
URBAN SAFETY - Editorial

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1. Safety, Security and Fear of Crime in the City

In Germany as well as in other continental European states, a debate was initiated in the late 1980s and in the 1990s, which had already taken place in the USA. Crime, disorder, incivilities, fear of crime, social segregation, demise of the cities and much more were regarded as a sign of the unstable situation, which became the subject of social, political and economic discourse.

An alarming situation was portrayed and is still portrayed in the press coverage in the newspapers and weekly magazines. The small town of Wehr in Baden-Württemberg (Südkurier 16.06.2005) was described as “a hotbed of larceny”, or similarly, Elmshorn in Schleswig-Holstein as “a place with a high crime rate” (Wedel-Schulauer-Tageblatt 24.05.2005). “Citizens concerned about safety” was the headline of the Frankfurter Neue Presse on 08.06.2005. On 20.05.2005 the internet service provider T-Online published a safety-ranking under the title: “The most dangerous places in Germany”. And while Hamburg and Frankfurt were contending for the undesirable title of “Crime Capital”, Berlin is “in first place in Germany for the number of crimes committed” (Berliner Morgenpost 09.06.2005). An article in the weekly magazine “Der Spiegel” “Dreckspatzen und Drecksarbeit“ (No. 24, 1997, P. 50) concerned itself with “miserable

wretches and professional criminals, graffiti covered walls and house burglars, wrecked cars at the roadside and weeds between the paving stones – increasing numbers of citizens are beginning to see all of this as the writing on the wall of chaos, that could soon destroy cities and societies.”

By the end of the 20th century, the theme of safety in the city had surpassed the previous political debate on organized crime, and the discourse on the problem of violent crime has come into the fore. At the beginning of the 21st century the debate on urban safety continued to simmer, while terrorism, with its many associated forms, became the main focus of the discussion on security.

The discussion on urban safety had several effects. In areas of local government and national security, changes in policy, as well as polity and politics took place: Technical and personal controls in public areas were extended, not only under the umbrella of crime prevention, but also because of the desire for an improvement in the feeling of security. Local councils in several cities introduced uniformed civic wardens; in some federal states “voluntary police units” were deployed, and the video surveillance of streets and other public places was permitted and intensified. By means of security networks, neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention committees, the communication, cooperation and coordination of work on security by various actors could be integrated. This involved not only the police and local communities, as well as private security firms, civil society groups such as charities and sports clubs, and other public institutions (schools, citizens’ advice bureaus etc.). The activities not only involved a “fight against crime”, but were widened to include the “fight against the fear of crime”, areas which are well below the threshold of criminal law. In doing so, behaviour which conflicted with middle-class standards, such as begging, the consumption of alcohol in public

places, loitering and other forms of incivilities and disorder became a focal point.

If people's perception and action change, and if there is a wider, not just academic debate on urban safety, it is necessary to look for an empirical basis, to view the problem in context, and to examine the impact of action strategies with regard to their aims and effectiveness. It is also necessary to differentiate between various problem areas and discussion themes.

2. The empirical basis

Starting with the state of affairs of crime in Germany: According to public debate, a large increase in "public" crime would be expected. Offences such as stealing handbags, hold-ups in public areas, assault, theft from and of cars, violation of public peace and vandalism come under the concept of so-called "street crime". In 1993 in Germany, this area of public crime reached its peak, with almost 2.4 million registered cases – then in the next ten years fell by 800,000 criminal offences, a fall of around 30% (Federal Criminal Police Office/Bundeskriminalamt 2004: 242). The largest share in the fall of crimes was in the area of car crime. In other areas, the tendencies are not so clear. Assaults on streets and other public places stagnated, with slight fluctuations, at around 25,000 offences per year, while bodily injury has shown a continual rise. Reports of damage to property have also increased significantly.

This quantitative development however must be seen in the context of the problem of evaluating police criminal statistics (see Frevel 1999: 46 ff.). On the one hand, they show an actual increase in criminal offences; on the other hand, they reflect a change in perception by the population and an increased willingness to report crime by the victims,

and thereby a shift in the grey area of crime.

