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Controlling crime through networks

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1. Introduction

Scholars have, for some time now, chronicled a significant transformation in the way policing is organised, and have acknowledged the increasingly pluralistic and networked nature of crime control (see, among others, Bayley and Shearing 2001; Fleming and Wood 2006; Brodeur 2010). No longer is the state regarded as holding a monopoly over policing (Bayley and Shearing 2001). Instead, controlling crime has become shaped by networks that integrate the public police with a host of other actors involved in the authorisation and delivery of security, including various state, as well as non-state, actors. Much research has explored the confluence of these multiple actors in various crime control contexts and has served to establish key theoretical strands within this burgeoning scholarship that view security as being delivered through networks (Dupont 2004, 2006a; Fleming and Wood 2006; Wood and Dupont 2006). This body of work suggests that the relationships between actors vary, ranging from highly coordinated, coproductive alliances to differing forms of contestation (Shearing and Wood 2003; Crawford 2006a). Several scholars have also sought to elucidate the nature of these connections and, in particular, the various ways in which information and resources actually flow across networks to deliver security (see Marks et al. 2011, 2013). One important thread emerging from this

scholarship recognises that assessing the nature of these flows involves the consideration of social structures—particularly through its macro-structural properties (Dupont 2004, 2006c). These very dimensions have been subject to empirical examination in some recently published work by the author (Brewer 2014, 2015), offering fresh insights into how the distinct patterns of connections within security networks shape the ways in which criminogenic conditions are controlled and responded to.

This chapter will probe key theoretical and empirical developments and account for how various state and non-state actors shape flows across networks. It begins by outlining a theoretical foundation for this work, detailing the evolution of crime control as it has unravelled in recent years, the pluralisation of policing arrangements and the emergence of networked approaches within the criminological literature. After establishing these important theoretical strands, this chapter then draws on findings from several recent empirical studies of security networks to explain and reconcile emergent structural forces that serve to shape network flows and influence security outcomes. It is argued here that a better understanding and appreciation of these forces, and the various contexts for which they operate, is necessary as policing networks continue to diversify. This chapter concludes by tying these findings in to broader debates occurring within criminology about the governance of security and the need to establish regulatory approaches to account for these developments.

2. Delivering security in the modern state

To fully comprehend the complex interweaving of state and non-state actors involved in contemporary policing and its complex social undertones, it is first necessary to give conceptual consideration to precisely how the propagation of non-state orderings within the modern state has drastically altered the delivery of public security. The ascendancy of neoliberalism as the prevailing economic and political paradigm has generally coincided with widespread privatisation, marketisation¹ and the dispersal of systems of governance. The state's longstanding primacy as the central 'guarantor of security' was not unaffected by the broader

1 Marketisation refers to instances where public institutions operate in some ways as market-oriented firms replete with market-oriented goals and objectives (that is, increased economic performance, competition) and market-type relationships (Salamon 1993). This process can occur, for example, through the reduction of subsidies and the deregulation of certain state-funded sectors.

transformation occurring across the modern state, as it, too, was heavily altered by a 'new public-private paradigm' (Johnston and Shearing 2003: 32–5). Bayley and Shearing's (1996: 586) much celebrated transformation thesis provides an account of these developments, proclaiming the 'end of a monopoly' in policing by public constabularies—ushering in a new line of scholarly inquiry seeking to account for the dispersal and restructuring of more traditional security roles within developed economies. In a later piece, Bayley and Shearing (2001: 1) argue that:

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, policing has been 'multilateralized': a host of non-governmental groups have assumed responsibility for their own protection, and a host of non-governmental agencies have undertaken to provide security services.

Systems of social control have, as a result, become fragmented—being forced to restructure into an 'array of interlaced networks and institutions that transcend the classical public/private divide' and incorporate an increasingly diverse cast of state and non-state providers of security (De Maillard 2005: 326). The complexion of such networks is crowded and includes various government agencies and multinational corporations operating within the same sphere as small businesses, communities, associations and even individual actors (Castells 2000; Holley and Shearing, Chapter 10, this volume).

