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**CHANGES IN SOCIETY,
CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN EUROPE:**
A challenge for criminological education and research

**CHANGEMENTS DE SOCIÉTÉ,
CRIME ET JUSTICE PÉNALE EN EUROPE:**
Un défi pour l'enseignement et pour la recherche en criminologie

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Ter Ere van
In Honour of
En l'Honneur de

Prof. Dr. Jaak VAN KERCKVOORDE
5 mai 1994†

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Police, private security and employee surveillance; trends and prospects, with special emphasis on the case of the Netherlands

JAN VAN DIJK*

1. Introduction

Broadly defined the police maintains law and public order, as defined by legislation and jurisprudence, through the democratically controlled execution of surveillance and investigative functions. Private security firms protect the economic interests of their clients against illegal predations by outsiders and employees within national legal frameworks. Several commentators have noted an increased tension between these two entities working in roughly the same domain (SWANTON, 1993).

The growth of the private security industry over the past two decades is perceived by some police executives and experts as an intrusion on the police's exclusive preserve. Some criminologists have expressed concern about the adverse effects of private security upon individual liberties (MARX, 1992; HOOGENBOOM and MORRÉ, 1988). The growth of the industry is seen as an extension of the formal social control functions of the state without the usual legal safeguards (MCCRIE, 1988).

Others, however, the present author included, welcome the contribution by a supposedly efficient and client-oriented private sector to the prevention of crime in society (VAN DIJK, 1988).

In this paper we will focus our attention on trends in the provision of ordinary surveillance functions which make up the bulk of the activities of both the police and the private security firms. For a grounded judgement on the positive and negative aspects of private surveillance, statistical information on trends seems to be of vital importance. We will try to put the ongoing ideological and theoretical debate in an international perspective by presenting and discussing comparative statistics on police and private security manpower. If our data are found to be unsatisfactory, hopefully they will at least have wetted the readers' appetite for better information.

Although few statistics are available on this, we want to include in the analysis professionals such as busconductors, caretakers, janitors, shop assis-

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tants etcetera. These people exercise surveillance as part of a broader package of services. In some instances surveillance is in fact an unintended side effect of their primary work. In the Dutch literature on crime prevention their activities are referred to as functional surveillance (*Society and Crime*, 1985). CLARKE (1992) uses the term employee surveillance. The enlarged scope of the subject matter seems to have important implications for the theoretical interpretation of trends in private security.

Throughout the paper we will inevitably borrow most of our examples from the national experience with which we are most familiar, that of the Netherlands. To conclude, we will make some comments on the prospects for policing and private security in Europe.

2. Market volume and market share

Over the past twenty years the private security was a growth industry. For instance in the Netherlands the total number of persons employed by private security firms increased by 75% since 1981. The increase of the industry does not necessarily point to a power shift in the social organisation of formal social control. It does not follow from such statistics that the police has in any way lost a market share to the private sector. It is perfectly possible that the demand for security type functions has grown, together with that for policing. In the same period, however, the Dutch police force did not substantially expand its manpower. In purely financial terms the police has indeed lost a market share in the Netherlands. In other respects the growth of private security seems to have outpaced that of the police forces as well. It remains to be seen whether private security has taken over functions which were traditionally largely or exclusively performed by the police or has entered newly emerging markets.

SOUTH *et al.* (1987) has placed the various control agencies on a "continuum of police organisations". The use of the concept of "police organisations" betrays his underlying assumption that other control agencies are quasi-police. In our view private forms of organised social control have their own history and identity (VAN DIJK, 1988). A distinction can be made on the continuum of formal/informal social control between policing, private security, employee surveillance and natural surveillance by parents, neighbours etcetera. On the extreme ends are situated the police, exercising formal control and the private citizens, exercising informal social control. There is hardly any overlap between their roles. Situated in the middle are private security guards and employees. Their activities can be characterized as semi-formal control. Private security is formal in the sense that the officers wear uniforms and comply with professional codes of practice. In some countries security guards are licensed by the state and even endowed with certain privileges (e.g. the right to wear

firearms or to use force). Some in house private security guards of large companies, e.g. in mining, have limited police authority. Most forms of employee surveillance also have some formal characteristics (e.g. busconductors). This is not the case with janitors, caretakers, etcetera, employed by private agencies but their social roles partly governed by contract law.

There are substantial overlaps between the surveillance activities of the police and private security. Examples are preventive patrolling of public space and the provision of follow up services to burglar alarms. There are also overlaps between private security and employee surveillance. Examples are access control/reception desk service or preventive checks made by caretakers in office buildings. Finally, employees such as caretakers in high rise flats have many functions in common with ordinary residents (keeping an eye on things, encouraging children to obey the rules).