The development of the fear of crime, which since the 1990s has gained increasing significance, has run almost parallel to the development of registered crime. From 1993 to 1995 the data on the sense of security of the Germans was alarming. 86 percent of East German citizens and 70 percent of West Germans felt that their safety on the streets was threatened (IPOS 1995: 68). But it was not only the general fear for their safety which concerned the people; many had a tangible fear of themselves becoming a victim of crime. 29 percent of West Germans and 48 percent of East Germans expected to be mugged within the following 12 months. 42 and 63 percent respectively expected to be victim of a break-in, and 45 and 66 percent to be robbed (Statisches Bundesamt 1994: 526 ff.). Surveys carried out by the North-Rhine-Westfalian police continuously showed that even though the situation improved in the following years (compare Dörmann/Remmers 2000), the emotional fear of crime, as well as the cognitive risk assessment remained at a high level.

There is a correlation between these personal attitudes towards crime and the so-called social attitudes towards crime, which have an effect on the assessment of crime as a social problem, as well as attitudes towards sanctions and policy towards crime. Opinions and attitudes towards criminal menace created a crime-related political climate in Germany characterised by an increasing acceptance of the expansion of police authority, the curtailing of civil liberties, the tightening of criminal law, as well as faster and tougher penalties in the courts. The success of the right-wing populist Ronald B. Schill in the local elections in Hamburg in 2001, and the swift expansion of his "Partei Rechtsstaatliche Offensive" in other federal states – in spite of its ultimate speedy political downfall – was an indication of the responsiveness towards these attitudes. The

widespread inclination, even in the established political parties, to yield to the general desire for tighter measures, was criticised by the former Minister of Justice of Lower Saxony and head of the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony, Christian Pfeiffer. In an open letter to the federal ministers of justice and federal minister of the interior in the weekly newspaper, *Die Zeit* (02.06.05, P. 9), he called for a less alarming political discussion, which should address the actual risks and threats, instead of dramatising the situation and adopting tighter measures.

In the light of a part real, part assumed worsening security situation, an increased fear of crime, increasingly stringent attitudes towards crime by the population, as well as a party political environment receptive to these currents, the security policies of the local councils is being reshaped.

3. Local security work

The debate on security and law and order in Germany has also been strongly influenced by the ideas of the “broken window theorem”, developed by the American social scientists Wilson and Kelling (1982). In an essay and in later publications, they expressed the idea of an analogy between the fall into disrepair of a house and demise of a community. The idea being, that if one window of a house is broken and no one bothers to repair it, in a short time all the windows will be broken and the house will fall into disrepair. Not bothering is a sign of lack of control, lack of rules and responsibility. In the local community the lack of reaction to wrong-doing (whoever defines this), sends a signal to those wrong-doers and the social environment, that this and even criminal behaviour, will be tolerated. Thus a situation of lack of social control develops, which could soon turn into a situation of lack of legal authority. The implication of the broken window theory is that there

must be a reaction in the early stages to deviant behaviour. Even forms of disorder and incivility should be dealt with immediately, in order to nip crime in the bud.

The security policy in New York based on this theorem, was introduced by the mayor Giuliani and his chief of police, William Bratton, and goes under the name of “zero tolerance”. In spite of the success record of this strategy, in the form of the decline of violent crime and an improvement in the feeling of security, there are some problems. Allegations of police brutality, racism, increased social inequality and other factors have been linked to this concept.

“Zero tolerance” attracted attention – partly due to the intensive press coverage and marketing strategy of Giuliani and Bratton – also in Germany and found a certain amount of support. Conservative politicians in particular adopted the slogan, and the CDU used the title for their programme on crime policy for the general election. However, the police and criminologists viewed this development with scepticism; both in view of the non-comparability of the respective US and German crime situation, as well as the fact that a zero tolerance policy is hardly comparable with fundamental values of the “appropriateness of means” specified in the German constitution (compare Bundeskriminalamt 1997).

The interest in US American security work, created by the broken-windows-theorem and the New York zero tolerance strategy, brought other concepts, going under the umbrella of “community policing”, into the continental European arena. In contrast to zero-tolerance, the philosophy of problem solving played a more significant role in community policing. Solving problems has to begin with the causes of the problems, and must stem from a balanced ratio between primary and secondary crime prevention, and though not excluded, in contrast to zero-

tolerance, repression does not become the main element. A precondition of this strategy is the cooperation between the various organisations involved. Cooperation is required not only from the police, but also from the local council, with its law and order administration, its social - and advisory services, as well as the regional economy, local clubs and societies, neighbourhoods and other institutions of social control. Policing must go hand in hand with crime prevention measures. It is also important that the citizens' perception and assessment of behaviour patterns, of city planning (e.g. identifying places of fear) and the feeling of security are incorporated in the conception of local security work (see Bässmann/Vogt 1997).