The literature is not in complete agreement as to the extent to which such fragmentation is a product of the transformation thesis, as Bayley and Shearing (1996, 2001) suggest. Instead, some scholars (for example, Jones and Newburn 1998, 2002; Newburn 2001; Hoogenboom 2010) argue that the nature of diversification witnessed is merely representative of a modern state (and its police) reinventing itself along contemporary hybrid structures that formally capture new (but often pre-existing) agents of social control, who have always coexisted with state policing agencies and continue to do so (such as tram conductors, bouncers, ushers, shopkeepers, and so on). What is consistent across this diverse discourse, however, is the widespread recognition of an expansion of policing networks within the modern state, accompanied by a pervasive shift in the governance of security emphasising these public/private orderings. The factors explaining the origins of such profound changes are numerous and interlaced—revising the roles of both public constabularies and other non-state auspices over an extended period. Some, like Bayley and Shearing (1996, 2001), contend that such emergent governance arrangements are reflective of parallel shifts

occurring within the modern state itself: fledgling economies throughout the 1970s, the rise of mass private property (see Shearing and Stenning 1983; Kempa 2004) and the decline of the Keynesian welfare state being some of the most salient drivers (for further treatment of these concepts, see Newburn 2001; Dupont 2004; Reiner 2010). The parallel emergence of a 'risk society' has also been significant—featuring risk management as the key technology providing a 'systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization' (Beck 1992: 21; see also Haines, Chapter 11, this volume). The application and institutionalisation of this 'technology' within the modernising state have had considerable implications for the way criminal justice institutions operate, and the way crime policy is conceived: shifting away from a more traditional and episodic 'bandit-chasing', deviant individual focus to one that resituates crime control as its primary focus (Buerger and Mazerolle 1998). Such developments have also been aided considerably by the proliferation of powerful information, communication and surveillance technologies throughout the 1990s, which have enabled previously bounded agencies, organisations and individuals to expand the limits of their roles and responsibilities (Dupont 2004).

With the exception of a number of countries where the state has aggressively retained its primacy, the resultant revisions to the complexion of policing represent far more than the simple devolution of the existing roles of state institutions into subordinate orderings, but instead represent a blurring of such responsibilities in a technologically facilitated risk-based exercise designed to control and respond to crime (Johnston 2000; Bayley and Shearing 2001; Waring and Weisburd 2002; Dupont 2004; Hoogenboom 2010). Determinism has not been a factor in limiting the types of private and public actors becoming involved (or the extent of their involvement) in this exercise, or the degree to which they cooperate with or compete against one another in pursuit of internal and external security objectives. Rather, the uncertainty associated with the fragmentation of responsibility over security has compelled actors to seek order by coordinating with others (but not necessarily with all others). This has prompted the establishment of new channels of communication, the forging of new social connections (or ties) among previously disparate actors (or nodes) and the formation of alliances to tackle crime problems (Dupont 2004). The shared models emerging throughout this process are expansive, yet multifaceted, interweaving state authorities and non-state actors into an 'increasingly complex and differentiated patchwork of security provision' (Newburn 2001: 830).

