 1977).

Neighbourhood teams were intended to change this. These teams were primarily meant to improve police legitimacy. The POS expected that performing the police function closer to the public and from a client-centred orientation would lead to a higher level of satisfaction and to a better understanding of the police by citizens. This should, according to the views of the POS, lead to a higher level of police legitimacy.<sup>11</sup>

How should these neighbourhood teams reach those goals? These teams are responsible for all daily police work in a relatively small area on a 24-hour basis. Citizens should turn to their own team for all routine police matters, be it calls for service, criminal investigation or social problems. The team had to patrol their area preventively, be it by car, bicycle or on foot. Every police officer was to be trained to do all police work: criminal investigation, mediation, upholding the law, conflict resolution, responding to calls for service, etc. This was defined as *task integration*. In order to make this task integration possible, an *organisational integration* was required: the criminal investigation department, the uniform branch and several smaller departments of the police amalgamated to a large extent into one kind of organisation: the neighbourhood team where all police personnel would perform the same job. Neighbourhood teams should consist of some 20-30 police, in more complex and urban areas these teams would be increased 40-60 police and in very difficult areas even up to over 100.

Neighbourhood teams have been successfully introduced in some police forces, for instance in the cities of Haarlem and Amsterdam. Several other forces did not succeed because of implementation problems. Many other police forces at that time preferred a kind of neighbourhood team system with a lesser degree of 'integration', that is, more like a traditional police organisation with the existing specialisations. They opted, for instance, for some specialisation in the team or had the reactive patrol function separately organised. Usually these teams are called *basis police teams* and are not considered to be an example of community policing because they stick too close to 'traditional policing'.

### 3.3. Area-bound policing

The most recent development in community oriented policing is the introduction of the so-called *area bound police officer*. This 'system' started in the nineties. Like beat constables, area-bound police officers usually work alone in their neighbourhood, but

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11. It is most interesting to see nowadays, when rereading the reports of the POS, that effectiveness in crime control at that time did not play a substantial role in the discussions with regard to changing the police, and the fact that the reports were strongly police-centred: changing the police was expected to lead to a growth of legitimacy because citizens would recognise this as an improvement.

unlike beat constables, it is considered very important that they are well embedded in the force. Besides, they have a different responsibility. They are held responsible *for organising safety in their neighbourhood*, in co-operation with social partners and with the support of other departments in the force.

Area-bound policing has the same theoretical foundation as team policing and 'A changing police' was again the conceptual source. It was also partly a reaction to the reorganisation of the police into 25 regional forces in 1994 and a re-allocation of police strength to the effect that rural areas lost many officers to urban areas with more crime. The police had virtually disappeared from sight, also in urban areas where the anonymity of the police had already become a problem before the reorganisation of 1994.

Dissatisfaction amongst the public and local governments about the police being so 'far away', together with a growing political interest in social safety and quality of life in the neighbourhood and the development of a multi-agency approach to safety problems on a local level, made for a favourable social and political climate for police changes that were aimed at a more integrated position in society. Co-operation of the police with partners is an essential aspect in area-bound policing since safety is defined as 'a responsibility for us all'. Other organisations, institutions and individuals participate, such as housing authorities, social assistance organisations, entrepreneurs, shopping malls, volunteers, directors of schools, or pub owners.

Unlike the neighbourhood teams, area-bound policing became a nation-wide movement. Every force in the Netherlands has implemented some form of area-bound policing. Why did chief constables in forces with neighbourhood teams not adhere to the team approach and why did they opt for area-bound policing? The main disadvantage of neighbourhood teams turned out to be that task integration did not work out well. It was very difficult to have all police officers carrying out the same job. Many chief constables stated that at least some specialisation was required. As a consequence the teams developed in the direction of the traditional police organisation and the citizens suffered from the same disadvantages as in the old structure. With a mixture of teams and territory based individual police officers the advantages of the two earlier systems are preserved and disadvantages avoided.

