

Community Policing and Disputed Norms for Local Social Control in Post-Apartheid Johannesburg

CLAIRE BÉNIT-GBAFFOU

(Human Sciences Research Council)*

Ryan Carrier (1999), reflecting on policing in South Africa, has pointed out that there may be different types of order that are not necessarily mutually exclusive: he argues that the type of order that the state seeks to guarantee may be different from the type of order that businesses, affluent suburbs, townships and corporations wish to establish or preserve. He concludes by saying that different types of order may call for different types of policing. Whilst this idea seems interesting regarding the way communities can gain control over their direct environment, it is also quite challenging when thinking of equality in the access to security – especially in South Africa, where the idea of ‘separate but equal’ development has sinister overtones. In the current worldwide context of security governance and of development of community policing principles, the line between what communities are entitled to do and what they should leave to the police is very blurred, particularly so when norms regarding social order vary in space and time. Security norms to be implemented at the neighborhood level have to be negotiated between communities and public authorities, and within communities themselves.

This article, based on field study in suburbs and townships in post-apartheid Johannesburg, argues that there are different ‘cultures’ of policing and different conceptions of local social order embedded in different local histories and contrasting socio-economic settings. The South African state is currently attempting to homogenise security practices and to ‘educate’ people in a democratic policing culture. At the same time it is also firmly setting some limits (for instance by rejecting road closures and vigilantism) to the local security experiments developed in the period following the demise of apartheid. However, its current policy, supposedly designed to ‘unify’ the policing systems under common principles, is based on the broad encouragement of community participation in the production of security, as well as on the promotion of zero-tolerance principles. These policies actually serve to exacerbate local differentiation regarding the content and practice of policing as well as the undemocratic principles rhetorically resisted by the state.

* Thanks to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for supporting the research on which this article is based. I am currently located at the University of the Witwatersrand, and can be contacted there at.

Introduction

We're trying to get rid of sourcing out work: gardening, installing electrical fencing, building ... We're trying to get rid of the mentality of outsourcing. Too much information is getting out of the area. [...] All the contractors coming in, we don't know who they are. Then we hear about a theft ... I say, stick with people you know! We've got a team of dedicated builders, plumbers. The residents can phone me anytime, saying 'I need a locksmith', I can find the right guy for everything.

Some domestic workers have been working for 25–30 years for the same person. But theft still happens! You trust them and the following day all your jewellery has disappeared ... We'll check them for you. And also, with the new domestic workers law, should you want to fire your domestic worker, they'll take you to the Labour Court; suing you for unfair dismissal ... My plan is to put domestic workers every month under a polygraph test. I'll set up a company that would be responsible for paying the salary to the domestic worker; we would dismiss and replace the domestic for you. And we could do our polygraph test every month. We would take care of everything. If a domestic worker wants a job, she'll come to me, I'll interview her. I'll check her record at SAP, photocopy her ID book, check the reference, phone the family for you.

[...] My plan is to replace all the guards by CCTV cameras: we would need about 150, one every three houses. Every security member becomes complacent after a while. CCTV allows us to get rid of this complacency. Look, the security here has got a salary of R800 to R1,200 per month, for 24 shifts a month, 12 hours each. There is no relief, it is wrong that you work that long and get that type of salary. So, either they contract on a second job, or they do crime. With the CCTV, you get rid of that man worrying about his wage and his family (Hans, Atholl Security Project, 2004).¹

This excerpt suggests many things. This imagination is first a mad fantasy of total social control through an idealised and mythified technology: each stranger to the neighbourhood has to be tracked; each relationship between the residents and the outside world has to be controlled and should be subcontracted to the Community Security Project. It is also a quite inventive way of making money in the name of security and the community.² Hans is a former employee of a private security company, who was working in Atholl, a middle- to upperclass neighbourhood in Johannesburg's northern suburbs. After having got to know the residents and their associations, he left the security company and established the Community Security Project, a financially rewarding (some 300 residents pay R400 a week) and growing enterprise. The project is also a way of sidelining the labour laws (in spite of a very clear understanding that crime mainly derives from unemployment or unacceptable working conditions) and does not hesitate to humiliate – in a quite unconstitutional way – the (black) workers for 'security' reasons.

This case is not a caricature: it is one of the hundreds of local community policing projects that have emerged in Johannesburg in the last decade. In a way it is a perfect illustration of the 'zero-tolerance' approach which the police and municipality are encouraging that simultaneously enhances community participation in the production of their own security. There is no road closure here and no vigilantism. This is an extreme form of neighbourhood watch which seems to infringe the law only

¹ All the names of interviewees quoted in the article have been changed.