In figure 1 we have depicted the four forms of surveillance at issue and their overlaps.

Figure 1: Four types of surveillance, placed on the dimension of formal versus informal control

public police	private police	employee surveillance	natural surveillance
formal social control	semi formal social control		informal social control

In our view the dynamics on the market for policing and security must be analysed within the full range of surveillance functions. Three main trends can be observed in the overall surveillance markets in industrialised nations over the past decades.

The first trend was the decline of employee surveillance and its partial replacement by the police. The second trend was the (lagged) replacement of reduced employee surveillance by specialised private security officers. As a third trend we see the development of the private security industry into a respectable profession and potential partner of the police.

3. Reducing employee surveillance and expanding the police (1960-1980)

In the sixties crime started to rise against a background of more individualistic, urban lifestyles and a wider supply of suitable targets for crime (FELSON,

1994). Several forms of natural surveillance declined, for instance parental control over evening activities of teenagers (JUNGER-TAS and TERLOUW, 1991). The urbanization process has also weakened the social infrastructure for bystander interventions and neighbourly surveillance since communities have become less well-integrated.

As noted in the Dutch policy plan *Society and Crime* (1985), the opportunities for crime were further increased by substantial reductions in employee surveillance. Employee surveillance was reduced primarily for economic reasons. The higher minimum wages payed in highly productive, industrialised economies made many traditional service jobs into a luxury. Partly for cost cutting reasons but partly also as a deliberate policy move, private and public agencies reduced the numbers of caretakers, janitors and canteen assistants in plants, schools, offices and flats. Municipal authorities reduced the number of park wardens, bridge wardens and the like. Public transport companies reduced the number of bus conductors, ticket collectors and introduced voluntary payment systems. In Amsterdam local authority at one point decided unofficially that the less well off ought to have free public transport and deliberately discouraged controls. Department stores introduced the self service system and cut back on staff. The most striking illustration of the new trend is perhaps the replacement of the classical evening paper vendors by a system of voluntary payment. Finally, middle class families stopped subscribing to commercial night watch schemes.

The ideological underpinning of this trend was that modern citizens do not need to be controlled by authority figures. They are supposed to exert a sufficient measure of self restraint to regulate their own activities without the interference of (uniformed) officials. The reduction of employee surveillance can be seen as an manifestation of the freedom loving spirit of the sixties, embraced eagerly by management for economical reasons. In the Netherlands the breakdown of external controls was interpreted by sociologists as a new stage in the civilisation process as described by N. ELIAS (KAPTEYN, 1989).

The rapid and substantial reduction of many forms of semi-formal social-control must have had considerable impact upon levels of crime. To date these trends have been largely neglected by criminologists. The focus of criminology on deprivation theories has probably prevented empirically minded criminologists from documenting these trends. The demise of the shop steward, busconductors and caretakers has also gone largely unnoticed by experts on policing and private security because they typically take the public police as their vantage point.

In our view, governments and citizens in West European nations experienced extraordinarily low crime rates in the first two decades after the war and could afford a *laissez faire* mentality towards deviant behaviour and petty crime. After the economic recovery most forms of crime started to show an increase. When crime rates started to go up in the late sixties, the obvious

solution was an expansion of police budgets. Progressive political parties at first tended to downplay the rise of crime. If government action had to be taken expanded police forces were given preference over private security arrangements for reasons of principle. Police forces are democratically accountable and therefore supposed to respect individual autonomy and privacy. They are also supposed to provide an equal service to all citizens.

The business sector as well as public and semi-public agencies, which had reduced employee surveillance for efficiency reasons, gladly supported the definition of crime as the exclusive responsibility of the police and the criminal justice system. For ideological reasons several public agencies also defined crime as a law enforcement problem. Youth workers and teachers pursued a clean hands policy by denying any responsibility for the maintenance of law and order among their client groups. Unpopular interventions against juvenile offending was happily left to law enforcement agencies.

As a result of this convergence of economic and ideological interests police forces were invited to fill the vacuum created by reduced natural and employee surveillance. Prime examples of this are police patrols in department stores at the request of the management to prevent shoplifting and the patrolling of high-rise buildings by police. Literally hundreds of police officers carried out surveillance functions in overtime during largely unguarded soccer matches or pop concerts. Police officers and prosecutors were forced to spend sizeable proportions of their capacity on arresting and prosecuting faredodgers. In some cities the police also fulfilled various social work functions and even set up its own youth clubs. All these phenomena could be observed on a large scale in the Netherlands in the seventies and eighties. During this period, the police was expected to perform all remaining formal and semi-formal control functions.