#### 4. THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY POLICING

In the previous section, the three principal types of community oriented policing in the Netherlands have been described. By doing so, we have not answered the question what community policing actually is. In the Netherlands, as in the USA,<sup>12</sup> community

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12. See W.G. Skogan and S.M. Hartnett, *Community Policing, Chicago Style* (New York 1997).

policing has two conceptual versions; some see community policing as just one of the possible police strategies, but the prevailing opinion is that it is a fundamentally different concept of policing, a real paradigm shift and a break with traditional policing. Team-policing and area-bound policing were introduced as new paradigms, and in this respect they differed fundamentally from the beat constable system, in which community oriented policing was set apart as a function, performed only by the beat constable. In all-day reality of some forces however, the line between the beat constable on the one hand and neighbourhood teams and area-bound policing on the other hand, sometimes turns out to be less distinctive. For instance, area-bound police officers work also mainly alone in their neighbourhood, and the work they do often resembles to a certain extent the work of the traditional beat-constable. However, other forces have succeeded in developing the function of area-bound policing into a new kind of professionalism. In this profession, Beumer<sup>13</sup> defines the following elements as essential:

Community policing refers to both a strategic choice and its organisational form. It concerns basis policing tasks and takes place close to citizens, in a specific geographical area. It is carried out by individual police officers or permanent groups of police officers with individual responsibility. The main objective is to increase safety and liveability, and to achieve these objectives the community police officer has to know his or her neighbourhood and conversely must be known by the residents of that neighbourhood. That is to be realised by small-scale, community oriented policing. Community police officers are accessible, recognisable and individually responsible, and they take a problem-oriented approach. The community police officers are responsible for organising security in their neighbourhood, in co-operation with relevant external partners and officers in the force. Managers of teams, districts and the force are responsible for facilitating it.

In this description, there are three central aspects:

- A *geographical* aspect – the police work in small geographical areas, which requires a decentralized organisation;

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13. R.J. Beumer, M.J.B. Kavelaars and M. Kruissink., *op. cit.* pp. 22-23.



- An aspect of *proximity* – the physical and social distance between the police and the public should be small, the police should be seen and known by citizens, be available and approachable;
- An aspect of *commitment* – police officers should be committed to the residents and their problems, they should know what happens in their area, what problems are considered important by citizens, et cetera. This means a shift in the relation between the police and the public. Citizens are not just the informers, or the ‘eyes and ears’ of the police, neither are they only the ‘clients’ of the police whose needs have to be met by appropriate police actions. They are also partners of the police, with a responsibility in securing safety in their own neighbourhood.

In short, community policing in the Netherlands refers to a geographical small scale approach as well as to a specific way of working that differs from ‘traditional policing’ in that it is characterised by an emphasis on prevention and finding lasting solutions for existing problems, and in the fact that community police officers determine, on the basis of their knowledge of the neighbourhood, what police actions are to be taken and they work in close co-operation with social partners.

As far as the *goals* of the police are concerned, research in the Netherlands has not revealed any adaptations of the basic goals of policing. Community policing may be different from traditional policing, but the ultimate goal is the same: a higher level of public safety. Apart from improving safety in terms of crime rates (or victimisation rates) and feelings of (in)security, community policing is to bring about a better quality of life in the neighbourhoods and a higher satisfaction of the public with the functioning of the police.

The sub-goals that are usually seen as more specific for community policing, such as integration of the police in society and of individual community police officers in their area, preventive activities, ‘to know and to be known’, are also means to achieve the ultimate goal (safety). They are however also goals in themselves, to be reached by being visible, approachable and accessible through foot patrols and, on another level, through consultation and co-operation with external partners.

So, community policing is usually seen as a ‘new way of performing the police function’, involving all aspects of policing, at least according to the ideology behind the concept. But in reality it is a diffuse concept, open to different interpretations. The stated goals are often imprecise and unclear. This means that the relation between community policing and its objectives is cloudy and difficult to establish.

## 5. COMMUNITY POLICING EVALUATED

### 5.1. Some preliminary remarks on methods of evaluation

Generally, it has been hard to prove the effectiveness of policing, although the evaluation of well-defined police actions, restricted in time and place, and their impact on a specific problem has shown positive results.<sup>14</sup> As mentioned above, community policing is not a 'well-defined police action' and its objectives are not very specific. This means that evaluating community policing is difficult. At the same time, with politicians and the public becoming more demanding and the police having moved from a task-oriented organisation into a result-orientated organisation, it has become more important to establish the efficacy of police strategies.