3. Making sense of the melange

Taking stock of these developments, and making sense of the inherent complexities driving the provision of security in the twenty-first century, has proved a challenging, yet fertile, domain of scholarly inquiry. Within this burgeoning literature, the concept of ‘networks’ has provided a useful framework for portraying these complexities, and has attracted considerable attention from policing scholars involved in their study. The usage of this concept has, however, been driven largely by intuition about what a network is or how it should behave—drawing theoretical assumptions about neat, highly coordinated assemblages that presuppose activities of coproduction via horizontal partnerships (Brodeur and Dupont 2006; Dupont 2006a). This literature has interrogated the pervasiveness and utility of these assumptions largely using narrative or statistical data—concluding that policing relations are, in fact, characterised by a ‘complex mosaic’ of ‘more-or-less awkward relations’ that are ‘poorly organised and co-ordinated’, ‘suffer duplication’, ‘are marked by competition and mistrust’ (Crawford 2006a: 466–7) and thus offer ‘little evidence of the development of a co-ordinated system of policing’ (Jones and Newburn 1998: 197; see also Newburn 2001; Crawford et al. 2005). This work also sheds light on several important considerations surrounding the study of plural policing with which the application of network theories must grapple. For one, the provision of security within this increasingly pluralised ‘patchwork’ is incredibly difficult to trace, its boundaries porous and the true diversity of its memberships unclear. Nodes form networks across numerous plains of existence that overlap and intersect: they can be localised within communities, they can be inter-institutional, they can be transnational, they can also be entirely virtual and, importantly, they can change over time (Dupont 2004). Discrete networks can also be vastly different in terms of their scope and operating contexts, and ties can (and are) mobilised through a multifarious web of regulatory, contractual, voluntary and informal arrangements (Cherney et al. 2006; Dupont 2006a). Nodes are not necessarily bound by shared values or overarching objectives either, and are instead more appropriately characterised as a medley of overlapping (but also potentially competing or conflicting) interests and interdependencies (for example, Castells 2000; Newburn 2001; Crawford et al. 2005; Crawford 2006a; Brewer and Grabosky 2014; Brewer 2015). As a consequence of all these characteristics, the formation of connections among nodes and development of distinct

patterns of relationships have seen pluralised policing networks unfold in unique and sometimes unexpected ways. These myriad developments have considerable consequences for the provision of security and warrant further empirical attention.

To date, very few studies of policing (and, indeed, across criminology more broadly) have scrutinised the structural features of such networks (Dupont 2006a) or, in particular, employed network science (based in graph theory and widely used across other disciplines) to capture and explain precisely *how* the myriad links and interdependencies formed among security actors (no matter how strong, fleeting or diverse) serve to shape outcomes (Papachristos 2011). Several scholars have called for a need to move away from untested theoretical assumptions and employ methodologies to verify the multiplex nature of policing (which may be captured through network approaches): the extent to which nodes form connections, share resources (or do not), develop trust (or do not) and align interests (or do not) (Johnston and Shearing 2003; Fleming and Wood 2006; Johnston 2006). A substantial body of work emanating from within the discipline of sociology has long recognised the importance of accounting for a node's positioning within a network, as well as the meanings behind regular patterns of relational ties that emerge within networks—in other words, its *social structure* (Marsden 1982; Wellman 1988). However, only a handful of studies to date have adopted a network orientation in elucidating the complex social structure underpinning plural policing.² Dupont's (2004, 2006a, 2006b) pioneering research took important first steps in establishing concrete methodological and analytical parameters surrounding the study of *security networks*³ using relational data. Using social network analysis (SNA), this body of work undertook the onerous task of mapping the social structure (that is, the extent of connections and the placement of nodes) of localised security networks. Subsequent research by the author (Brewer 2014, 2015) has employed similar methods to build on these contributions and further develop understandings of how the diverse connections between nodes

2 The dearth of research in this space is surprising, considering the number of studies that have adopted a network orientation to examine so-called 'dark networks' (Raab and Milwaard 2003). Several notable studies have, for example, applied social network analysis to various forms of criminal networks (for example, Bright and Hughes 2012; Morselli 2009; Bichler and Malm 2015).

3 Dupont (2006a: 168) posits that 'security networks form around the authorisation and delivery of security, through a range of processes and services that extend from identification of needs and the resources available to respond to them, to the management of risks and the deployment of human technological assets'. Nodes can vary in specification; they may be 'institutional, organisational, communal or individual agents' that fall either directly or indirectly within this remit.

and their emergent social structures influence security outcomes by shaping the flow of network assets (that is, information and resources). With respect to these findings, the following discussion will tease out one important narrative surrounding the unexpected priority of some nodes over others, and a resultant concentration of control within a network structure. This commentary will reiterate that security networks do not operate as egalitarian horizontal structures, and instead demonstrates that only a select few nodes within a given network are adequately positioned to ‘fully exploit the opportunities this form of governance yields’ (Dupont 2004: 78).

