LXVII

# the POLICE and PETTY CRIME CONTROL



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research- and documentation centre

Ministry of Justice The Hague - Netherlands
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CONTENTS

The police and the control of petty crime

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years -particularly following the publication of the report "Politie in Verandering" (The Changing Police- Organizational Structures Project Group, 1977)- the function and role of the police in society have been under constant discussion in the Netherlands, like in many other countries. Their function is defined as follows under Section 28 of the current Dutch police Act: "It shall be the duty of the police, under the control of the competent authorities and in accordance with the rules of law in force, to ensure the actual maintenance of law and order and to provide assistance to those requiring it". The new Police Bill retains this wording. The major area of police responsibility is regarded as being the actual maintance of law and order, (sub)divided into the "maintance of public order" and the "maintance of order under criminal law, i.e. the actual prevention, investigation and stopping of criminal offences, the prosecution and bringing to trial of offenders and the execution of decisions by the Court or Public Prosecution's Department in criminal cases" (Establishment of a New Police Act, 1981). The second responsibility is to provide assistance to those requiring it. Providing assistance to the public is regarded as an essential part of police work, without losing sight of the fact that it is not exclusively a responsibility of the state or of the police as an agency of the state.

The debate on the assistance function of the police has in fact been under way since 1948, when the Langemeijer Committee was set up.[2)] The Committee was concerned not so much with wether the police should provide assistance -there was no disagreement on this point- but with whether this ought to be laid down by Act of Parliament and whether the term "hulpverlening" (provision of assistance) should be used. The broad concept of police responsibility was eventually selected mainly to meet the wishes of the police. This broad concept of assistance, however, gives rise to uncertainty as to precisely what should be expected of the police, both within the force and by the competent authorities and the public. A survey of the work of neighbourhood policemen has for instance shown that they are faced with certain dilemmas

as a result of the dual function of the police (Vriesema and Bastiaenen, 1981). When performing his law enforcement function or even his assistance function a neighbourhood officer has to choose between serving the force and serving the residents of the neighbourhood. Public opinion research indicates that people dot not regard various aspects of social services as part of the proper work of the police (Junger-Tas, 1978*; Nuijten-Edelbroek, 1982 a). On the other hand a survey of police patrol work (Junger-Tas, 1977) and one of calls for service emergency calls (Van der Zee-Nefkens, 1975) show that people make considerable demands on the police for assistance, mediation, aid and information. The same picture is found if people are asked about the contacts they themselves have had with the police (Junger-Tas, 1978; Nuijten-Edelbroek, 1982 a).

That part of police responsibility concerning the "maintenance of order under criminal law", the combating of crime, has never been in question, and this function is expressly reserved for the police. In police training, for instance, great importance is attached to fighting crime: much emphasis is placed on the fact that the police can and should clear up all crimes (Junger-Tas and Holten-Vriesema, 1978). Officers themselves also regard this as being their role (Vlek, 1982). The public regard combating crime (by catching offenders and/or finding stolen goods, but also by preventing crime) as being police work par excellence, alongside maintaining public order and road safety (Junger-Tas, 1978; Nuijten-Edelbroek, 1982 a)[3]. It is also thought that the police spend a lot of time on this work, but people are only moderately satisfied with the way in which the police perform this duty.

The answer given by the police is that they do not have enough manpower actually crime as well as satisfying the enormous demand for aid and assistance. Consequently the desire for a larger police force is constantly being voiced, especially in the four large municipal forces. In Amsterdam, detectives recently went so far as to "go on strike", by all taking sick leave together, when the head commission announced that the amount of overtime that could be paid was to be restricted because three-quarters of the amount allocated for 1982 had already been used up half-way through the year.

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* Nr. XXXIII RDC-series



Victims of crimes express dissatisfaction at the fact that the police do nothing about their cases, and there is a growing danger of people taking the law into their own hands. ("If someone steals my bicycle, I steal someone's else's. There's no point in reporting the theft to the police, they won't do anything about it anyway. I'll sort it out myself").

The present article will consider not only whether the police do little or nothing to combat crime but also whether they would produce better results if, without immediately thinking of increasing the size of the force, they were to act against what is referred to as "petty" crime in a different way than hitherto: not serious crimes such as robbery with violence, murder or manslaughter but minor offences such as theft, burglary and pickpocketing. Some new Dutch approaches will be discussed in Section 3, and a number of terms will be defined. Sections 4 and 5 respectively deal with the contribution or role of the uniform department and the Criminal investigation department in controlling petty crime and describe the results of the new approach in various experimental schemes in the Netherlands and other countries. The article concludes by considering what the police still need to do -in the light of the results of these experiments- to control crime more effectively.

We begin, however, with an outline of the trends in petty crime and the size of the police force in the Netherlands.

## 2. Trends in petty crime and the size of the force

Before outlining the trends in petty crime it is necessary to define what is meant by the term. Without claiming that is it unambiguous or comprehensive, we have adopted the definition as used by the Assembly of Procurators General: "petty crime is taken to mean those offences which individually are relatively trivial but are committed on such as large scale that they cause serious nuisance to the local population and are even likely to cause fear of crime average cases of burglary, pickpocketing, minor robberies, petty theft, vandalism" (internal memorandum, 1978). When we refer to "crime" in this article we are referring to these forms of petty crime.

The figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics give an indication of the trends in petty crime in the Netherlands as reported to the police (Monthly Police, Court and Fire Service Statistics). Research among the Dutch population in the form of victims surveys has shown that the CBS figures take account of about 50% of offences covered by the definition of petty crime (Van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1980). Table 1 shows the totals for offences under the Criminal Code for the 1976-81 period.

Table 1: Offences under the Criminal Code reported to the police, 1976-1981

| Year | number reported | index |
|---|---|---|
| 1976 | 459,832 | 100 |
| 1977 | 477,018 | 104 |
| 1978 | 488,708 | 106 |
| 1979 | 528,410 | 115 |
| 1980 | 610,680 | 133 |
| 1981 | 708,687 | 154 |

Table 2 gives figures for some common forms of petty crime under the Criminal Code for the 1979-1981 period. If we compare Tables 1 and 2 we find that over 90% of reported crime comes under the heading of petty crime.