Obviously, the difficulties with establishing the impact of policing may be even greater when one tries to measure the impact of a reform of police policy and practice such as community policing. Before any effects can be expected the changes must have been implemented. The question then is whether the intended changes have actually occurred, that is, whether forces have been able to adapt their policy, organisation and working methods in such a way that policing actually happens according to the basic principles of community policing. Research on neighbourhood teams and area-bound policing has shown that this is a long and difficult process.<sup>15</sup> When an evaluation takes place too early in this process, there is a considerable chance that the researchers do not measure the impact of the reform, but the (in)ability of the police force to implement the changes. Specific problems that we encounter when evaluating community policing are related to the essence of community policing itself. For instance, one of the main objectives is the prevention of crime and of problems that may turn into crime when nothing is being done about them. When community-policing strategies are successful, certain crimes or problems do not occur. The (well-known) problem is, that it is impossible to measure what does not happen, and so the effectiveness of community policing is hard to prove. The only solution to this academic problem is to set up evaluation studies along the lines of strictly controlled experiments, but these are hard to conduct in real life situations.

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14. L.W. Sherman *et al.*, *Preventing Crime. What works, what doesn't, what's promising* (Washington 1997).

15. For instance W. Broer, *Een wijkteam dat moest wijken. Analyse van een vastgelopen wijkteamexperiment in het Delftse politiekorps* (The Hague 1982). O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts and L. van Heel, *Gebiedsgebonden politiezorg* (The Hague 2000) p. 53. O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts and C.D. van der Vijver, *op. cit.* pp. 96-99. As far as the process of implementation is concerned, the results were comparable to the famous publication of L.W. Sherman, C.H. Milton and Th. V. Kelly, *Team policing: seven case studies* (Washington 1973).

Another important aspect of community policing is the co-operation with other agencies in preventing and fighting crime. This means that when a decrease in crime occurs, it is hard to establish the contribution of each partner to this effect. Finally, crime rates in small areas may fluctuate substantially. Therefore, changes in the level of crime in a small neighbourhood cannot simply be interpreted as the consequences of police actions. One needs corroborative evidence from other sources, such as knowledgeable key persons in the area involved.

With the growing public and political demand for the police to achieve results, and the police changing from a task-oriented organisation into a result-oriented organisation, the need for measuring the effects on crime and feelings of insecurity has become more urgent. Still, although there is a fair amount of research on different types of community oriented policing, most of this research was aimed at getting insight in organisational aspects rather than in the external impact. In the following sections we describe some results.

## 5.2. The impact on the organisation

The first studies on beat constables took place in the 1970s and were carried out by the police themselves.<sup>16</sup> The first independent study was published in 1980 and was aimed at analysing problems in the functioning of beat constables.<sup>17</sup> The title of this report 'The beat constable, servant of two masters' referred to the awkward position of beat constables between the police organisation and the public. They could serve either of the two but not both at the same time. This report was based upon interviews with beat constables, their colleagues (notably of the criminal investigation department and the uniform branch), and of key persons in their task environment. It turned out that, at that time, beat constables were not taken very seriously by their colleagues. The nicknames they gave them ('social worker' or 'district nurse') revealed that they did not consider them real police officers; they were good enough to deal with the problems nobody else wanted to tackle. This way they (unintentionally) also marginalised them. As a consequence, beat constables were not very eager to co-operate with other departments in the police organisation and to pass any substantial or intimate information they received during their contacts in the neighbourhood to the CID personnel, afraid as they were that it might be misused. This could damage the 'position of trust' they had built up. For this reason beat constables were criticised by their colleagues

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16. These studies were often carried out by students of the Netherlands' Police Academy. See for instance P. Huijsmans, *Verhouding politie-publiek toegespitst op het instituut wijkagent* (Apeldoorn 1973).  
E. Weenk, 'De wijkagent/rayonagent', in *Tijdschrift voor de Politie* (1975) pp. 3-8 and 27-34.

17. J. Bastiaenen and J. Vriesema, *Wijkagent: diender van twee meesters* (Amsterdam 1980).

who thought it improper that beat constables 'took the side of the community and not of the police'. The public, on the other hand, did not reward the beat constables for their client-centred attitude. They stated that beat constables did a good job but they criticised the fact that these officers were typical loners 'who promise a lot, but realise a little'.<sup>18</sup> This study and a following study by the same authors<sup>19</sup> had quite an impact on the changes within the police that followed, notably the introduction of neighbourhood teams.

Whilst beat constables were relatively easy to fit in the existing organisation, the introduction of neighbourhood teams demanded thorough changes in the organisation, in culture, in work and internal co-operation and communication, and, last but not least, management style.