4. Locating the positions of power and control over policing

The modelling undertaken of discrete security networks, first by Dupont (2006a, 2006b) and then by Brewer (2014, 2015), offers unique insight into *how* security is being delivered that has not previously been canvassed. Although these studies vary in terms of jurisdiction, size and scope, they both nonetheless feature consistent attributes pertaining to the interdependencies that exist between public and private nodes, the formation of distinct patterns of relational ties connecting nodes, and the emergence of complex structures that govern flows across security networks.

First, this body of work clearly articulates the extent of the diversity of both public and private nodes involved in the provision of security, and that sufficiently dense networks can afford copious opportunities for exchange. This is not to suggest, however, that all actors (public and/or private) operate on a level playing field, each having equal access to opportunities across the network. Rather, a node’s reach within a security network is affected by the extent to which its connections and activities are confined within distinct subgroups, or clusters. The abovementioned studies have shown the extent to which providers of security tend to concentrate activities among distinct subgroups, which, in many ways, serve to limit their capacities to connect to, and access resources across, the broader network. Brewer’s (2014) study of networked policing on the waterfronts of Melbourne, Los Angeles and Long Beach, for example, demonstrates that such patterns are reflective of tendencies among nodes to remain active within the confines of others who share similar values and interests, operating most effectively within parochial

silos and not concerning themselves with opportunities that may exist externally to that cluster. On Melbourne's waterfront, for example, nodes had a tendency to restrain their activities within a single cluster, where their duties, skills and functions remain non-overlapping and narrowly constrained to the point of specialisation. Public constabularies were shown to concentrate their connections among other institutional nodes involved in sharing intelligence and undertaking joint operations, and were regarded by nodes contained within other clusters as largely 'being left to their own devices', as 'only being interested in the glamour crimes' and as being 'way too far removed from industry and from the front line' (Brewer 2014: 138).⁴ Private stakeholders, on the other hand, were also very much aligned with, and connected to, other organisations sharing similar commercial interests. Owners of infrastructure were chiefly concerned with ensuring business continuity (and interacted with other related actors on that basis), while those involved in moving/clearing cargo also served their own internal interests. Such activities served to further distance (and, in some cases, alienate) these nodes in the eyes of external parties, promulgating the perception of 'closed shop' environments where crime problems were being addressed discretely (if at all) via 'in-house solutions' (contrary to legislative requirements that involve notifying public agencies contained within other clusters) (Brewer 2014: 138).⁵ These findings are significant in that they clearly illustrate a division of responsibility over network assets (information and resources), which in turn impacts on precisely where (and with whom) power resides within security networks. As such, opportunities for engagement and the flows of network resources are concentrated within, and are at risk of being fragmented across, distinct pockets of network activity.

This is not to suggest that crosscutting networking opportunities are futile within security networks. To the contrary, the research suggests that certain actors are sufficiently well connected within security networks to create opportunities for linkages, and effectively control the flow of network assets among less-connected actors. Studies of security networks to date have modelled control of such flows through a determination of which nodes actively occupy the most central (and, hence, most powerful) positions within a given network's structure. Measures of centrality have

4 Observations made by a maritime union representative and reiterated by other industry stakeholders interviewed for Brewer's (2014, 2015) research.