Table 2: Reported petty crime under the Criminal Code, 1979-1981

| Criminal offence | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 |
|---|---|---|---|
| simple theft (excl. shoplifting and pickpocketing) | 223,201 | 249,555 | 278,695 |
| burglary | 143,445 | 171,777 | 214,903 |
| other serious theft (excl. burglary) | 16,907 | 19,595 | 25,778 |
| vandalism | 58,115 | 69,779 | 75,792 |
| shoplifting | 26,056 | 31,206 | 36,037 |
| assault | 13,407 | 13,409 | 14,319 |
| pickpocketing | 6,936 | 10,782 | 12, 452 |
| total | 488,067 | 566,103 | 657,976 |
| in percentages of table 1 | 92 | 93 | 93 |



Table 1 shows that the total number of offences under the Criminal Code in the Netherlands has risen by 54% over the years 1976-1981. The rise in some forms of petty crime has certainly been no less, albeit Table 2 covers a shorter period; only assault and simple theft have risen less.

The success of the police in combating crime could be measured from the number or percentage of cases solved as is normally done by the police itself and the policymakers. Table 3 shows the total numbers of Criminal Code offences solved over the 1976-1981 period; Table 4 gives corresponding figures for some common forms of petty crime over the 1979-1981 period.

Table 3: Clearance rate for offences under the Criminal Code, 1976-1981

| Year | solved | % | index |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1976 | 121,409 | 26 | 100 |
| 1977 | 119,315 | 25 | 98 |
| 1978 | 121,509 | 25 | 100 |
| 1979 | 125,110 | 24 | 103 |
| 1980 | 137,260 | 22 | 113 |
| 1981 | 156,140 | 22 | 129 |

Table 4: Clearance rate for petty crime under the Criminal Code, 1979-1981

| Offence | 1979 solved | % | 1980 solved | % | 1981 solved | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| simple theft (excl. shoplifting and pickpocketing) | 20,155 | 9,0 | 23,130 | 9,3 | 24,412 | 8,8 |
| burglary | 27,494 | 19,2 | 29,989 | 17,5 | 36,576 | 17,0 |
| other serious theft (excl. burglary) | 6,793 | 40,2 | 6,591 | 33,6 | 8,228 | 31,9 |
| vandalism | 11,902 | 20,5 | 13,099 | 18,8 | 13,089 | 17,3 |
| shoplifting | 20,204 | 77,5 | 22,984 | 73,7 | 27,011 | 75,0 |
| assault | 9,863 | 73,6 | 9,977 | 74,4 | 10,482 | 73,2 |
| pickpocketing | 461 | 6,6 | 405 | 3,8 | 512 | 4,1 |

Comparison of Tables 1 and 3 shows that the rise in the numbers of cases solved over the 1976-1981 period (29%) was less than the rise in the number of crimes reported (54%). Table 4 shows that in the case of petty crime the clearance rate has not always kept pace with the number of offences reported either: whereas the clearance rate for simple theft, shoplifting and assault has kept pace, the rise in the numbers of cases of pickpocketing, other serious theft -and to a slightly lesser extent burglary and criminal damage- is solved considerably below the rise in the number of cases reported. Over the years it would seem, then, that the police have been less succesful in carrying out this duty.

However, the numbers of cases solved should be looked at in the light of police strength. Table 5 shows the executive strength of the State Police and the municipal forces over the 1979-1981 period.

Table 5: Size of State and municipal police forces, 1976-1981

| Year | Size | Index | Number per 100,000 inhabitants |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1976 | 22,971 | 100 | 167 |
| 1977 | 24,288 | 106 | 176 |
| 1978 | 25,448 | 111 | 183 |
| 1979 | 26,239 | 114 | 188 |
| 1980 | 26,902 | 117 | 191 |
| 1981 | 27,611 | 120 | 194 |

The figures are from the CBS (Monthly Police, Court and Fire Service Statistics).

Table 5 shows that over the 1976-1981 period the executive strength of the police in the Netherlands grew not only in absolute terms but also in relation to the size of the population. On the other hand -as Cachet (1982) indicates over a longer period- the increase in executive strength has been less than the increase in crime and that in the number of cases solved. It might be concluded from this that, relatively speaking, a less rapidly



growing force has achieved better results when crime grew more rapidly. Nevertheless an increasing number of citizens in the Netherlands fall victim to crimes which remain unsolved, committed by offenders who are not caught and therefore not punished. As Antunes and Hunt (1973) among others, state, in the combating of crime of "certainty" (likelihood) of being caught and the "certainty" (likelihood) of punishment are more important than the severity of the penalty.

## 3. A different approach to petty crime

At various levels attention was focused on the sharp rise in petty crime some years ago. Schemes were introduced in the forces to release additional manpower for detecting or preventing crime: clerical work was transferred to clerical staff, preventive patrols were introduced. Little is known, however, about the results of these local initiatives.

Steps were also taken at national level. For instance, the Minister of Justice in 1972 set up the Reporting of Felonies Study Group, part of whose remit was to see whether a national set of priorities for the reporting by the police of certain crimes could be developed. The Study Groups answer to this question in its final report was that this was not possible at that time, although a selective approach to investigation and reporting by the police was feasible on a local or regional basis. This approach would have to be decided in the local tripartite consultations between the Burgomaster, the Chief Public Prosecutor and the Chief of Police (Reporting of Felonies Study Group, Final Report, 1976). At the instigation of the Assembly of Procurators General the Research and Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Justice has organised and evaluated pilot schemes in some police forces, based on the Study Group's conclusion, to improve police control of petty crime by establishing priorities and introducing new forms of police intervention; some of these are still in progress.

These are not the only initiatives. Dutch police forces have an avarage of two pilot schemes each in progress, most of them concerned with juvenile crime, petty crime, vandalism, burglary and theft (including shoplifting and thefts of cycles and mopeds). The activities being undertaken here mainly entail new types of patrol, entrusting the uniform department with minor criminal

investigation duties, rationalisation and simplification of procedures and prevention advising to the public. These schemes in progress also lack any scientific evaluation and it cannot therefore be said whether or not the approach has been succesful, except in the case of a pilot scheme carried out by the municipal force of The Hague. To decide whether new approaches to police intervention have an effect on the combating of crime we shall therefore refer mainly to the pilot schemes based on the Study Group's report, which have been evaluated by the RDC, supplemented from time to time with research in other countries.