4. Specialised security services (1970-1990)

In the course of the seventies it became apparent that the police could not possibly turn the rising tide of various forms of crime. At the same time governments became reluctant to agree to further increases of the police. In some nations the so-called fiscal crisis made further increases of police budgets politically unfeasible. In the meantime police forces had upgraded their professional standards. Training was improved, especially in social and technical skills. In conjunction with this, salaries were substantially raised. The higher costs of policing have been an extra impediment to further expansions.

After a short period of political negotiation larger private and semi-public companies understood that they had to improve security on their own premises. In the words of Anton DREESMAN, the then executive manager of Hollands largest department store, the larger companies "opted out", in the sense

that they no longer relied on the police for their security. They sulkily decided to sort out their own security problems. Instead of rehiring previously dismissed staff with wider service and surveillance functions, department stores and public transport companies now started to introduce specialised security personnel. Security guards were introduced in department stores. Public transport companies introduced special inspectors in stead of regular bus or tram conductors. Universities employed campus police instead of porters. In the Netherlands some council estates hired private security guards to patrol high rise blocks in the evening instead of employing caretakers.

As a second major trend we see, in sum, the lagged substitution of private security for employee surveillance. In the short term the hiring of private security guards seemed more efficient than an overall increase of service staff.

5. Private security companies as partners (1980-2000)

As said, private security companies have grown rapidly over the past years. In our view this trend was an economically motivated response to increased criminal losses. Growth of mass private property, such as mega shopping malls and recreational parks, may have caused special crime problems as suggested by SHEARING and STENNING (1983) but this is only one of many factors. Public and semi-public agencies incurred similarly high losses and have acted accordingly.

Another factor besides increased losses, which may have opened new markets, was the introduction of new, sophisticated surveillance technologies. The supply of new technologies may at first have driven out the use of guards but eventually seems to have reduced the costs of security and stimulated demand of more cost-effective security services. The growth in the number of security companies was also advanced by economy drives by large companies in the eighties which led to a slimming down of all secondary functions. In house security agencies were partly contracted out. Another important factor has been the privatisation of secondary functions by government. Government agencies, including police forces and prisons, started to contract out elementary tasks such as desk reception/access control and transportation to security companies. The growth in size of the private security industry was accompanied by qualitative improvements (NEMETH, 1989). Most governments on the European continent introduced or amended legislation regulating the security industry (DE WAARD and VAN DEN HOEK, 1991). Typically, companies have to fulfil certain requirements to be licensed. In many countries individual guards have their criminal record checked as part of the selection procedure.

Gradually private security lost its image of a second rate or failed form of policing – policing for profit – and acquired a sizeable and respectable position in the service industry. This fact has triggered a new willingness on the

part of the police to seek a better cooperation with the private security industry (FARMER, 1988). Police and private security management started to attend conferences together. In several areas the police collaborates closely with private security, for example in the regulation of soccer matches. The newest trend includes the establishment of formalized public-private partnerships which seek to capitalize on synergies arising from closer cooperation. In the Netherlands a National Platform of Crime Control was set up in 1992 on which both police and private security management are represented. Special taskforces were formed by the platform made up of experts from both professions (e.g. task forces tackling armed robbery and car theft). Police forces have also set up foundations together with the local business community to collectively contract private security and alarm services on industrial estates. The selected security companies work according to the instructions of the board on which the police is represented. The police forces at issue profit from fewer false alarms and can guarantee better follow up. Losses from crime were found to drop sharply on better protected estates. This persuaded the insurance companies to offer reduced premiums on certified estates. In the Netherlands more than thirty of such foundations are currently operational. Some police forces and private security companies have also set up joint training programmes or allow participation by "outsiders" in their courses.

In short, we conclude that the private security industry has been able to grow in response to rising crime rates. It provided an efficient alternative to more labour intensive forms of employee surveillance. It was not, as is often uncritically assumed, introduced as a substitute for the police. The advent of private security is mystified if represented as a process of privatisation of public policing (SHEARING, 1992) or of netwidening by the state (COHEN, 1985). As regards the extent to which police forces have outcontracted certain functions this should rather be seen as a process of reprivatizing employee surveillance, temporarily exercised by the publicly financed police. As recommended in the final report of a Dutch advisory committee on crime policies in 1985, security costs of commercial and semi-commercial activities must be internalised in their market price and not shifted onto the tax payers.