5 Views expressed by numerous state and federal officials (law enforcement and regulators) interviewed for Brewer's (2014, 2015) research.

frequently been used by researchers of security networks (for example, Dupont 2006a, 2006c; Brewer 2014) and elsewhere (for example, studies of criminal networks; see Note 2) to identify those nodes that hold the most connections and, thus, the greatest opportunities to connect with, influence and direct flows towards others. Relatedly, Brewer's (2015) study also emphasised the significance of brokerage roles undertaken by certain nodes within security networks, who are strategically placed to bridge 'structural holes' (Granovetter 1973) and connect otherwise isolated nodes. This research showed that public actors—and public constabularies, in particular—are both centrally and strategically situated network players. Such findings are perhaps unsurprising given the exclusive control governments have over essential security assets, which include specialised 'security equipment', the 'legitimate use of force' and access to 'restricted crime-related information' (Dupont 2006a: 175). What is striking about the social structures detailed by Brewer's (2015) study of Melbourne's waterfront, however, is that the network core is not exclusively the domain of the police; rather, entrepreneurial private nodes—in this case, the Port Corporation and terminal operators—also assume privileged positions to become the *most strategically placed nodes within the entire network*. In this respect, security networks have pluralised to such an extent that private nodes are increasingly becoming central players in the provision of security, and take a leading role in creating network paths, bridging structural holes and controlling flows across the entirety of the networks—thus targeting and creating opportunities for connection, especially among those disadvantaged and constrained by their structural positions within clusters.

5. Security networks and the governance of security

The structural elevation of private actors in crime control contexts is not an entirely unexpected phenomenon. Several years ago, Crawford (2006a: 466) noted that 'developments in the security market', including those undertaken by private actors, represent yet another thread that needs to be recognised of plural policing activities that coexist and intertwine. Indeed, over the past several decades, criminological scholarship has sought to clarify the extent of these developments—through empirical approaches that may serve to ground understandings of the conceptual placement of state and non-

state actors in an increasingly pluralised environment and to enhance prevailing debates surrounding the governance of security. The notion of ‘anchored pluralism’ (Loader and Walker 2006) represents one established perspective that has received considerable attention within the criminological literature, arguing that public constabularies exhibit distinct attributes that reinforce (anchor) their central position in the collective provision of security (for example, perceptions of legitimacy, symbolic power and cultural authority, access to resources and its position of being a backup of last resort). The empirical findings considered above support this perspective to a limited extent, showing that while public police serve as ‘anchors’ in some respects (they do maintain control over some network flows, as well as a symbolic position of authority), the network ‘does not depend on [the police] to mediate its exchanges on a routine basis’ (Dupont 2006a: 177).

In light of this, a nodal perspective (see further, Holley and Shearing, Chapter 10, this volume) better captures and explains the patterns of relations and coordination of security networks than does a purely state-centric view. The ascendancy of private nodes to prominent network positions provides clear evidence of a shift towards ‘corporate-anchored pluralism’, with private actors becoming a primary site of governance existing outside the state (see Johnston et al. 2008). The impact of increasingly dominant privately centred structures underpinned by competitive logics (that is, loss prevention) has been foreshadowed in the theoretical literature exploring ‘private governments’, highlighting, in particular, the capacity of private nodes to actively steer ‘the flow of events to promote security’ (Shearing 2006: 11; see also Macaulay 1986). We have learned from the research canvassed in this review that private actors have considerable influence over controlling flows within security networks—particularly in terms of ‘build[ing] bridges between disconnected parts of the market and organisations where it is valuable to do so’ (Burt 1992: 18). Brewer’s (2015) study of Melbourne’s waterfront shows that private actors can (and do) broker network flows along such lines and, to the extent possible, exercise control over segments of a security network in support of ‘club goods’ (Crawford 2006b) that benefit the maritime industry over broader ‘public goods’ concerning crime reduction. By way of example, this has led to network flows that often preference the expedited movement of cargo, ships and trucks (guarding against disruptions) over the provision of thorough and time-consuming screenings, investigations and reporting. Moreover, specific security undertakings often tend to be orientated towards addressing

vulnerabilities most pertinent to commercial interests (that is, mitigating internal risks), emphasising ‘volume criminality’ such as vandalism, trespassing and container thefts over international ‘glamour crimes’ such as terrorism and drug trafficking, which present more far-reaching consequences.⁶ Such capabilities introduce a conundrum where private actors can, through their control over certain network assets, effectively usurp government and the public interest and potentially seize control of the authorisation and delivery of security within a range of settings.