² For an analysis on the blurred distinction between 'community' and 'business' security initiatives, see C. Bénit-Gbaffou, 'Policing Johannesburg Wealthy Neighborhoods: The Uncertain 'Partnerships' Between Police, Communities and Private Security Companies', *Dialog* (July 2006).

marginally. It is, however, quite violent in the racist behaviour it generates and legitimises. The neighbourhood watch principle indeed encourages residents to notice and to report on everything out of the ordinary – a pedestrian in the suburb, an unknown face, etc. It epitomises what Foucault foresaw as the ‘future of the penal system’, where the social order norms and the surveillance tasks are devolved to and integrated by the residents in a manner that inhibits the development of state policing.³

Community policing and local social order

Principles of international governance as well as official policy in post-apartheid South Africa tend to encourage communities to participate in the production of their own security.⁴ Part of this policy seeks to create stronger links and to build trust between residents and the police, particularly necessary in South Africa which experienced four decades of political policing. Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in particular, the implementation of which is compulsory at each police station level, are supposed to create a forum for community and police security projects. But community participation is more than that in the South African context: residents, as well as the private sector, are supposed to supplement the police, whose personnel are considered insufficient to tackle the wave of crime that usually follows political transitions.⁵ This privatisation of policing is not new in South Africa, although it was given a new impetus in the post-apartheid period.⁶ While ‘privatisation’ (delegation to the private sector) is still sometimes controversial, ‘civilianisation’ (enhancement of community participation) is seen in a positive light as a way to enhance local democracy and participation, even though the latter process frequently involves private interests.⁷ It is the effect of this ‘civilianisation’ on policing practices and the inequalities it creates along lines of space, race and income, which I wish to question in this article.

At the same time, policing principles as a whole are undergoing an important shift, from ‘bandit catching’ to ‘problem-solving approaches’: the various security stakeholders are encouraged to prevent crime from occurring – not so much through social welfare and educational measures (preventing residents from becoming criminals), but mainly through changes in environmental design and forms of neighbourhood watch (preventing the crime from being committed at a specific place and at a specific time).⁸ The neighbourhood scale is therefore central in this strategy, and residents’ participation is crucial. In this context, it is no wonder that different local orders emerge in different neighbourhoods. As Carrier argues,

There may be different types of order that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The type of order that the state is attempting to guarantee may be different from the type of

³ M. Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir* (Paris, Gallimard, 1975).

⁴ C. Shearing, ‘Changing Paradigms of Policing: the Significance of Community Policing for the Governance of Security’ (Institute for Security Studies, Occasional Paper 34, 1998)

⁵ M. Shaw, ‘Crime, Police and Public in Transitional Societies’, *Transformation*, 49 (2002), pp. 1–24.

⁶ SA Government, White Paper on Safety and Security, 1998.

⁷ C. Shearing and W. Kempa, ‘The Role of “Private Security” in Transitional Democracies’, (unpublished paper presented at the ‘Crime and policing in transitional societies’ Conference, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 2000).

⁸ Shearing and Kempa, ‘The Role of “Private Security”’.

order that businesses, affluent suburbs, townships and corporations wish to establish or preserve. Different types of order may call for different types of policing.⁹

While this idea seems very interesting in terms of how communities can appropriate their direct environment, create social links and solve local conflicts, it is also quite challenging when thinking of equality (access to security, for instance) and constitutional principles, as the Atholl example suggested. The line between what communities are entitled to do and what they should hand over to the police is very blurred, even more so if norms of social order vary in space and time. Local security norms being implemented have to be negotiated between communities and public authorities, and within communities themselves: sometimes in accordance with constitutional principles, sometimes not. This article therefore considers two questions: how far can public policies go in accommodating social and 'cultural' differences in the way that residents consider security and policing? And what are the challenges in trying to implement common policing principles, without which it may not be possible to speak of a democratic society?¹⁰

Community participation versus the legacy of separate government

Apartheid society was characterised by political fragmentation based on the ideal of separate societies managed by separate jurisdictions. The fall of the apartheid regime and the election of a democratic government in 1994 led to a massive restructuring of political and administrative jurisdictions and boundaries, in order to reconcile a society that had been divided at every level. For instance, Johannesburg's racialised municipalities have been dismantled, leading to the eventual creation of a Metropolitan Council for Greater Johannesburg. Interestingly, the policing structure of Johannesburg has remained unchanged: the metropolitan territory is covered by two main police areas, one for Johannesburg, Sandton and Randburg; and one for Soweto. While this can be justified by the very different crime patterns and policing methods in the two areas (which was also the justification for a separate Sowetan local authority under apartheid), a more convincing reason for the absence of boundary restructuring is the high degree of centralisation of the police system: both Johannesburg and Soweto Area Boards fall under the Police Provincial Board, itself under the National Board. This degree of centralisation allows for major police restructuring without necessarily requiring an integrated metropolitan police structure. In particular, it has led to an important redistribution of police personnel and resources from the former privileged areas to the townships and to the implementation of diverse reforms in the way that policing operates at the local level.¹¹

⁹ R. Carrier, 'Dissolving Boundaries: Private Security and Policing in South Africa', *African Security Review*, 8, 6 (1999).

¹⁰ This reflection owes a lot to a stimulating discussion by Sylvie Jaglin on the theme of 'splintering urbanism' in the context of shrinking public resources. She argues for the necessity of adapting to local contexts and local norms in the public provision of urban services in the context of shrinking public resources. See S. Jaglin, 'The Differentiation of Technical Services in Cape Town: Echoing Splintering Urbanism?' (unpublished paper, International Workshop, 'Placing Splintering Urbanism: Changing Networks, Service Provision and Urban Dynamics in Cross-national Perspective, Autun, France, 22-24 June 2005).