6. The public-private ratio in an international perspective

A full-fledged empirical test of the account given above would require the collection of trend data. There are hardly any statistics on employee surveillance and few on private security. What we have at our disposal are comparative data on police personnel and private security personnel of several European countries collected by J. DE WAARD (1993). These rates are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Absolute and relative number of police personnel and private security personnel per country

	personnel police (source)	(A) per 100.000 inhabitants	personnel priv. sec. (source)	(B) per 100.000 inhabitants	(A)+(B)	Number Priv. sec. per 100 policemen
Belgium	18.498 (b)	222	6.321 (i)	76	298	34
Denmark	9.416 (a)	184	4.227 (j)	83	267	45
Finland	11.942 (g)	244	4.100 (g)	84	328	34
France	199.757 (a)	360	73.060 (l)	132	492	37
Germany	201.892 (d)	327	190.000 (k)	307	634	94
Great Britain	180.039 (a)	317	70.000 (m)	123	440	39
Netherlands	28.516 (a)	195	16.689 (n)	114	309	59
Portugal	4.600 (f)	486	15.000 (o)	150	636	31
Spain	160.500 (e)	422	62.824 (p)	165	587	39
Sweden	22.000 (e)	259	15.000 (q)	182	441	70

Before commenting upon these rates, we must express a word of caution on their accuracy. The numbers do not relate to the same year. The reference year varies between 1986 and 1991. Although most of the information was collected directly from authoritative sources by the researcher himself, some definitional misunderstandings may yet have occurred which inevitably limit comparability.

The data show that in Europe the private security industry is still relatively small, compared to the police. Private security agencies in these fifteen countries employ about 500,000 persons, while public law enforcement in these countries have a workforce of over 1 million. In the USA the ratio is reversed; app. 1.5 million persons are employed by security firms and app. 600,000 by the police.

In Europe, South European countries have the highest rates of police per capita. A pronounced police presence seems a feature of countries with a historically strong, centralised state. In both Spain and Portugal private security companies were in fact largely outlawed in the fascist era. Private security was seen as a threat to the violence monopoly of the fascist state.

In Germany, Sweden and Spain many more security guards are currently employed than in Belgium, Denmark, Finland and The Netherlands. The high rates in Sweden are a special case because the private security industry is partly state-owned. The low rates of security personnel in the other "Nordic" countries is the more remarkable in view of their relatively modest police forces (*see* Figure 3).

Figure 3. Size and order or ranking of the police force and the private security sector per 100,000 in ten European countries

	A personnel police per 100.000 inh.	B pers. priv. sec. per 100.000 inh.	A+B total per. per 100.000 inh.	B/A ratio priv./ police
Portugal	486 (1)	150 (4)	636 (1)	0,31 (10)
Spain	422 (2)	165 (3)	587 (3)	0,39 (5,5)
France	360 (3)	132 (5)	492 (4)	0,37 (7)
Germany	327 (4)	307 (1)	634 (2)	0,94 (1)
Great Britain	317 (5)	123 (6)	440 (6)	0,39 (5,5)
Sweden	259 (6)	182 (2)	441 (5)	0,70 (2)
Finland	244 (7)	84 (8)	328 (7)	0,34 (8,5)
Belgium	222 (8)	76 (10)	298 (9)	0,34 (8,5)
Netherlands	195 (9)	114 (7)	309 (8)	0,59 (3)
Denmark	184 (10)	83 (9)	267 (10)	0,45 (4)

The four "Nordic" countries who have the lowest rates of formal control agents are traditionally seen as low crime countries. In the ICS Belgium and Finland featured as countries with low rates of crimes against households (VAN DIJK, MAYHEW, 1992). In the Netherlands petty theft and vandalism was relatively high. Crimes against businesses, however, may be less of a problem. First results of the International Crimes against Businesses Survey confirm that most commercial crime in the Netherlands is indeed lower than in the UK. Given the lower crime rates of Belgium and Finland generally, commercial crime losses are probably fairly low here too.

The data on the security-police manpower rates in Europe suggest that South European nations with centralistic state traditions have the highest numbers of police officers. Private security tends to be related to national rates of commercial crime. Companies in Germany, Spain, Portugal, France and the UK seem to invest more in their security to counteract higher losses than their counterparts in the Northern countries, regardless of the availability of more police manpower.

7. Conclusions and discussion

Although the private security industry has boomed in Western Europe, it is still modest in comparison to both the European police forces and the equivalent industry in the USA. There is no indication that private security is gradually taking over conventional police functions (see also NALLA and NEWMAN, 1991). National rates of private security are not inversely related to national rates of police officers. South European countries, Germany, the UK and

France all combine relatively high numbers of police with high numbers of private security officers. To our knowledge, no European nation has substantially reduced its police forces in recent years or has plans to do so.