So far we have referred constantly to the "combating" of petty crime. It would be completely unrealistic to suppose that any approach could ever reduce it to zero. The results may be regarded as good if an increasing crime trend can be levelled off or even forced downwards in the course of time using a new approach. It is better, then, to refer to "controlling" petty crime than to "combating" it.

The Uniform and Criminal Investigation Departments

Combating crime is part of crime control, which involves not only investigating but also preventing crime. There are thus two sides to police work. The first entails ensuring that crimes are not committed: street patrols, observing and following potential criminals, providing potential victims with information on precautions, etc.: research into the causes of criminal behavior may also be counted as part of this work. The second side of police work entails catching offenders and solving crimes which have already been committed and reported to the police, on the basis of the assumption/hope that recording the offence and imposing a penalty will have a preventive effect on the offender[4]. This division of police work largely corresponds with the division into the departments which carry out the work, i.e. the "Uniform department, notably the patrol department, as opposed to the criminal investigation department (see also sections 4 and 5). This is not to say that the division is entirely mutually exclusive. It sometimes happens that the uniform department catches a criminal red-handed on a patrol or as a result of a report by a citizen, or provides information which anables the CID to arrest the offender. The converse can apply to the CID; its investigations into certain offences may have a preventive effect on other potential offenders, who may decide that the risk of being caught is too great. For the sake of convenience, however, in the present article we shall regard the



prevention and investigation/solving of crime as being more or less equivalent to the work of the uniform department and CID respectively.
Just as the roles of the two departments in crime control are different, the various pilot schemes which have been introduced in Dutch police forces are of different kinds, with a correspondingly different evaluation of the effects.

In the case of the uniform department the new approach contained in the schemes takes the form mainly of preventive patrols, new types of patrol in which the police are more in evidence on the streets, as well as advice on crime prevention, where the role of the public is certainly not glossed over.

The new approach is expected to reduce the amount of petty crime and diminish public's fear crime concern about crime and feelings of insecurety and, moreover, to have a favourable effect on certain major preconditions for crime control, such as the public's willingness to report offences which have been or may be committed, their willingness to take steps to avoid becoming the victims of crime and their confidence in the action taken by the police. Whether these effects have been achieved is assessed on the basis of data collected from public opinion (including victim surveys) and police statistics on the aspects mentioned at various times (before, during and after the scheme).

On the investigation side the new approach consists mainly in changes in the organisation and procedures of the CID. It is evaluated in terms of whether better results are archieved in terms of the solving of crimes and catching of offenders, and the amount of time spent on investigations. The evaluation is based on data collected from police statistics, observation studies and time and motion studies of police detectives.

4. Crime prevention by the uniform department

In this section we consider what influence the uniform department has or can have on the crime rate. We shall concentrate mainly on police patrols since the majority of uniformed officers are employed from day to day in the patrol department. The more specialised work of traffic police, dog handlers etc. is outside the scope of this discussion.

First we look at the day-to-day contribution of the patrol department to crime control using descriptive studies; we then describe new methods which have been applied on an experimental basis, with prevention activities occupying a central position.

Contribution to crime control

For many years the public and the police themselves have had the idea that a large part of police work centres on crime. American research has however shown that this impression is at variance with reality: less than a fifth of all police work was concerned with crime. (See Kelling, 1978). The figures in the report on police strength similarly point to a low percentage in the Netherlands (Organisational Structures Project Group, 1979). As regards the patrol department, over the past ten years it has been concluded from various surveys carried out that its day-to-day work is concerned only marginally with crime control. The patrol department is concerned first and foremost with maintaining order in the broadest sense: traffic and traffic incidents account for a major part of its work.

Following their research in England, Comrie and Kings (1975), for instance, came to the conclusion that a tiny proportion of the time spent by officers on street patrol was directly related to crime, a mere 5% or so of their total hours of duty.

An observation study of police patrols in the Netherlands by Junger-Tas (1977) came to the same conclusion. She found first of all that patrol officers spent about two-thirds of their working hours (in their cars) actually on patrol. For one third of the total time they spent on the streets they were involved in direct action, either providing assistance to the public requesting it or reacting directly, on their own initiative, to incidents they themselves had observed (known as "assistance patrol work"). A striking fact was that these actions were related mainly to traffic incidents and assistance to members of the public and only to a small extent to crime. The remaining time -the majority of it- officers spent on patrol while not occupied with incident-related actions had a preventive purpose, to prevent crime, traffic incidents and breaches of public order; this is consequently referred to as preventive patrol work.



It is not long ago that a start was made on reorganising the methods of the patrol department. Not least because of the importance attached to them, preventive patrols were separated wherever possible from assistance patrols. The preventive patrols were carefully planned, but often on the basis of the existing pattern of incidents. In view of results mentioned earlier it is likely that the attention of officers on patrol will be directed to a large extent towards traffic and breaches of public order and to a lesser extent towards crime, especially if there are no instructions or guidelines on how the preventive patrols are to be carried out. It is not surprising, then, that in practice preventive patrol work consists mainly of traffic-related activities. Furthermore, in many cases preventive patrol work has been unable to develop into a fully-fledged independent function of the patrol department. Transferring manpower from preventive patrols to assistance patrols is apparently a standard procedure for meeting an increased workload due to reported incidents. This is well illustrated by a figure or two: over the 1978-81 period the number of cases of assistance rendered by the Amsterdam force rose by over 24,000 (from 120,682 in 1978 to 144,880 in 1981[5]). It would be difficult, it seems, to achieve a high degree of control over patrol work of this kind, first because assistance patrols have priority and can upset the preventive patrols at any time, desirable or otherwise, and second because preventive patrol activities are virtually impossible to control.