¹¹ C. Bénit-Gbaffou, 'Splintering Policing: Are Security Systems in Johannesburg "Fragmented"?', (unpublished paper, International Workshop, 'Placing Splintering Urbanism: Changing Networks, Service Provision and Urban Dynamics in Cross-national Perspective' (Autun, France, 22-24 June 2005).

The aim here is not to disqualify the importance of solutions adapted to local patterns of crime and insecurity; nor to under-estimate the social efficiency of better communication as a way of eliminating local conflict, between the police and the communities or within communities themselves. As far as neighbourhood conflicts and tensions are concerned, when it does not concern what the law considers 'serious offences', mediation at the local level, be it by a community organisation or by public authorities, is often the best solution, especially when the 'offender' is well known by the 'victim' and both are to remain within the same neighbourhood.¹² In that regard, the local diversity of conflict resolution patterns is obvious, depending on the 'community' culture, history and structure. Community policing, by developing social links between police and residents, and by allowing the emergence of an articulated dialogue about small conflicts among residents, is very useful.

Nevertheless the question remains as to how far these local 'cultures' of conflict resolution and community policing should go before they begin to challenge constitutional principles of equality before the law. There is also the risk that such 'cultures' could lead to social and political fragmentation, with different legal norms being implemented in different spaces by the same public authorities. Here there is a fundamental distinction that needs to be made between dispute resolution and crime control: they are often confused under the term 'community policing' and in community policing forums.¹³ Of course there is a continuum between the two, as Seekings has emphasised in his discussion of 'people's courts'.¹⁴ However, a convenient line could be drawn by stressing the difference between cases where people (complainant and offender) willingly attend the community court (or more informal forms of mediation), and cases when the offender is resisting, refusing or ignoring such mediation attempts (which should lead to police intervention).

As far as crime control is concerned, we have chosen two objects to illustrate how the enhancement of local social orders, which can be read as forms of local 'cultures' regarding crime, the law, and policing in general, can lead to the development of social practices that are not in line with constitutional principles. We will first question the extent to which different local social orders can be accepted; then, to what extent an integrated policing system can be implemented to subsume these different local orders. For this, we will rely on extensive fieldwork in different neighbourhoods of Johannesburg – chosen according to their income level, type of collective response to crime, location and urban setting.¹⁵ For the purpose of this article, it seemed useful to distinguish between three contrasted ideal-types of

¹² J. Seekings, 'The Revival of "People's Courts": Informal Justice in Transitional South Africa', *South African Review*, 6 (1992), pp. 186–200; D. Mistry, 'The Dilemma of Case Withdrawal: Policing in the "New" South Africa', *British Criminology Conference: Selected Proceedings*, Volume 3 (2000) ; W. Schärf, D. Nina, *The Other Law: Non-State Ordering in South Africa* (Cape Town, Juta Law, 2001) ; B. Tshela, *Traditional Justice in Practice: a Limpopo Case Study*, ISS Monograph 115 (April 2005).

¹³ J. Seekings, 'Social Ordering and Control in the African Townships of South Africa: an Historical Overview of Extra-State Initiatives from the 1940s to the 1990s', in Schärf & Nina, *The Other Law*, pp. 71–97.

¹⁴ Seekings, 'The Revival of "People's Courts"'.

¹⁵ Numerous interviews were conducted with the different security stakeholders in each case study: from civil society (Community Policing Forums, Sector Crime Forums, Street Committees, Road Closure Committees, as well as residents associations and civics); from selected security companies, and from the public authorities (City of Johannesburg, Johannesburg Roads Agency, local ward councillors; Metro police officers; SAPS police officers). Besides the interviews, the fieldwork consisted in observation through the attendance of various meetings in each area studied (Community Policing Forums, Crime Sector Forums, Street Committee meetings, Residents Association meetings, Police management meetings; Municipal and Community Court hearings).

neighborhoods: suburban (low-density and middle- to upper-income, formerly white area under apartheid); inner-city (high density, today quite run-down and low-income, hosting a number of migrant communities especially from other African countries) and township (high density, socially mixed but in general low-income, still racially segregated as it was the former black area under apartheid). As with all ideal-types, these categories run the risk of caricature, but as far as our subject dealing with different experiences and cultures of community policing is concerned, this typology appears relevant with some commonalities and many contrasts between the three categories.¹⁶

To what extent can different local social orders be accepted in post-apartheid South Africa?

To answer this question, this study will look at two objects. The first object focuses on road closures and neighbourhood watches, both illustrating practices of suburban, racially-based defiance often described as the reconstitution of an apartheid order.¹⁷ The second deals with vigilantism and the extent to which this practice is embedded in South African townships' history.

Segregation and the construction of the New South Africa

Practices of exclusion based on class and race have partly been challenged by the public authorities in the 'trial' of the road closure initiatives that have been spreading in Johannesburg since 1997. Road closures have been seen by municipalities as the reproduction of the *laager*,¹⁸ erecting physical barriers surrounding mostly white neighbourhoods to prevent mostly black people from gaining access to these enclaves.¹⁹ This accusation, which made communication between residents associations and the municipality difficult, was formalised when the matter was submitted to the South Africa Human Rights Commission. The Commission found road closures to be in contradiction of basic human rights, such as the right to move freely as well as the interdiction of racial discrimination.²⁰ As a consequence, the Commission strongly discouraged their use. While one may contest the validity of a

¹⁶ Discussions with stakeholders committed at the metropolitan level (in the police, the Metro or CPFs), or having a wide experience of different neighbourhoods in Johannesburg, as well as engagement with researchers and the broader literature on this topic, allowed us to try and go beyond our few case studies to build this typology. This research was funded by the French Institute of South Africa, within the broader research programme on 'The Privatisation of Security in African Cities: Urban Dynamics and New Forms of Governance', 2003–2005. It was further supported in 2005 by a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of the Witwatersrand, Public and Development Management.