This approach was also widely accepted and applied in Germany. From the middle of the 1990s there was a boom in the creation of crime prevention councils, round table organisations, security networks and law-and-order partnerships, who, each with their own profile and influenced by the groups concerned and their specific interests, participated in the local security work (see e.g. Innenministerium NRW 2004, BKA 2003).

The strong perception of American policy was not solely based on the performance of the concept, but was also due to the fact that the environment was receptive to this concept. An important factor in this context was the on-going discussion on the so-called civil society, which was influenced by the debate on social communities of the 1980s. The strengthening of civil society structures and the taking-over of civil responsibility in the community were thoughts which were connected with deliberations on the role of the state, its abilities and limits, as well as the legitimacy of carrying out its tasks. In the state-related part of this debate, the concepts of a catalyst state, "citizens councils" and "civil police" were developed. Their common element is the conviction, that the modern state at the end

of the 20th, beginning of the 21st century, is reaching the limits of its possibilities to perform tasks: The active cooperation of society in solving problems as well as democratic participation are necessary. The acceptance, legitimation and effectiveness of the state are in the forefront.

The second significant factor, though related to the above-mentioned, is to be regarded independently. High public debt has led to a view of state performed action as a criticism of its tasks: What should or rather what must the state do, who would be responsible on a state or administrative level? On the one hand, it was hoped that the answers to these questions would be found by making changes in the internal organisation, for example the introduction of the new governance model, which put a strong business management emphasis on public administration. On the other hand, the measures were reviewed, whereby the administration could be restructured using outsourcing, or linking state and private organisations with private-public-partnerships, or even undertaking 'real' privatisation.

Making organisational changes, establishing a network for those involved and using the synergy effect, getting the recipients of services involved in the organisation of services, economising: These are just some of the many points in this debate. In such an environment, the ideas of community policing could be adopted quickly and integrated into the policy and politics of local security.

However, this integration in Germany did not happen as quickly and as smoothly as it would perhaps seem. The "new public management" came up against resistance and problems of acceptance by the employees within the authorities concerned, but among the administration management it also triggered reservations regarding shifting responsibility and authority. The internal problems

are not so significant for this theme, but they had a strong influence on the process of change (regarding the police, see Lange/Schenck 2004). Changes in the responsibilities of the institutes concerned were more significant. Within the police force there are misgivings, whether a perception of security, in other words subjective feelings, can be an adequate starting point for police action. In addition, doubt has been expressed as to whether it is the role of the police as an organ to prevent danger and a law-enforcement agent, to be involved in primary and secondary crime prevention programmes (with for example social support), or whether this is the role of the city and local community. On the other hand, the local councils voiced concern that by taking on tasks in the field of crime control, they were forced into providing a service and funding expertise, for which they were a) not legally responsible and b) for which they did not have the financial means and personnel to deal with. Should the local councils now carry the weight, which the federal states as bearer of the police force should be doing? (see Städtetag NRW 1996).

4. Social science perspectives

The above-mentioned process offers a rich pallet of particularly interesting research questions, which arise partly from a rather academic interest, but are also influenced by an interest in the use and application e.g. from the ranks of the police force, administration or even educational institutions.

In contrast to the USA, Great Britain and some other European countries, in Germany the relationship between the social sciences and the police was marked by tension. A significant, but certainly not the only reason for this tension, was the debate concerning the criminological theory of the labelling approach (Becker 1963; re.

Germany, see Sack 1978) in the 1970s, for example by such authors as Manfred Brusten, Johannes Feest and Rüdiger Lautmann. In this area of research, the police were portrayed as increasing social inequality, as acting as state bailiff and as the wielders of power in society, who repress minority groups and criminalize them. There was therefore little institutional interest on the part of the police in social science studies (Pick 1995; see Ohlemacher 1999: 5 ff.). It was not until the 1990s, when the problematic situation was changing and there was a new generation of researchers, as well as the gradual introduction of academic courses for police training at special universities of applied sciences, that the doors to academic research were re-opened (ibid.; Feltes 2003).