Bearing all this in mind it would seem that, to judge by the pattern of activities and the amount of time spent on the matter, the uniform or patrol department is not directly involved to any great extent in controlling crime. Assistance patrols do of course react to incidents of crime, and it should be noted that the proportion of such incidents is increasing: in Amsterdam, for instance, the percentage of crime incidents reported to control rooms rose from 19 in 1978 to 29 in 1981. Despite this, police assistance is still more often given in connection with incidents of other kinds (traffic, public order and request for aid) than in connection with purely crime-related incidents. Similarly, the actual of potential contribution to crime control made by preventive patrols in their present form -either in their own right or as part of other types of patrol- is probably not very significant.

## The call for more police

It is quite possible that officers starting their careers find a conflict arising between their expectations of police work and their experience in practice. Although police forces attach great importance to controlling crime, experience shows that many other demands are placed on new recruits as they take their first steps as patrol officers within the force (Junger-Tas and Holten-Vriesema, 1978). Moreover, when the police talk of controlling crime they are thinking mainly in terms of investigation and detection and not so much of crime prevention work. Given the constantly increasing crime rate and falling clear-up rates it is conceivable that the police feel frustrated. The solution to the problem seems very logical in itself: give us more manpower and resources and things will improve. This argument, however, fails to take into account how the police use their manpower: is it used efficiently, in the best possible way, and are there ways of combating crime more effectively using the manpower and resources available? It could be asked whether the patrol department divedes its attention among traffic, public order and crime in the right proportions. Another more specific question which could for example be posed is what precise from preventive patrols should take; it might also be asked whether this should be based in the present pattern of incidents. It is rarely if ever that anyone asks what external sources can be tapped to improve crime control. There is talk, it is true, of improving relations between police and public, but there is a danger that this could become an end in itself. Despite the fact, well-known from the literature, that some 60% of crimes are committed in places which escape the attention of the police, it is often forgotten that good relations with the public could be used as a means of controlling crime (Elliot, 1973).

The call for more manpower and resources for crime control is heard not only form the police. We have already noted in a previous section that the public harbour ideas and expectations which are not in accordance with reality. People regard crime control as one of the most important functions of the police, they believe that the police devote a lot of time to it, and yet they are by no means satisfied with the results (Junger-Tas, 1978; Nuijten-Edelbroek , 1982 a). It is quite possible, therefore, that the public's train of thought (an important function -a lot of time devoted to it- mediocre results) also leads to frustration in the long run. This could result not only in less willingness to cooperate with the police to combat crime but even to



people eventually taking the law into their own hands. The popular notion moreover conceals a denial of the responsibilities of members of the public, for instance to take preventive steps to protect their own interests and property, and not to indulge in reckless behaviour which might result in their becoming victims of crime. An American study (Biderman and others, 1967) shows, for example, that although the public are critical of the police, saying that their methods are not effective enough, even the public attempt to solve the problem by providing more police and more resources and dealing more severely with offenders. At this point the ranks close and police and public are united on how to improve crime control: both sections favour a quantitative improvement, i.e. more police.

## Pilot schemes abroad

Various pilot schemes based entirely on the increased deployment of uniformed officers have in fact been tried recently in police forces; experiments have also been carried out involving new methods of policing. Most of those involving more patrols were designed to ascertain the effects of frequent motorized patrols on crime rates. The best-known example was the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Scheme (1974), where it was found that more frequent motorized patrols had no effect on the crime rate, the behaviour of the public as regards reporting crime did not change and the additional police efforts did not improve public satisfaction.
A major criticism of the scheme was that the incentive it gave was relatively weak and it could not therefore be expected to have much effect. Other pilot schemes in the United States which did give a strong stimulus in the form of more motorized patrols were found to have an effect -at least temporarily- on crimes committed in public places (Press, 1971; Schnelle and others, 1977). It should however be pointed out that shift effects were also noted (Press, 1971).

The main problem with these experiments would seem to be that they were all concerned woth motorized patrols, whereas, as indicated above, over half the crime takes place in locations which escape police attention, where results can probably be achieved only with the aid of information from the public, i.e. from direct contact with the public. Skogan and Antunes (1979), using data from the United States, have demonstrated that there is a link between the locations of crimes and the likelihood of police appearing on the scene without being summoned. The percentages in Table 6 show that the likelihood of the police being present (by chance or ortherwise) when a crime is committed is relatively minimal.

Table 6: Valuerability of crimes to patrol[1)]

| Crime | At Home | In a Building[2] | On street or Near Home | Other | % of Police "On Scene"[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Assult | 11.0 | 23.4 | 54.2 | 11.4 | 3.7 |
| Forcible Rape | 29.3 | 7.8 | 45.5 | 17.4 | 1.4 |
| Robbery | 10.9 | 18.8 | 64.8 | 5.5 | 1.6 |
| Personal theft | 2.1 | 47.7 | 39.3 | 10.8 | 0.7 |
| Larceny | 4.8 | 27.0 | 60.0 | 8.2 | 0.3 |
| Burglary | 96.3 | 3.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| Vehicle theft | 0.0 | 1.5 | 94.8 | 2.8 | 1.8 |

1) Table taken from "Information, Apprehension and Deterrence: Exploring the Limits of Police Productivity", in Journal of Criminal Justice, 1979, vol. 7, p. 229.

2) The "in a building" category combines events occuring in schools, hotels, office buildings, and personal crimes occuring in commercial establishments.

3) Percentage of incidents in each type of crime, regardless of the place of occurrence, in which the police were present or arrived at the scene without being called.

Even when the police receive reports of crimes from the public the reaction time of the auxiliary patrols does not substantially contribute to better crime control (in terms of catching criminals in the act). More important than the police reaction time, as various studies have shown, is the speed with which the public inform the police (see for example Bieck, 1977).



Partly as a result of some of the studies mentioned above confidence was placed in fool patrols. Not only would the police get to know the neighbourhood better, officers on patrol would establish contact, and thus improve relations, with the public. In this way the foundations for better crime control would be laid. Even foot patrols do not seem to have any great effect on the crime rate, however, though they did increase public willingness to report crime and change people's feelings about crime: there was a decrease in feelings of fear and anxiety (Kelling, 1981).