¹⁷ Shearing and Kempa, 'The Role of "Private Security"'.

¹⁸ The *laager* refers to the wagon enclosures built by Afrikaners during the nineteenth-century Great Trek as a means to defend themselves against the African 'enemy'. Today it is used to refer to the way in which some white residents attempt to create elite, discriminatory, exclusive and racist community enclaves.

¹⁹ It should be noted, though, that the demand for road closure is more income based than racially based: A. Mabin, P. Harrison, 'Security and Space: Managing Contradictions of Access Restriction in Johannesburg', *Environment and Planning B* (forthcoming); C. Bénit-Gbaffou, 'Community Policing and the Difficult Relationship between Community, Police and the Municipality: Lessons from Yeoville and Observatory, Johannesburg', *Urban Forum* (forthcoming).

²⁰ South African Human Rights Commission, *Report on the Issue of Road Closures, Security Booms and Related Measures* (Pretoria, 2005).

highly politicised demonstration, it is noticeable that a certain form of residential social control is at least theoretically being rejected by the municipality.

However, in non-enclosed neighbourhoods, such human rights are often violated in very similar ways (except the barriers are not so visible), and with the blessings of the public authorities, be they the police or the municipality. The Atholl Security Project offers a striking example of how community control over its environment can become paranoid and exclusive, especially when supported by important technology and manpower. It also underlines the huge economic interests at stake. Fear takes the form of a systematic defiance against black people, or at least against poor people (who are indeed predominantly black).²¹ The 'neighbourhood watch' mentality, modernised with the use of high technologies, leads to daily discriminatory practices encouraged by the public authorities.

These practices are taught with the supervision of the police. They are engaging suburban domestic workers to distrust everything coming from the street. Domestic workers are to be 'the eyes and ears of the community', an 'army' to protect their 'Madams and Masters'. Domestic Workers Watch meetings are indeed organised jointly by the residents associations and the police in several wealthy northern suburbs. There, the domestic workers are taught not to trust anyone knocking at the door, from the trade union representative (he might be 'a fake representative, having a stolen card and uniform') to the street beggar, as is shown by the following conversation:

Employer:

Please beware beggars. Don't look at them in the eyes; you might start feeling sorry for them. If you give a beggar a glass of water or leftover food, you invite them to come for breakfast, lunch and supper. And they'll invite all their friends. You've got to harden your hearts.

Domestic worker:

But if someone is really hungry...? I won't let him in; I will just give him food through the gate.

Another employer:

Don't! They can grab you! You know what you do? You just throw it over the gate. (*Silence in the audience*)

First employer:

They'll become a nuisance in your life. We don't want those people in the streets or at the street corner. These people can work, or they can go to social services, but they actually make more money begging in the corner with a little baby they've rented for the day. (*A majority of domestic workers applauds*).

(Hurlingham Domestic Workers Watch, April 2005)

The local order implemented in these meetings – intolerance towards pedestrians – corresponds to a certain conception of the neighbourhood, and this initiative, born within the Community Policing Forum, is one of the results of community 'participation' in the production of security.²² Although these meetings are in many regards empowering for domestic workers,²³ as the neighbourhood watch

²¹ T. Dirsuweit, 'Johannesburg: Fearful City?', *Urban Forum*, 13, 3 (2002), pp. 4–19.

²² The Community Policing Forum is a statutory body set up by the police at the local level to foster partnerships with the residents.

²³ Here again, security issues are a powerful tool to try and build new forms of collectivities, if not 'communities'. These meetings indeed constitute a rare opportunity for such flexible, post-modern and spatially scattered workers to meet in big groups, and discuss broader, everyday-life issues. However,

or road closures create strong social links at the local level (at least when they were set up), these practices clearly contradict the non-discriminatory principles of the new South Africa. Without taking an excessive moral stand, one can indeed wonder which type of urban society these practices are building.

Vigilantism and the difficult path to democracy

It is difficult to look at social control practices and moral codes in the township without running the risk of caricature:²⁴ many authors have developed a bi-polar vision, of 'good popular practices versus bad state practices'. This is especially true in the specific context of the transition from apartheid. In post-apartheid South Africa it was necessary to restructure the police, which had been instrumental in implementing apartheid laws. And the civic movements, which had been important in the struggle, were unilaterally considered a model for the democratisation of policing practices.²⁵ The current and quite racialised debate on security also relies on this category, where the 'civic' is opposed to the '*laager*' as a good versus a bad form of community policing, and where street patrols and neighbourhood watches are encouraged at a national scale.²⁶

Seekings has documented the great variety of 'moral codes' expressed in the people's justice practices in the townships of the Witwatersrand since the 1960s.²⁷ He has stressed the importance of generational, social and cultural differences in the way residents construct their own local orders: old versus young, established versus 'disrespectable' residents, and kin- or village solidarities versus township, territorially-based solidarities. In particular, he has suggested that the growing urbanisation and the subsequent erosion of the 'traditional' village solidarities have weakened a mode of social regulation that was quite efficient in the 1960s: hence, the temptation to use physical violence since the social means of regulation have collapsed.²⁸ More generally, community policing is often most efficient where there are strong local social links: ostracism or pressure from the community upon the offender can be efficient. But those communities are not necessarily the most in need of policing, or the most affected by crime.