The changes involved with the introduction of the neighbourhood teams were a reorganisation of the force into geographically decentralised teams, de-specialisation and task integration, a reduction of hierarchical levels, and as a consequence, traditional values such as the status differences between generalists and specialists had to change (for instance, CID officers could be appointed in the teams as 'general community policing officers'). The reform required substantial investments from both the organisation and individual police officers, and the risk of failure was considerable. Indeed, some forces even cancelled the reform because of the implementation problems they encountered. This was the case in the first force that opted for neighbourhood teams, Delft.<sup>20</sup> The change process started as an experiment in one area and if this was a success, teams were to be installed in the whole force. However, resistance in the force grew with time, co-operation diminished, information was not exchanged, CID officers openly depreciated the work of the officers in the teams in the field of criminal investigation,<sup>21</sup> tension between different departments grew, and within a year the experiment was stopped.<sup>22</sup> When another force, Haarlem (a town west of Amsterdam) introduced neighbourhood teams, between 1983 and 1985, this was accompanied by the most comprehensive evaluation in the field of community policing in the Netherlands. The implementation of the teams started in three areas, where the change process was monitored by way of internal and external evaluations. The measurements took place at three moments in the process: shortly before the start of the implementation process, one year after the start and three years after the start.

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18. J. Bastiaenen and J. Vriesema, *op. cit.* pp. 73-76.

19. J. Bastiaenen and J. Vriesema, *Een kwestie van aanpak: de wijkagent zet de politie op het kruispunt van twee wegen. Eindnota in het kader van het onderzoek naar wijksurveillance* (Amsterdam 1981).

20. Delft is a city with, at that time, a municipal police force, in the western part of the Netherlands.

21. M.L.J. de Jong, *Recherche en wijkteam* (Schipluiden 1983).

22. Broer 1982, *op. cit.*

In order to prepare the force for the change process, much effort was put into getting internal support, with the result that, just before the start, 70% of the personnel thought favourably about the intended changes. After a year, however, this percentage had dropped to 59% and two years later it had dropped even further to 33%. Problems mentioned were (not unlike those put forward in Delft): a lack of manpower, a lack of exchange of information between the teams or between teams and other departments in the force, too much work for the teams (due to decentralisation), and a lack of experience to fulfil CID tasks. In fact, after the first negative reports, the reform in Haarlem might have failed too, if it had not been for the chief constable who urged everyone to go on. Due to the criticism on the functioning of the teams, many other forces decided to implement a 'diluted' form of neighbourhood teams in which task integration was left out.

Ten years later, when area bound policing was embraced as the newest version of the community policing concept, the forces usually put effort in 'warming up' the personnel before they actually started the change process, with a strong emphasis on the ideology behind it. None of the studies on area bound policing addressed the issue of resistance against the intended reform, but we do know that in several forces the change process started 'bottom up'.<sup>23</sup> This indicates that amongst those officers on the street, there was already some enthusiasm for this type of community policing. As changes in the organisation were limited and the work of most officers remained more or less the same, there was probably less reason for strong opposition, although not everybody thought area-bound policing was a good idea. At present, scepticism is most likely to be found amongst officers of the CID who fail to appreciate the fact that area-bound police officers know their neighbourhood well and often have very useful information.<sup>24</sup>

The implementation of area-bound policing has proved to be a long process, partly because the most suitable way to organise it is not always obvious, and also because the building of an 'infrastructure' for the relation and communication between area-bound officers and other parts of the organisation takes time. There has been nothing like a general process towards some 'ideal' situation; forces have chosen different organisational structures and have been following their own development, which makes it difficult to establish their progress in comparison with each other.<sup>25</sup> At this moment, most forces have chosen for models in which area-bound police officers are either embedded in a team of 'regular' officers (who work in a larger area), or they work in separate teams in which they are individually responsible for their own neighbourhood or, together with one or two colleagues, jointly responsible for a bigger area.

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23. P. Klerks and O.J. Zoomer, *op. cit.* pp. 8 and 10.