Pilot schemes in the Netherlands

Some experiments designed primarily with the control of petty crime in mind, with various types of patrol playing an important part, have now been completed in the Netherlands. Three projects, all with the main aim of preventing crime, have been conducted using mainly uniformed officers in the municipalities of Hoogeveen, The Hague and Amsterdan respectively. A major common feature was a visible and accessible police presence on the streets, for the most part in the form of foot patrols. Each project had its own particular emphasis, and each will now be discussed briefly; the main results will also be outlined.

Hoogeveen

In the Hoogeveen project the emphasis was on preventing crime with the aid of task-oriented patrols directed at those places where and taking place at those times when crime was a common occurrence according to internal police sources. Particular attention was paid to burglaries from dwellings, theft from vehicles and vandalism and disorderly conduct. The project patrols were carried out in cars, on foot or on bicycles depending on the time and place. Both uniformed and plain-clothes officers were deployed and all the patrol officers in the force were involved in the project during a period of one year. A Crime Prevention Officer was also entrusted with various types of prevention work (Nuijten-Edelbroek, 1982 a).

The Hague

A special team was set up in The Hague whose first job was to reduce the incidence of burglary in the Moerwijk district. Eight uniformed officers and two detectives were deployed for a period of six months. The team's work consisted in frequent foot and bicycle patrols, providing information on how to prevent burglary and taking reports of burglaries and dealing with them (1981).

Amsterdam

The Amsterdam project, which was carried out in the Osdorp district, may be regarded as a modified repeat of the project in The Hague. First, it covered more types of offence, and second, prevention and detection work were not intermingled in Amsterdam. The first objective was to improve relations with the public by having as much direct contact as possible, to which end most patrols were on foot and a great deal of attention was paid to providing information on preventing economic offences. Here again a team consisting mainly of uniformed officers was deployed for a period of six months (Spickenheuer, 1983).

What, then, were the results of these three preventive experiments? First, the overall crime rate did not fall as a result of them; at most it can be said to have stabilized. This result is in line with the conclusion reached as a result of the Newark Foot Patrol Experiment, where there was no effect in terms of a reduction in the crime rate. We should like to stress, however, that this conclusion should be qualified in the case of the Dutch experiments: it seems that certain types of offence, notably those committed in public places (e.g. vandalism) are more susceptible to this approach than others. So for certain offences the experiments seem succesful, especially in regard to increasing national crime rates.
Some of the experimental schemes did have a favourable effect on people's feelings about crime. Fear of crime reduced sharply among the public only when they did not link the presence of the police with a feeling that something was wrong in the district or town.

Apart from this, experimental schemes had other significant effects. First, victims of crimes of aggression were more willing to report them, and people were more willing to report them, and people were more prepared to notify the police of suspicious circumstances in which they were not directly involved. In general the public's opinion of the police was more favourable as a result of the project activities. Preventive work did not have much effect on people's willingness to take precautions although direct approaches had more effect than publicity campaigns in the media.



To summarize, it must be concluded that while the various projects had some significant positive results, they did not make a large contribution to crime control, although the best results were found in the Hoogeveen and Amsterdam project. All the projects were based on the expectation that using different methods in the patrol department would bring about a drop in crime; in fact there was at most a stabilization. Albeit a stabilization of the crime rates is a success already.
Perhaps the projects expected too much from the police, i.e. the patrol department. It should again be pointed out that much crime occurs in places to which the police have little or no access; in this respect it is perhaps insignificant whether the patrolling officer covers his beat in a car or on foot. It was found that the way in which patrols were carried out did affect people's feelings about crime: foot patrols generally had a favourable effect on fear of crime. The pilot schemes have also shown that a different approach by the patrol department has a favourable effect on certain preconditions for better crime control by the police. One of the principal preconditions is the public's willingness to cooperate with the police by reporting crimes and informing them of any suspicious circumstances they encounter. Another one is that people must be given information on what precautions to take so that they are made aware of their own responsibility to protect themselves against crime. The results of police action in this area have not yet been particularly good.
Lastly, most of the pilot schemes met another important precondition for reducing crime in that the public gained a more favourable impression of the (new) methods used by the police.

## 5. The Criminal investigation Department and the solving of crime

In this section we shall consider two questions:

a) What factors play a part in the solving of crime by the police, in particular the criminal investigation department?
b) Could the riminal investigation department achieve better results than at present, and if so, how?

Both questions relate to criminal offences knwon to the police, reported to them, i.e. about 50% of the total in the case of petty crime (Van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1979).

Factors relevant to the solving of crime

Within the police organization solving crime and catching suspects is the responsibility of the criminal investigation department, which consists of some 15% of the total strength of the force (in municipal forces). The CID has various specialist functions. In addition to the criminal investigation service itself there is a technical service which examines fingerprints and other clues, and an identification and information service which collects photographs of suspects and descriptions of their methods and data on their day-to-day activities. The specialist fields of drugs and firearms are also generally covered by the CID. Depending on the size of the force either the CID is divided into special units or its members are responsible for providing one of the special services in addition to their normal duties.
Virtually all forces have a criminal investigation unit, a technical investigation and identification unit and an information unit. Here we are concerned mainly with the criminal investigation unit.

It has long been assumed that an effective method of identifying and catching criminals comprises:

1) Car patrols keeping an eye out for "on scene" crime;
2) Assistance patrols which arrive at the scene of the crime shortly after a report is received;
3) Detectives who look for fingerprints and clues;
4) An identification and information unit which collects photographs of suspects, descriptions of their methods and data on their activities;
5) More and more sophisticated aids, faster police cars and mobile radios and telephones;
6) Detectives with special skills to carry out investigations, interrogate suspects, interview witnesses, and so on.

Whether all this is in fact effective is difficult to say; too little research has been carried out into the matter in the Netherlands. The low clear-up rates in any event do not point in this direction. Kelling (1978) attacks the effectiveness of this approach on the basis of American research. Despite differences in the organization and methods of the police it may be assumed that the picture Kelling draws also applies to the Netherlands. Two factors stand out as being important to the solving of a crime, in both the foreign and the Dutch research:

1) the information content of a crime report; and



2) the time available to the detetective to carry out the subsequent investigation.

These two factors will now be considered separately in the light of the research material available. This will be followed by suggestions which might give better results without immediately seeking a solution in terms of greater manpower.