Seekings has also shown the historical embeddedness of people's justice, although its forms have varied tremendously in time – only in the 1980s have the civics and youth become more involved in implementing social order. Marks, in her in-depth study of youth politics and violence in Diepkloof (Soweto) in the 1990s, has further analysed the complex mixture of political objectives, community protection and banditry in the rise of self-defence units within the township youth.²⁹ What we merely wish to stress here is the contradiction between these popular cultures and the Bill of Rights which, although set up in a democratic South Africa, is not necessarily considered as legitimate in the township. Given, an ANC Youth League Member and Meadowlands community activist, is clearly caught between his loyalty towards the

these groups are still very instrumentalised: the police use them for the recruitment of informers, fostering mutual suspicion more than trust.

²⁴ Seekings, 'Social Ordering and Control in the African Townships of South Africa'.

²⁵ M. Brogden and C. Shearing, *Policing for a New South Africa* (London, Routledge 1993); Shearing, *Changing Paradigms of Policing*.

²⁶ Bénit-Gbaffou, 'Community Policing'.

²⁷ Seekings, 'Social Ordering and Control in the African Townships of South Africa'.

²⁸ To be excluded or ostracised by the community is no longer a real threat.

²⁹ M. Marks, *Young Warriors: Youth, Politics, Identity and Crisis in South Africa* (Braamfontein, Wits University Press, 2004).

ANC and his concern about rising crime levels in this transitional period where no proper regulation has been set up:

Vigilantism was big in 1994! The vigilantes used to beat up the criminal until he confesses, and then the police come. Everyone knew: if I do something they will all come to my place and burn my house. It was a certain system that made people to fear them. In a way it was successful. They managed crime at the time... Now we have a new government, and now we have crime. The government said, 'there are human rights', even if you are a criminal. But with vigilantes there was nothing like that: you make a crime, you are harassed by the community. [...] Like the Pimville issue, in 2001: 30 people were arrested by the police, because there was a mob beating up police officers themselves [...] Vigilantes start changing: we get arrested if we do things. We know: the Pimville issue is very popular in Soweto. [...] But] the community still wants it the old way. Did you see last week, what M. [an old activist] was saying at the [Sector Crime Forum] meeting? Get a stick, you hold it like this, you hit like that ... But what can you do...? (Given, ANC Youth League activist, and member of the Meadowlands Sector Crime Forum, 2005).

After 1994 the 'breakdown of community and related principles of social organisation, including the crime control arrangements' characterising transitional societies, left a void that the Constitutional Rights and the police reform have yet to fill.³⁰ The nostalgia for the old social (but not political) order of the township, particularly the one prevailing in the 1980s where street committees were powerful and vibrant, can find a way of expressing itself in the current government call for community participation in the production of security, and in particular in the official enhancement of street patrollers, to supplement a police force considered insufficient.³¹

In a way, street patrols are indeed providing a sense of belonging and framework for action for turbulent youth – but the cultural model is no longer the anti-apartheid activist;³² it is the (American) movie action hero. Sanza, a 22-year-old resident started a patrol in his street in Yeoville, partly as a way to respond to his own frustration and feelings of his limited role in society. He was also aware of the failures of the police as well as the private security system. Coming from a secondary city's township, he is also importing his revisited township or rural culture to the inner-city neighbourhood of Yeoville, a place where policing experience and cultures mingle to a great extent:

I was a guard in [a private security company]. I asked for a job in the armed response section, but they told me, 'You are too young'. I still kept the gun and the licence. I wanted to work with the police, I've applied; they didn't even respond. [...] So when I saw people getting mugged in my street, I started patrolling with some friends. My girlfriend doesn't want this thing. But what I've started to do, I must achieve. I must be a hero. I'll stop when crime is low (Sanza, Head of X. Street patrol in Yeoville, 2004).

However, the patrollers are not trained as reservists: the demand for training is too high and the police training capacities are low. Moreover, becoming a reservist (a fully trained volunteer police officer) requires a minimum level of literacy, which

³⁰ Shaw, 'Crime, Police and Public in Transitional Societies'.

³¹ G. Kynoch, 'Apartheid Nostalgia : Personal Security Concerns in South African Townships', *SA Crime Quarterly*, 5 (September 2003), pp. 7–10.