The private security boom seems to be a logical response of the business sector to increased crime rates. The larger investments in security by businesses can be analysed in the perspective of the rational interactionist model (VAN DIJK, 1994). Investments in security will rise to the extent that loss prevention delivers larger marginal savings than the marginal expenses made. In the short term the crime burden is shifted towards the least protected targets. If a critical level of protection is reached certain types of offending are rendered more difficult and less rewarding. In the long term improved self protection will decrease the net gains of offending and so contribute to a stabilization of crime. In the area of armed robberies, for instance, such equilibrium seems recently to have been reached in many countries. As is the case with the increased implementation of burglar alarms in residential areas, the insurance companies play an important accelerating role in these dynamics by collecting and transferring information on costs and benefits.

In a sociological perspective the growth of the industry must be understood as the lagged replacement of natural and employee surveillance rather than as a dispersal of conventional police functions. The return of the police to its traditional core functions is a manifestation of the overall decline of the extended welfare state, caused by the need to reduce taxes in the context of competition on global markets.

8. Prospects

Due to the exportation of organized crime structures and activities from Italy and the former communist bloc, the European Union will have to protect its democratic institutions and open markets against organized crime. In the coming years police forces will probably be hard pressed to allocate more resources to the investigation of organized crime.

The focus of police forces on criminal investigations will involve increased cooperation with existing regulatory bodies, such as the tax collector (HOOGENBOOM, 1994). New strategic coalitions will be formed for which a legal basis must be created. It may also lead to a transference of secondary functions like traffic control to private security firms. In the Netherlands the decision was made recently to do a series of experiments with the privatisation of traffic control. The privatisation of such functions could lead to infringements on civil liberties. These liberties will increasingly have to be safeguarded in a framework of administrative and/ or contract law. The privatisation of prison services in the UK serves as an example how this may bring about improved performance. Stringent procedures for quality control, including the handling of complaints about bad treatment, will have to be incorpor-

ated in the private security company cultures. Since this is a service-oriented culture there is no reason to be pessimistic about the outcome. Quality control will probably be guaranteed through liability litigation (SCHILLER, HARRIS, 1988) and through certification procedures within a legal regulatory framework. Eventually private security standards may lead to increased costs to the point where the industry loses its competitive edge over the police.

The new focus on criminal investigations may also lead to a growing dissatisfaction among upper middle class families with police surveillance in their neighbourhoods and induce them to hire private security services. The North American phenomenon of heavily guarded shopping, annex recreational centres and adjacent residential areas in an otherwise unsafe urban environment is likely to emerge in European cities as well. In fact the first signs of such "Security oases" can already be observed in the Netherlands and in the UK (BOTTOMS and WILES, 1994). Improved protection of well to do neighbourhoods could cause a replacement of certain types of crime to more vulnerable neighbourhoods and exacerbate existing class divisions.

To counteract increased security inequalities, governments must, in my opinion, actively promote new forms of occupational surveillance. In the Netherlands the government has successfully intervened on the market for occupational surveillance (WILLEMSE, 1994). In the eighties public transport was allowed to employ a thousand extra inspectors, recruited from the long term unemployed. Their employment brought about substantial drops in fare-dodging and vandalism (VAN ANDEL, 1989). In some instances the traditional tram conductor was reinstated. Council estates were given three year grants for the hiring of caretakers with predominantly social functions. This has led to reductions in crime and the subsequent permanent employment of hundreds of such people (HESSELING, 1992). Building on the experience with public transport, the government has recently introduced so-called City Guards in more than thirty cities. City Guards are uniformed people recruited from the long term unemployed who patrol the inner cities on behalf of the municipality. They carry out preventive surveillance, give information to tourists and encourage people to comply with elementary rules (not to litter the streets or cycle on the pavement). They do not possess any special authority and have to rely solely on their social skills. In cases of emergency the police provides a back up service. All City Guards receive training from the local police and are supposed to pass an examination for security guard within a year. These projects are highly appreciated by retailers and the public at large (HAUBER *et al.*, 1993) and are now rapidly expanded. In some cities City Guards are now working in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods as neighbourhood concierges.

We see social caretakers, City Guards and neighbourhood concierges as a cost effective tool to control crime on behalf of the public at large in today's metropolises. Through the introduction of these functionaries European governments are reintroducing employee surveillance which was reduced for short term efficiency.

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