The information content of a crime report

a. Results of research

The information available on a crime brought to the knowledge of the police can vary considerably.

1. The offender may already be known because the police arrived on the scene of the crime so soon after receiving the call that he or she has been caught, or because he or she has been apprehended in the act of committing the crime by a patrol which happened to be passing.
2. The victim or a witness may give a detailed or rough description of the offender.
3. There may be indications as to the offender's possible identity from his modus operandi, or technical investigations may yield fingerprints, footprints, or other clues.

Skogan and Antunes (1979) take the view that the availability and reliability of information on the incident/crime and the offender play a crucial part in determining whether the police will be able to solve the crime and catch the offender. More information is available, for instance, if there has been contact between the victim and the offender, if the contact has been of some length, if the offender is known to the victim or the crime was committed in front of witnesses or bystanders. In such cases the crime is easier to solve, as Skogan and Antunes show with the aid of clearance rates. The clearance rates for rape and crimes of violence against the person (serious assualt, attempted murder/manslaughther), for example, are high, as in the case of certain economic offences such as obtaining money under false pretences and embezzlement. If there is no contact between offender and victim, the crime is not committed in a public place or is not discovered immediately the information content is considerably less. Indications will be found at most in the modus operandi or

or clues left behind. Low clearance rates are the result, as in the case of simple theft, pickpocketing, housebreaking, burglary and vandalism. This pattern also applies in the Netherlands. It might even be concluded that it is really somewhat unrealistic to expect the police to identify and catch offenders where there is little information available. A study by Bloch and Bell in Rochester, New York (1976), for example, showed that two-thirds of police reports on burglaries contained no indication of a possible suspect. Only 5% of reported burglaries were solved by the investigation following the report (most of these as a result of interviewing the victim or new witnesses). Bloch and Bell's findings support the conclusion reached in the study by the Rand Corporation (Greenwood and others, 1975) that the most important factor determining whether or not a crime is solved is the information the victim or witness gives to the police officer, who quickly arrives on the scene.

Little research has been carried out into the information content of crime reports in the Netherlands: we know of only three. An internal study by the CID of Utrecht Municipal Police (1979) indicates that nearly two-thirds (60%) of a sample of crime reports contained nothing likely to lead directly to the solving of the crime and were therefore not investigated by the CID. The remainder did contain direct indications and were investigated. Half of these investigations were not completed, largely because of the heavy workload, and thus these cases were not solved. Of those cases which were solved only half merited official police reports; the other half resulted in a reprimand, warning or the like. Reports of crimes containing no direct indications at the time they were made to the police were not investigated at all by the CID, then, and only half the crimes reported with direct indications were solved (totalling 20% of all reports of crimes, 10% in the form of official police reports).

A Research and Documentation Centre Study in the same force (Nuijten-Edelbroek and Ter Horst, 1980) indicated that only 15% of reports of burglary and theft (excluding shoplifting) contained indications at the time they were made. Of all the crimes reported 14% were solved. Direct indications played an important part: the cases sovled contained indications three times as often as the unsolved cases. Another result was that just under a fifth of the cases solved involved catching the criminal red-handed.



An as yet unpublished observation study by the RDC in the CID of Leiden Municipal Police shows that when taking down the particulars of crimes, in only a small number of cases (15%) did the detectives ask the person reporting the crime for names of possible offenders or witnesses or about any clues or other indications. In most cases (85%) the person was allowed to talk freely or questioned about the crime itself (damage, place, date, time and so on). It may be partly due to this that the name of the offender was known in just over 10% of cases and there was a vague description in a further 15%. Ultimately some 90% of reports of crimes where the offender is unknown contain very few indications towards further investigation.

In the main these Dutch studies confirmed the findings of (the) foreign research. Many reports of crimes contain few if any indications for investigation, and these are precisely needed to start an investigation and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion. There are no data on the role of police officers on the scene of the crime in the Netherlands to our knowledge. The RDC study in Utrecht (Nuijten-Edelbroek and Ter Horst, 1980) did mention the importance of the policeman on the spot; the percentage of crimes solved where the criminal was caught red-handed was fairly high.

b. Proposed changes

So far we have pointed out a number of shortcomings related to the information content of crime reports. Those thinking of changes or improvements may find the following suggestions useful.

1. The police/CID must above all obtain more information on the crime, and obtain it sooner. On the one hand the public can play an important part here by giving the police information and by calling in the police at the earliest possible opportunity; attempts could be made to encourage this. The prevention schemes showed (see section 4) that it is possible to increase people's willingness to report to the police. On the other hand it might be worthwhile to give detectives and officers in the patrol department better training in posing specific and relevant

questions to witnesses and persons reporting crimes.

2. The information obtained from the witness or person reporting the crime should be recorded better. Standard forms could be used containing more relevant questions than at present.
3. Contacts between the patrol department and CID could be stepped up so that each is constantly better informed of what the other is doing and has the information necessary to do its job properly.
4. The information available within the force could be used more effectively. The Rand study pointed out that many police forces collect more information than they can handle and actually use (Greenwood and others, 1975). The report on Dutch police strength ('Sterkterapport' - Organizational Structures Project Group, 1979) also indicated that a quarter of the time of the CID was spent collecting information. The internal CID study in Utrecht (1979) showed that this information was by no means always put to the best possible use. A sample of bulletins from the CID information unit was followed to see what happened to them. About a third had such a low information content that nothing was done with them. Again nothing was done with a third of the remainder even though they contained information relevant to investigations. The bulletins which were used in investigations helped to solve the crime in only half the cases. On the whole their information content was somewhat limited and consequently they played little part in investigations. This is not to say that the situation could not be improved, e.g. by producing information files selectively or analysing the information more systematically. On this latter point the time would seem to be ripe for every police force to go over to data processing systems (mini-computers).

## The time available for CID investigations

### a. Results and research

The second aspect is the time detectives spend on the investigations following a report. The study by the Rand Corporation (Greenwood and others, 1975) indicated that a relatively small proportion of their



time was spent on investigating crimes, especially serious ones; most of the detectives time was spent on various clerical duties. When CID officers interviewed victims of crimes again they were in fact repeating the work done by the patrol department: no new information was usually produced. The study reaches the conclusion that most of detectives time is taken up reading day and night reports, interviewing victims of crimes that cannot in any case be solved and completing the work, including the clerical work, on cases solved.