³² Seekings, 'The Revival of "People's Courts"'; Marks, *Young Warriors*.

most Sowetan patrollers do not meet; and, at least in some stations, the police require the reservist to be employed, a condition that many are unable to meet. Be it because of the danger or catching a criminal, or of dissatisfaction with the police and judicial systems (which require a case to be opened against the criminal, and allow for bail), the civilian or private participation in 'bandit-catching' often leads to forms of vigilantism:

We arrested two guys, they were breaking cars. We took them to the police. They locked them in. After one day, we saw them in the street: they start to hunt us. That is why people are taking the law into their own hands. The police said 'we need a plaintiff', otherwise there is no proof. But the car [that was being attacked] ran away (Sanza, head of X. Street patrol in Yeoville, 2004)

It happened several times that a security [agent] killed a thief. We defended him in saying we all did this together, or it was done by the mob. [...] Two weeks ago, there was a fight between a security and a customer in a bar. The police arrested the security! I had to go to the SAPS and assist him, and we had to pay R1,000 to have him released. [...] The police don't co-operate with us: we catch a thief and we see him in the street the following day! Now, they [*sic*] decided not to call the police at all, to discipline the person themselves. If a person steals a cell phone, they will hit him with the *sjambok*. He's the one who'll go and open the case. It's become too dangerous to arrest a criminal and take him to the police (John, security agent operating in Yeoville, 2004).

The police, at least at the higher ranks, are quite aware of this danger and are working to try and 'educate' residents about the Bill of Rights and the new police and judiciary systems. As one police officer noted:

Sector policing is about educating the people. Let them know about the priority crime, think of the root causes of crime. People don't have too many ideas. They don't understand a criminal is entitled to bail. They tell us 'you have released him!' That person, if he is arrested by the community, it will be attached to the statement. They must not make a decision of getting him out like that. All the courts respect that. They won't release that person if life is in danger (Meadowlands police officer, 2005).

But even when they understand the technicalities of criminal prosecutions (as Sanza did), street patrollers are putting themselves in danger. It is reasonable to assume that it is difficult for community members policing their neighbourhoods to protect themselves from retaliation when the criminals they caught (at their own risk and often through violent means) are released shortly after being apprehended. The contestation of the Bill of Rights is deeply rooted in everyday practices: to contest it seems all the more legitimate to residents given that public discourse is itself contradictory, enhancing street patrols whilst condemning vigilantism. As Seekings has stressed, it is not enough to link vigilantism – and the 'culture' of policing in Soweto – to a question of legitimacy of the police and the political authorities when addressing the question of community justice under apartheid:

Urban South Africans have often been subjected to moral codes different to their own, through procedures they do not accept, and by structures they consider illegitimate.³³

³³ Seekings, 'Social Ordering and Control in the African Townships of South Africa'.

Nor is an explanation of vigilantism that relies on supposedly 'African' values, traditions and cultures satisfactory. Such arguments have been used by a famous vigilante group, Mapogo a Matamaga.³⁴ The legal system is simply not adapted to residents apprehending criminals, nor is it able to protect them from the consequences of such practices. Moreover, the police and judicial systems suffer from a number of practical deficiencies, as well as a lack of trust in them on the part of residents.

How, then, can the new government give legitimacy to these local social orders that rely on 'moral codes' that are in conflict with the new Bill of Rights? How far can it let 'communities' (re)build and implement their own social order? Behind the official and sometimes ambiguous condemnation of vigilantism, the public enhancement of street patrols could be understood as a cynical encouragement of vigilantism, as a powerful form of community control of the social environment.

To what extent can an integrated policing system be implemented?

After a period of experimentation encouraging local security initiatives, public authorities are currently regulating all these initiatives, discarding the ones that are not considered acceptable, expanding the experiences considered 'a model' and drawing up a coherent policy. The National Crime Combating Strategy has indeed been implementing a 'normalisation phase' since 2004, following on the 'stabilisation phase' that took place between 2000 and 2004.

Moreover, the need to find efficient ways of curbing crime levels – a test for the new democratic government – also leads to the search for comprehensive public policies.³⁵ Part of the legitimacy of the new government is at stake: there is a need to show that the democracy is not a 'weak government' as well as demonstrating that the ANC and black people are not incapable of leading the nation. This double public pressure, occurring at the national as well as at the international levels, leads to the adoption of more repressive security policies and, in particular, to promote what is perceived globally as the most efficient recipe, namely, the New York-style 'zero-tolerance' approach.³⁶

Attempts to homogenise forms of community participation: street patrollers everywhere?

The need for public authorities to homogenise policing patterns across the metropolitan region of Johannesburg is clear from the discussions arising around the Community Policing Forum regulations. The current text regulating CPFs leaves much room for interpretation and has allowed many initiatives to emerge with very different legal and practical forms.³⁷ A national text has been drafted to try and

³⁴ M. Sekhonyane, A. Louw, *Violent Justice, Vigilantism and the State's Response*, ISS monograph 72 (2002).

³⁵ M. Shaw, *Crime and Policing in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Under Fire* (Johannesburg, David Philip Publishers, 2002).

³⁶ And to shift, in 2000, from a National Crime Prevention Strategy to a National Crime Combating Strategy: see T. Leggett, 'The State of Crime and Policing', in J. Daniel et al., *South Africa State of the Nation 2004–2005* (Pretoria, HSRC Press, 2005), pp. 144–76.