The consequences of such developments are significant. Their implications have been forecast in the scholarly literature with some trepidation. Loader (2000: 329), for example, posits the downside risks associated with a policing paradigm characterised by diminishing state involvement and control, suggesting:

[the] rapid expansion of commercial provision and competitive logics not only threaten to see the private sector replace the state as suppliers (or ‘rowers’) of policing across a range of settings; it also, more significantly, creates a situation in which government finds it ever more difficult to exercise its ‘steering’ functions, whether in terms of effecting some control over the distribution of policing goods, or of bringing service providers to democratic account.

Relatedly, Crawford et al. (2005: ix) advocate an ‘urgent need to ... secure suitably robust forms of governance and regulation to ensure policing is delivered in accordance with democratic values of justice, equity, accountability and effectiveness’. To this end, Loader (2000: 333) further suggests a need to ‘begin to formulate conceptions of democratic regulation appropriate to the diverse instances of policing as governance that are currently unfolding beyond the state’ and, quoting Valverde et al. (1999: 31), proposes a need to develop and put in place ‘mechanisms ... to ensure at least some measure of democratic accountability within bodies that might be formally “private” but which are performing more and more governmental actions’.

An important thread present within this scholarship suggests that, if left unchecked, the propagation of such social structures may ultimately produce serious dilemmas for governance, specifically resulting from the potential for abuse of corporate power by privileged private nodes. While it certainly is important to identify and mitigate against such

6 Views expressed by numerous state and federal officials (law enforcement and regulators) interviewed for Brewer’s (2014, 2015) research.

downside risks, it must be acknowledged that these developments also have a bright side—particularly in terms of enhancing crime-control network functionality and producing efficiency gains via an emergent capability to ‘bridge [social] structures and allow the unfettered access to information and resources, build trust, and link otherwise disconnected nodes’ (Brewer 2014: 178). These private actors effectively serve as ‘conduits of exchange’, and thus have potential to create resiliency within otherwise fragmented security networks—enabling structural deficits to be overcome and thus providing access to resources across the network.

While monitoring the influence of private actors via appropriate regulatory measures is pertinent given the aforementioned risks, their implementation requires careful planning. Given the attendant successes (enhanced network activities, distribution of resources, and so on) observed by the author in his previous studies, a strong case can be made that such patterns should, in the right contexts, be not only recognised, but also encouraged. For example, Osborne and Gaebler (1992: 19) argue that true innovation can be an important by-product of ‘empowering’ private actors, by ‘pushing control out of the bureaucracy’. Accordingly, restraints on private providers aiming to ‘guarantee universal compliance to democratic principles’ should take care to celebrate the diversity in the authorisation and delivery of security, preserve the drive of private actors to create certainty and order, and reap the crime control benefits associated with such activities (Dupont 2006c: 105). Any such undertaking should adopt a meta-regulatory framework (Parker and Braithwaite 2003; Cherney et al. 2006) that makes possible the careful ‘regulation of regulation’ (for a depiction of how such a framework might be conceived, see Dupont 2006c: 104–10).

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the key theoretical and empirical developments around security networks. Through its review of the limited research available using social network methodologies, it demonstrates that the structural composition of such networks is crucial to garnering a nuanced appreciation of the pluralisation of policing and the security networks that have evolved, and continue to evolve, as a result of that process. The studies canvassed in this chapter clearly illustrate that security networks are invariably messy. They vary immensely across time and space, they can be extraordinarily diverse in

terms of size, scope and membership, and the unique patterns that form through the multiplicity of connections between nodes can have broader implications for the governance of security. More research is required to understand these attributes and, in particular, their applicability in other networked policing contexts. Such work would, again, benefit from the application of SNA methodologies as a means to unpack these complex nodal patterns.

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