Thus in the following years, social science research *in, about* and *by* the police could develop again (Liebl/Ohlemacher 2000). Young academics formed networks such as the “Interdisziplinäre Arbeitskreis Innere Sicherheit”¹ or the symposium “Empirische Polizeiforschung”² combining practical police work with academic theory. New publishers such as the “Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft”, the “Felix Verlag – Fachverlag für polizeiwissenschaftliche Literatur”, as well as the series of academic books “Schriften zur Inneren Sicherheit” published by the “Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften” took up these themes and published widely on police issues and matters of security. There was also increasing interest from university lecturers and students. In addition, the police and local councils suggested particular themes and allocated research assignments, which were supposed to describe the situation from an academic standpoint, highlight possible courses of action, or evaluate the activities.

¹ Translation: Interdisciplinary Working Party for National Security

² Translation: Empirical Police Research

In these studies, urban safety took on a special significance. Beginning in Lübeck, then other large cities and finally in smaller local communities, so-called criminological regional analyses were carried out. These involved the assessment of the security situation by the general public, the study of the image and performance of those involved in providing security, and identifying areas of application (compare Polizei-Führungsakademie 1992). Schwind et al. (2001) carried out a longitudinal sectional analysis of crime in the Ruhr city of Bochum, Krevert/Metzner (2002) dealt with security in large cities, and on the basis of the analysis of literature as well as analyses by experts described the situation in large cities. At various symposiums, academics discussed “the local state as a producer of security” (Prätorius 2002) and “the custodialisation of national security” (Elsbergen 2004). The above-mentioned references are just some examples from the booming field of research, which is taking up further interesting research questions.

In this issue of German Policy Studies, only a few of the topics studied or worth studying can be dealt with. On the one hand this selection of topics should provide an insight into the problems, and on the other hand an outline of the specific German or rather continental European perspectives. In addition to the articles by German authors on urban sociology and on the political-cultural conditions of local security work, colleagues from Switzerland and the Netherlands take up aspects specific to those involved in security work and its governance.

Walter Siebel and Jan Wehrheim, two sociologists who specialise in urban sociology at the Carl-von-Ossietzky University in Oldenburg, examine the changing conditions of safety and the perception thereof in urban environments. The starting point of their deliberations is the changing relation between public and private matters. On the one

hand, private matters become public – whether it is the homeless person, who sleeps, eats and urinates in public places, or whether it is the manager, who discloses his economic strategies and decisions to everyone in earshot while on the mobile phone – while at the same time the public domain is privatised. An example of this the latter bringing retailing literally under one roof when relocating an open market to a shopping mall, which is subject to the jurisdiction of the tenant.

Public life in a city differs from village life, in that the citizens have a higher degree of freedom and anonymity and there is a lesser extent of informal social control. However, it becomes apparent that with social segregation and the isolation of social milieus in cities, the necessary urban virtue of tolerance towards those who are different or unfamiliar is waning. If the fear of crime can now also be understood as the projected fear of the unfamiliar, a new need for safety or at least symbols promising safety (e.g. in the form of CCTV [Closed Circuit Television], private security services or police patrols) arises. Furthermore it can be observed that as well as formal social control in law-and-order partnerships and other forms, it is necessary to increase informal social control through the force of society. In eleven cases Siebel/Wehrheim illustrate that many of the debates on the fear of crime (discussed under the aspect of security) or use and control of public space should, from a sociological perspective, be reclassified. It thereby becomes apparent, that urban safety does not have, or not directly have something to do with crime, but with social structures and processes, which are merely reflected in the crime debate.

The younger colleagues at the Westfälische Wilhelms University of Münster, Henning van den Brink and Verena Schulze, have put the political-cultural preconditions for local security work into the fore. In a comparative study of

Germany and the Netherlands, they describe how the influences and traditions in the understanding of the state, democracy, citizens and safety, have an effect on the preconditions of an integrated strategy for local safety. It was not until after the Second World War, after a long period of a culture of state authority, that a democratic culture slowly began to develop. However, even today it is still affected by a strong orientation on the state's ability to perform and control. The political culture defines many problems e.g. also security as a task to be addressed, or better still solved, by the state. An intensive culture of regulation grows from this, which regards norms, laws and court sentences as being "better" than the negotiated compromise. A rather traditional desire for harmony and fear of conflict as characteristics of German political culture lead to a situation whereby the political debate on security mainly takes place in a state forum, while the general public desire safety provided by the state.