24. O.J. Zoomer, in progress.

25. O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts and L. van Heel, *op. cit.* p. 74.

As to the work, team policing and area-bound policing have different implications. Team policing was set up from an integrative point of view (that is, each officer in a team had to perform more or less the same duties, with specialist departments to support him), area-bound police officers have a task that is different from that of regular officers. Although it is emphasised that they are expected to perform the 'traditional' police duties (to prevent them from becoming 'social workers' like the former beat constables), their specific task is to 'organise safety' in their neighbourhood, which means that they have to work in co-operation with other agencies and activate citizens to work together in dealing with safety problems in their neighbourhood. Within the force they usually have the role of coordinator of police activities in their neighbourhood; they can claim support from other officers when deemed necessary. Obviously, their new tasks had to be developed, but recent research<sup>26</sup> shows that area-bound police officers do indeed perform different tasks compared with regular police officers; they spend a substantial part of their time in their neighbourhood patrolling, keeping contacts with residents, problem solving or mediation. They stimulate self-reliant behaviour of citizens which implies that they spend a fair amount of time on consultation with different external partners, stimulating them to take safety measures and finding solutions to persistent problems.<sup>27</sup> These activities need specific skills and training.

With the existence in the forces of area-bound police officers as new professionals it is generally understood that 'coaching leadership' is required. Traditional hierarchical steering models have to be replaced by more professional models in which chiefs of teams have a facilitating and consultative role. The introduction of community policing has brought about substantial changes within the forces, and one could therefore say that the introduction of community policing has had internal *effects*. However, these changes may as well be considered as *conditions* that have to be met before we can call the reform really implemented. Thus they are the indicators of a successful (or unsuccessful) implementation of the intended reform.

### 5.3. The impact on the neighbourhood

Apart from studies on the implementation process and organisational changes that were involved with the introduction of the teams, a few studies aimed at establishing the external impact of team policing. One of these studies, in Haarlem, showed that

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26. W. Ph. Stol, in progress.

27. P. Reckman, *Van onder op. Werkboek Methodiek Sociale Zelfredzaamheid* (Dordrecht 1996). N. Toenders, R. Meijer, L. Gunther Moor, W. van de Leur and K. van der Vijver, *Veilig in de wijk. Sociale zelfredzaamheid in de praktijk* (Dordrecht 2002). A. Raspe, *De impuls van sociale zelfredzaamheid. Ervaringen van wijkagenten en opbouwwerkers* (Dordrecht 1996).

neighbourhood teams had positive effects,<sup>28</sup> as was measured by repeated citizen surveys and interviews with key persons in the areas involved. Victimization, fear of crime and crime related problems in the neighbourhood decreased, whereas citizens' opinions about the police and reporting behaviour improved. This also holds true for so-called problem areas.<sup>29</sup> Key persons confirmed that these changes had to do with police activities. The fact that with the forming of the teams also new police stations were opened and police officers actually did get into contact with residents probably played an important role. One other interesting finding was that citizens said they missed the beat constable. Although they had complained about their functioning before the implementation of the neighbourhood teams, they now missed this 'one police officer who is always available'. Apparently, changes in police policy and practice that are based upon the results of academic research (in this case the earlier mentioned studies of Bastiaenen and Vriesema) do not always lead to the expected results (in this case citizen satisfaction). If the police change their strategies in answer to the expectations of the citizens, one often sees that this change in policy does not improve citizens' satisfaction – their expectations change. Nevertheless, the positive results in Haarlem stimulated other forces to introduce team policing too.

The external effects of *area-bound policing* have not been researched thoroughly. In our own recent study, carried out in four police forces, the impact on the safety in the neighbourhoods concerned was one of the issues examined. Unlike the study in Haarlem it was not possible to use a (quasi) experimental design because area bound policing had already been fully introduced in these forces. Consequently it was impossible to compare the situation before and after the changes took place or to compare experimental districts with traditional districts. By using different research methods (analysing existing data from citizen surveys, a survey among residents of neighbourhoods concerned interviews with police officers and external partners) some effects could be established, but not the impact on safety.<sup>30</sup> What became clear was that crime rates in the distinctive neighbourhoods were fairly stable over the years (1993-2001) although there could be a sudden change in a particular year, unrelated to the introduction of area-bound policing. The same is true for citizen satisfaction with the police as a whole, as measured with citizen surveys. Opinions about the functioning of the police fluctuated around 'just sufficient' over the years, and no improvements could be observed that could be attributed to area-bound policing. Obviously the changes

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28. For an extensive description of these findings in English: see C.D. van der Vijver, *Proximity policing. Developments in the Netherlands* (Enschede 1999). In French it is published in C.D. van der Vijver 'La police de proximité aux Pays-Bas: le cas de la ville de Haarlem', in *Les dilemmes de la proximité*, Les cahiers de la sécurité intérieure (Paris 2000).