Research has taken place in the Netherlands on how CID officers spend their time. The Organizational Structures Project Group carried out a time and motion study in three municipal forces as part of its study of police strength (1979). Utrecht Municipal Police carried out an internal time and motion study (1979), and the RDC carried out one in the CID of Leiden Municipal Police (not yet been published). In spite of criticisms of methods and differences in the methods used, the pattern that emerges from these studies is fairly uniform:

30-35% of the time of the CID[6] is spent on investigations: detaining and questioning suspects, placing them in custody, searching houses, interviewing witnesses, taking particulars of crimes reported;

25-30% of the time is spent on clerical duties: drafting and completing official reports, filling in all sorts of forms, etc.;

5-10% of the time is spent on procuring information, patrolling, guard duties;

5-10% of the time is spent on discussions with other officers, superiors public prosecutors, advocates, other departments and other forces.

The report on Dutch police strength ('Sterkterapport - Organizational Structures Project Group, 1979) further indicates that three-quarters of the time spent on dealing with crime cases (including clerical work) is devoted to serious crimes, which however account for only 5% of the crimes reported. Only a quarter of the case time is spent on the remaining 95% of reports of minor offences.

To summarize, we may conclude that detectives spend a relatively small proportion of their time on investigations, especially of petty crimes; a relatively large amount of time is devoted to various clerical duties; detectives spend little time procuring information internally or externally and rarely if ever go out patrolling on the streets.

b. Proposed changes

We should like to suggest the following possible changes as regards the time available for criminal investigations and the use of time by the CID.

1. Management of CID work could be improved to allow more time for criminal investigations. This could be done by assigning certain detectives or clerical staff to the job of taking reports of crimes so as to interrupt and fragment the work of the other detectives less. Another possibility might be to appoint coordinators within the CID to monitor the progress of investigations and discontinue them if there appears to be no likelihood of their being brought to a succesful outcome. Time could also be gained by spending little or no time on cases which have no likelihood of being solved. It would then be sufficient to provide the victim with information on how and where to submit any claims for damages and on future precautions or possible assistance. Another form of management, especially in the case of serious of frequently occurring crimes, might be to work in teams under the supervision of a team coordinator. Here too data processing systems could be useful by providing a systematic analysis of reports received.

2. There could be more consultation between the police and the courts. Regular consultations between the CID and the Public Prosecutor could save time in various ways: the Public Prosecutor could for example explain the grounds for dropping cases, on which basis the CID could select which cases to continue investigating. Detectives should be



prevented as far as possible from spending a lot of time on a case which is going to be dropped by the Public Prosecutor: although it has been solved, the preventive effect is probably insignificant. The consultations could enable the Public Prosecutor to indicate which cases he would like a detailed police report on for sentencing purposes and which cases could be mentioned as information in appendices; they could also help ensure that in any event the detective provides sufficient information and proof in the police report, thus reducing the likelihood of the case having to be dropped because of insufficient proof.

3. Another was to improve use of time would be to simplify various clerical procedures (drafting police reports) and to employ clerical staff to do some of the clerical work.

Effects of a CID project

The above suggestions are gradually being introduced in various parts of the country: for example computers are being used, procedures are being simplified, the patrol department is being employed to help with investigations and teams are being set up. Consultations between the police and public prosecutors are also under way. An article by Chief Public Prosecutor Herstel (1982) emphasizes the usefulness of such consultations to the public prosecutors as well. Priorities as regards controlling crime are figuring more and more in the tripartite consultations between Burgomaster, Chief Public Prosecutor and Chief of Police.

There has however been hardly any research into bhe influence of these new methods on the effectiveness of the CID. As far as we know there has only been a Research and Documentation Centre study of the effects of the "burglary project" carried out by Utrecht Municipal Police (Nuijten-Edelbroek, Ter Horst, 1980). This scheme involved a team of detectives and patrol officers who were given the job of sólving cases of burglary and theft. As part of the project some of the suggestions given above were implemented:

a. the members of the team were released from normal duties, thus their work was not subject to all sorts of interruptions;
b. several members of the team worked on each case;
c. there was a project leader who was responsible for the allocation of work, monitoring of progress, supervision and coordination;
d. better use was made of CID information files; the project also had its own information system geared specifically to burglary and theft cases;
e. clerical assistance was provide;
f. the clerical procedures were simplified;
g. the team consisted of detectives and patrol officers.

The RDC study indicated that the project was a success. The number and percentage of cases solved increased, with a smaller proportion of cases solved by catching the offender red-handed and a larger proportion of cases solved without direct indications. The likelihood of being caught also increased: not only were more cases solved, more offenders had reports made out against them. The average time spent on solving a case diminished.

The feature this project shares with all the other schemes involving the CID and criminal investigations is that it was not designed to do much more than improve a number of preconditions. The question remains whether this results in better crime control. Data on crime trends in the municipality of Utrecht do not point in this direction (Nuijten-Edelbroek, 1982). Where there was a drop in the crime rate this did not occur until some time after the burglary project: whether the drop was due to the project cannot therefore be said with any certainty. This raises the question of the extent to which the CID can be expected to help reduce the crime rate: are all CID efforts of this kind doomed to failure and therefore "hopeless"? This will be discussed in the last section in connection with the question of whether the preventive work of the patrol department, on the other hand, can be expected to help in this way.