For the Dutch, who can look back on a long liberal tradition, the situation is different. In their view of society, pluralism and tolerance have a special significance. Their religious and economic pillarization, in the sense of separate columns of milieus, lead to the creation of a consensus democracy, which, building on the tradition of participation and protection of minorities, created a strong stability of the system. The culture of negotiation and compromise in the Netherlands therefore differs greatly from the culture of regulation, which is to be found in Germany. In the Dutch system, the state is allocated much less authority compared to Germany, which is influenced by state authority. The Dutch have a much more pronounced faith in their social assets: The state performs more the role of providing a framework, rather than as a keeper of morality. In this form of political culture, criminal behaviour is not primarily assessed as a breach of criminal

law, but as an affront to the tolerance of the general public. Society reacts to this kind of behaviour firstly with social and informal sanctions, only after that is it the turn of the police. In Germany on the other hand, a punitive-repressive alternative is provided, with formal controls and prosecution.

While in Germany there has been a softening of this political culture and a gradual democratization is discernible, in the Netherlands there has been an increasing trend towards a “strong” state, and not just since the conflicts following the murder of the right-wing populist politician, Pim Forteuyns on the one hand, and the Islam-critical film-maker Theo van Gogh on the other. Whether this represents a convergence of political cultures in Germany and the Netherlands must still be open to question. The structures for creating a safe environment in cities are definitely changing in both countries.

Kees van der Vijver and Jan Terpstra deal with this problem from a police scientist point of view. The two police researchers from the Dutch University of Twente in Enschede, describe how the rising crime rates, increased fear of crime and feelings of general insecurity have changed the expectations of the general public towards the police and public order authorities. The late modern society, with its complexities, its increased dependence on experts and yet sceptical of their ability to solve problems, creates a precarious prevailing sentiment, which also has considerable consequences on the image of the police and their role. In the Netherlands, once noted for its liberal stance, tougher controls and enforcement are now being demanded of the police – e.g. towards migrants – on the other hand, the police are expected to continue their social proximity and friendliness towards the general public. Even the area of conflict between the need for security and the demand for freedom is becoming all the more apparent.

Van der Vijwer and Terpstra have come up with five main areas in order to classify the security strategy in the Netherlands: Changes in organizational and managerial arrangements, changes in the relations between the state and other agencies, the rise of extra-judicial instruments and a growing attention to the position of victims, the increasing technological nature of prevention and surveillance, and the shift to a harsher, stricter state. Problems and inconsistencies in late modern society are to a certain extent apparent in security policy, which is then itself in danger of being vulnerable.

Kuno Schedler is professor of Business Studies at the Swiss University of St. Gallen. As a proven specialist in New Public Management, questions regarding decision making and the implementation of deployment programmes as effect-orientated administration management are significant. He regards finding solutions to creating more security in the cooperative state on three levels. With New Public Management or system management, he brings the institutional dimension to the fore. However, actor-oriented factors must also be considered, in order to analyse the power of control over the study of the constellation of actors, as well as the analysis of the interest and potential to act. Taking the city of Zurich as an example, this now classic approach is augmented by an additional factor, which he refers to as the “public marketing approach”. Under the categories “focus on needs”, “segmenting the market”, “focus on competition”, “focus on competence”, “focus on communication” and “focus on satisfaction” he creates the necessary angle for the programme development of effective strategies for action. If such a development becomes established in crime prevention and security policy, this would be a considerable achievement compared to the otherwise often haphazard constellations and actions. In this context, goal-orientation and the ability to evaluate

are highly probable.

The editor and the authors hope that we have painted a multi-faceted picture of the problems of urban safety from the view point of urban sociology, political science, administration studies and police studies, the latter being in a still rudimentary state in Germany and yet to be conceptualised. The accounts from Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, in spite of some differences in detail, make clear that public and urban safety face significant challenges ahead. We have identified inconsistencies and problems in the expectations of the general public, institutional and organisational restrictions of the security actors, various forms of actions and programmes between repression and prevention as problem areas. Further developments can be awaited with bated breath and this area of research will remain of great interest.

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