³⁷ South African Police Service Act no 68 (1995).

homogenise these forms, but it is still under discussion.³⁸ The Gauteng provincial government has also produced its own draft, establishing stricter norms and rules in order to promote better representation for the CPF.³⁹ Apart from the fact that all groups within the community have to be represented, there is also a need to encourage better communication with the sector crime forums (the two networks often coexist in parallel), as well as to assist and support local projects with public money. While this initiative is positive – addressing what have been identified as the main problems of CPF – it is undergoing a certain level of contestation, in particular in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.⁴⁰ The forms of participation of wealthier communities, often relying on complex formulae of fund-raising to ‘help the police’ in many different ways, are often implicitly discarded. More generally, the rules set up are considered far too rigid, not taking into account the necessary local diversity of community structures as well as crime patterns.

Attempts to homogenise policing patterns take place in highly politicised and racialised contexts, where the forms of white suburban community initiatives (already publicised in a negative way through the road closure issue) are criticised as ‘non participative’. As one of promoters of reform at the Provincial government argued:

Most CPFs don't function the way we are expecting. There is no teamwork. We want community involvement, even if it is different in Soweto, with the street committees, and in the suburbs, where you have residents associations. But here in Soweto we know 90 per cent of our neighbours. In the white suburbs, they just throw money at the problems. And even the black people who now live there, they behave like Whites. They just got their alarm system, they don't know their neighbours (Quest, Community Police Relations for the Gauteng Province Department of Community Safety).

The differences between white and black, or high- and low-income community participation forums are undeniable. Such differences, for example, are highlighted by members of the CPF of Bedfordview who use their R70,000 monthly budget to pay for high-technology security devices such as a CCTV system at the police station, tracker systems on the cars donated to the police, and so forth. One of the Forum's members noted:

I met a lot of other CPFs. It was interesting. In other areas, it is more emotional and passionate. Here in Bedfordview the relationship with the community is good, but people are not involved themselves. We need to get people more involved themselves ... We haven't even considered making use of community for patrol or neighbourhood watch. Here there are a lot of boomed areas, which are controlled by their own organizations, ADT, Coin [major security companies], and so on. We consider it is a help for the police. The police won't say that openly, but they provide extra security, they are really a great help. And a lot of them participate [financially] to the CPF, since many residents own companies that can contribute (Julia, Bedfordview CPF, 2005).

However, the matter is more social than racial, contrasting time-rich and resource-less township dwellers with time-poor and resource-full suburban residents.

³⁸ National Task Team Draft, *Regulations for Community Police Forums and Boards in terms of the SAPS Act*, Act 68 of 1995: draft 6 (February 2002).

³⁹ Gauteng Provincial Guidelines for the Community Policing Forums and Boards (draft paper, 2005).

⁴⁰ D. Mistry, ‘The State of Community Police Forums (CPF) and their Challenge’ (unpublished paper presented at Crimsa/Unisa's Third International Crime Conference, Crime and Justice in the Nineties, Unisa, Pretoria, 3–5 July 1996).

The 'sense of neighbourliness' does not have the same meaning, nor the same importance, in communities marked by poverty and uncertainty (where the neighbour constitutes a form of safety net), and in richer neighbourhoods (where neighbourliness can be created occasionally to tackle a specific problem such as an upsurge in crime or a problem of street maintenance).⁴¹ In that regard, trying to force high-income residents to participate in the same way as poorer residents does not make much sense, unless the CPFs are no longer considered as participatory forums but as institutions.

An example of the difficulties of such homogenisation can be seen in the widespread police enhancement of street patrols in townships as well as the inner city and suburbs. In Yeoville, for instance, street meetings give police officers the opportunity to recruit street patrollers. Reactions in a culturally mixed neighbourhood vary greatly:

Police officer:

If we get people on this street, it is better, even only two or three. If you know people who are interested, we can all come together to next week's meeting. Training will be provided. You have to patrol the streets. Not for the whole night, maybe for just one hour, you can divide yourselves. Look at X. Street: there are guys who are patrolling the street from 6.30 pm to 12.00 pm. They are about 20 people: their street is OK now.

Resident (black, in his 40s):

How much does it cost to have a licensed firearm?

Police officer:

Application is free; you go to Johannesburg Central [police station]. You buy the firearm then go to the police station.

Another resident [white Afrikaner, in his 50s, who has already his own gun]:

You must also buy a safe.

Another resident [white Anglophone, in his 30s, talking almost to himself]:

I think it is becoming the Wild West...

(F. Street meeting, Yeoville, 2003).

In the suburbs, the police enhancement of residents' patrols can lead to unexpected results. When asked which residents were responding to the police call for street patrollers, a police officer in Parkview responded that the community patrols consisted for the moment of 'an army of domestic workers', a group of people he unconvincingly presented as volunteers who patrolled the streets on behalf of their employers in their spare time:

Presently, all my community patrolling groups are from Domestic Workers Watch. The problem is they don't have the resources, so it's more effective if we expand it to residents ... They are patrolling the streets on their spare time. These Domestic Workers Patrollers, we use them as informers. After I've taught them the basics about

⁴¹ C. Lemanski, 'Spaces of Exclusivity or Connection? Linkages between a Gated community and its Poorer Neighbour in a Cape Town Master Plan Development', *Urban Studies*, 43, 2 (2006), pp. 397-420.

safety and security [at the Domestic Workers Watch meetings], I then propose to the ones who want to meet to work closer to the police. Nobody knows they are watching on you when they patrol on the street. It's my soldiers, my underground soldiers (Parkview police officer, 2005).