29. W. Broer, C.C. Schreuder and C.D. van der Vijver, *op. cit.*

30. O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts and C.D. van der Vijver, *op. cit.* pp. 95-106.

brought about by the introduction of area-bound policing are more noticeable for those who have regular contacts with the police than for the public in general, and so more promising results came from the interviews with external partners. It appeared that area-bound policing had contributed to a more accessible and approachable police, and that co-operation with external partners had intensified. External partners were generally positive about their contacts with the police, in particular area-bound police officers.<sup>31</sup>

Because community police officers deal more adequately with neighbourhood problems, the risk that problems will escalate are smaller; as a consequence there is less violence. Moreover, citizens value area-bound police constables higher than 'ordinary' police constables. This also holds true for youngsters in so-called 'difficult neighbourhoods'.<sup>32</sup> The importance of community policing, or a police that is nearby, is also indicated by the fact that the closing down of a police station in a certain area has a negative impact on feelings of security and opinions about the police. Residents of such an area feel less protected and their trust in the police and the government declines.<sup>33</sup>

## 6. DISCUSSION

Community policing has received a lot of attention, both in police practice and in academic research on the police. We have learned a lot about the different ways community policing is put into practice, the functioning of community police officers, and, to a lesser extent, the impact of community policing in the neighbourhood. For citizens it is important that the police are in their vicinity, available and approachable. This is not just some kind of whim, it plays a very important role in upholding their feelings of security. Persons who have regular contacts with the police (in consultations for instance) think more positive about community policing than about other kinds of policing.

However, apart from the results in Haarlem there has not been scientific evidence for effects of community policing (in particular area-bound policing) on the level of

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31. O.J. Zoomer, P.G.M. Geurts and C.D. van der Vijver, *op. cit.* pp. 101 and 105.

32. W.J.M. de Haan, A.M. van der Laan and J.A. Nijboer, *Escalatie-risico's bij openbare ordeverstoringen. Een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen politie en jongeren in de Oosterparkbuurt in Groningen en het Overtoomseveld in Amsterdam na ongeregelheden in 1997-1998*, (The Hague 2001). C.J.E. In 't Velt, W.Ph. Stol, P.P.H.M. Klerks, H.K.B. Fobler, R.J. van Treeck and M. de Vries, *Politie en geweld. Een verkenning van politiereacties op geweldsincidenten in vier Nederlandse regiokorpsen* (Zeist 2003).

33. L.G.M. Gunther Moor and J. Peeters, *Politie en sociale zelfredzaamheid van burgers* (Dordrecht 1996).



crime. Generally speaking, victim surveys and neighbourhood scans are the basic instruments used for measuring police performance. The topics that are usually measured in these surveys or scans are: victimization rates, reporting rate, contacts with the police, satisfaction with and trust in the police and problems which citizens experience in their neighbourhood. However, when used for measuring the impact of community policing, the suitability of these instruments is doubtful for several reasons, the most important one probably that the relation between community policing and safety is too complex to be measured by a relatively crude instrument as a citizen survey.

To establish the added value of community policing we need more and other indicators than only the indicators of safety. More appropriate indicators are the extent to which the police are known in their neighbourhoods, co-operate with external agencies in preventing and fighting crime and contribute to solving problems. Information about these indicators can be provided by knowledgeable key persons in the area or external partners with regular police contacts. They are able to answer the question whether and to what extent police performance has improved.

Community policing is seriously questioned nowadays. Although positive effects of community policing have been established and in spite of the fact that the general level of crime has gone down lately, politicians and citizens alike require a more repressive style of policing and concrete results in fighting crime. Catching criminals is considered to be the primary task of the police. More specifically, civil authorities and politicians at the national level stress the importance of zero-tolerance, clearance-rates, restricting police work to the 'elementary police tasks'. From that point of view, it is undeniable that community policing is 'the wrong symbol' for society at this moment. One should realise however, that there is no sound scientific support for the idea that repressive strategies will help bring down crime. The fact that clearance rates and the number of cases brought to justice are easier to measure as indicators of police success in crime fighting and therefore an easier answer to the public should not be given too much weight. The problem with the demand for hard line strategies is that they are an answer to only a part of what the public wants. The public also want the police in their vicinity, available and known. But this is much less clearly articulated and usually not taken seriously in the political context.<sup>34</sup>

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34. The background of these opposite opinions of citizens has to do with the way human beings 'experience' feelings of insecurity. Within the limits of this article it is not possible to discuss the interesting but highly complex phenomenon in depth.