Conclusion

Before giving further suggestions on crime control by the police we should like to summarise the results of the Dutch experimental pilot schemes which have been evaluated. As regards crime prevention the Amsterdam, Hoogeveen and The Hague schemes have shown that different (foot, bicycle) and more frequent types of patrol combined with specific information on precautions can be successful in some fields. As regards crime control the results would seem somewhat less then was hoped, at least at present although a stabilization of the crime rate certainly can be regarded as a positive result. A decrease in crime was found only for certain types of offence (especially vandalism). Better results were obtained in other fields, e.g. people's feelings about crime (insecurity and fear of crime) and their willingness to call on the police for assistance when they fall victim to crime or notice suspicious circumstances. It must be added that the effects might well have been greater if the police had succeeded in reaching a larger section of the population with these pilot schemes. The results of the Amsterdam scheme point in the direction: a larger proportion of people were aware of the scheme than in the other schemes, and its effects were proportionally greater. It might also be noted that the effects on the crime rate may take longer to become evident than the period covered by the study.
As regards crime detection the only experiments that have been carried out points in the right direction: the number and percentage of cases solved increased, as did the number of persons against whom the police reports were filed; "more difficult" cases were solved in proportionately less time. It is impossible to say wether this also results in better crime control: again we see that the relationship between criminal investigation work and the crime rate is questionable. There may be a preventive effect on offenders who are caught or on potential offenders who find out about succesful investigations. On the other hand a large number of other aspects probably play a larger part: the workload of the Public Prosecutions Department, the practice of dropping prosecutions, sentencing practice, the capacity of prisons and Houses of Detention, and above all the social circumstances of potential criminals (unemployment, drug addiction). Even in new pilot schemes this question of the relationship between the object of the experiment (usually to achieve better detection results) and crime control remains.

What lesson do these results hold for the future? The prevention schemes have shown that the crimes to be combated thus must be selected more consciously than has hithero to been the case. Some types of offence are considerably more susceptible to the deployment of additional police manpower than others. The choise should also be influenced by the fact that only crimes committed outside the home or in public buildings (about 40% of all crimes) lend themselves to control by preventive patrols, e.g. vandalism, robbery, pickpocketing, thefts from cars and thefts of cycles and mopeds. Even then a potential criminal will not be so readily deterred by a passing patrol but will postpone commission of the crime for a while: criminal behaviour is determined by too many other considerations than just the possibility of being found out and caught by the police or others. Crimes which are not visible to third parties, i.e. even to police patrols, while they are being committed require a different approach, with greater demands being placed on the public.

In the case of crimes which do lend themselves to control by preventive patrols the type of patrol is also important. Frequent visible patrols (preferably on foot or by bicycle) with frequent contacts with the public and all sorts of organizations have a much better chance of success than patrol cars driving around "any old how". The new prevention work by the police presupposes additional manpower: this could be provided in two ways, either overall police strength could be increased or capacity could be realeased whitin the present force. We do not deny that larger towns and cities, that more police are desirable or necessary. In our view, however, the solution is not only to increase the size of the force but also to release capacity within the existing force. Research has shown that the time the patrol department spends on preventive patrol and crime is very limited; more time should centainly be allocated for this purpose, but the question is where the extra time should be found. Are there fields within the work of the police as a whole where a temporary reduction in deployment or involvement could be allowed without serious consequences in the longer term? We should like to conclude with a few suggestions.



The observation study of the work of the patrol department (Junger-Tas, 1977) indicated that a larger proportion of the time was taken up by driving around "any old how", without incidents of any kind and with no contact with the public. It cannot be denied that this driving around has a certain preventive effect, but this could be probably be increased considerably by using a different approach. This also applies to the time of day at which patrols take place. Under the present duty roster system a large proportion of patrols take place at times when relatively little is happening as regards traffic, crime and assistance to the public (during the daytime, when the avarage citizen is working or at school, etc.); a small proportion of patrols take place at times when the likelihood of incidents is greater (evenings, weekends, etc.). The extent to which this duty roster system could be changed might be investigated. Time and manpower could be gained in yet another way. It may be assumed that those who commit particular types of crime are more likely to be influenced by police presence than other offenders: e.g. it is conceivable that infringements of various traffic laws are influenced less by the number of police deployed to monitor them than cases of vandalism or theft from vehicles. If this is indeed the case traffic policing could be reduced for a certain period, for example, and the capacity thus released employed to deal with types of crime which can be combated with the aid of additional police involvement.

It would seem that traffic policing in particular could provide a considerable amount of police capacity which could be devoted to crime. Also, such additional police involvement could affect not only the amount of crime but also, because it would be more visible, people's feelings about crime and potential criminals perceived risk of being caught. This latter could have a particularly strong preventive effect.

New empirical research is needed to examine the feasibility and effects of these suggestions and to find out, for instance, what types of cases the police could neglect without all too serious consequences for while (and for how long).

As regards crime detection, we would argue in favour of selective investigations concentrating on cases which have a reasonable chance of

being solved. These selective investigations should make deliberate use of both methods of management and organization and computerized data processing systems. In spite of its probably small direct contribution to time control, criminal investigation is inseparable from the various types of prevention work carried out by the police. Increassing demands are being made on public to prevent crime by taking precautions, notifying the police as quickly as possible and above all by helping to restore an informal social vigilance or intervening themselves if they witness a criminal offence. A recent Research and Documentation Centre study (Roell, 1982) has indicated that a great deal of improvement could be made in this field in relation to bicycle thefts. The public might be more convinced about its role if the police could show that they can obtain good results in terms of indentifying and catching suspects, within the limits imposed upon them and in relation to types of crime where the limits imposed upon them and in relation to types of crime where it is realistic to expect this. This could put a stop to any tendency towards people taking the law into their own hands. Good crime detection results are moreover more apparent to the public, but also to the police, than good crime prevention results.



Footnotes

1 The authors are researchers at the Research and Documentation Centre, Ministry of Justice, The Hague, The Netherlands.

2 The Langemeijer Committee was set up in 1948 to make recommendations on a Police Bill to replace the 1945 Police Decree. It consisted of representatives of the Public Prosecutions Department, the provincial and local authorities, the Ministries of Justice, Home Affairs and Defence and the municipal police forces and State Police. Instead of a unanimous report the Committee produced a majority report, a minority report and three separate proposals for a Bill. The majority proposal was finally incorporated in the 1957 Police Act. (Report of the Police Study Committee, 1950).

3. This image of the police as "crime fighters" is maintained in various ways, especially by the media, television and the cinema).

4. A study by Van der Werff (1979) shows that this preventive effect is not in fact great.

5. Data from the annual statistics of the Organization and Planning Department of Amsterdam Municipal Police.

6. Excluding the time of the science unit, identification unit and information unit.

END