If the rising consciousness of the inequalities produced by community-driven, locally-based security initiative is a positive trend, the solution does not seem to rely on the attempted homogenisation of forms of community involvement in the production of their own security. These forms of community participation are by definition highly dependent on local contexts – the culture of policing and relationship to the law being perhaps less determinant than the level of income and type of crime encountered. Homogenisation and equalisation are not so much a matter for local communities; it is much more the field of public intervention on the part of municipal and provincial government and the police, institutions which are able to redistribute financial and human resources to the areas where they are most needed.

Criminalisation of poverty and dualisation of the city

Under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani the city of New York adopted what became known as the 'zero-tolerance' approach to crime. This contested but highly publicised American model has been adopted in a number of places, including the City of Johannesburg.⁴² Seen to have quick and visible results, 'zero tolerance' has indeed enjoyed a very efficient media image in showing a firm resolution to deal with all kinds of crime. This approach can lead to a very strict enforcement policy against petty crime, 'anti-social' behaviour and even informal activities. Not without grounds, some have seen the approach as criminalising poverty.⁴³

And in Johannesburg, this zero-tolerance approach is being internalised by residents. It may not be very surprising in the wealthier, former white suburbs, where the perception of a loss of control and the history and experience of a quite strict 'order' in public spaces are widespread: here the 'zero-tolerance' approach flatters and encourages segregationist temptations. The appropriation of this principle is perhaps more surprising in the townships, where some residents adopt the public policies' norms. Here, many lower-middle class residents find in the criminalisation of poverty a way to express their difference and their social distance from poor blacks.⁴⁴ In most residents' crime forums that I attended in Soweto, the police discourse was indeed internalised by some community leaders:

There are about ten guys, they play soccer in the street. After, they gather at a street corner, talking. I am not saying they are criminals, I am just checking. They know I am watching them: I told them, 'if anything happens in the location, then you are in big trouble'. They just kept quiet.

[...] If you see something unfamiliar in your area, call your neighbors. Give the patrollers the name of your lodgers in your yard. Because sometimes when patrolling, we see people we don't know in the yard, and we can't tell if these are criminals or lodgers. We need to know, if we see a person, where he stays.

⁴² See also N. Brenner, 'Urban Governance and the Production of New State Spaces in Western Europe', *Review of International Political Economy*, 11, 3 (August 2004), pp. 447–88.

⁴³ L. Wacquant, 'The Penalisation of Poverty and the Rise of Neo-Liberalism', *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 9 (2001), pp. 401–12.

⁴⁴ P. Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique Sociale du Jugement*, (Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1979).

[...] There are guys who move around in the streets, drinking or drunk: that must end. We are going to deal with them as well (Nicky, Meadowlands Sector Crime Forum Chairperson and street patroller).

The story in Athol with which this article opened and the example of the Domestic Workers Watch, are not so different in the daily practices adopted for the sake of security when facing a 'stranger' in the neighbourhood. However, residents are highly encouraged by the municipality and the police to set up neighbourhood watches and to telephone the police as soon as they see anything 'suspicious'.

In recent years, the City of Johannesburg has passed several by-laws regarding the broader context of urban policies aimed at transforming Johannesburg into a 'global city'. These by-laws allow the metro police to arrest beggars, vagrants who are drunk or drinking in public and even 'loiterers', defined as people who 'unlawfully and intentionally lie, sit, stand, congregate, loiter or walk or otherwise act on a public road in a manner that may obstruct the traffic'.⁴⁵ This definition, of course, gives the police much discretionary power.⁴⁶ The justice system has also started to apply the same 'zero-tolerance' approach, opening 'community courts' aimed at punishing the crime each community considers as prevalent in its area. The national prosecutor of Hillbrow Community Court⁴⁷ for instance, has been attending the main CPF meetings in order to capture the local priorities regarding crime.⁴⁸ This also encourages the police to make those types of arrests, as is obvious in the following list, reporting the weekly arrests in Parkview, a wealthy neighbourhood in the north of Johannesburg:

illegal immigrant (10), possession of unlicensed firearm (1), possession of dagga [marijuana] (2), possession of drug (1), possession of suspected stolen items (1), fraud (1), drinking in public (3), dealing in liquor (2), theft (9), begging (20), drunkenness (4), robbery (1), housebreaking and theft (1), assault (2), drunken driving (1), negligence (3) [sic].⁴⁹

If the police are resistant to some forms of community policing which grant residents too much power, they are quite happy to find informers and staff among such residents to implement the 'zero-tolerance' policy:

The [residents'] initiative jelled very nicely with our sector policing approach. We could follow ... a zero tolerance policy. We could handle these other things much more

⁴⁵ Section 13(1) of Notice 832 (2004), City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality Public Roads and Miscellaneous By-laws.

⁴⁶ This might also encourage corruption. Furthermore, these requests discredit the police officers' job itself, as they are sometimes absurd and out of scope. There has been some resistance, in particular from the SAPS, to these new 'social' functions: see J. Hornberger, 'Maman bat papa: la loi sur la violence domestique à Sophiatown, Johannesburg', *Politique Africaine*, 91 (2003); A. Altbekker, *The Dirty Work of Democracy: Policing the Streets of Johannesburg* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 2005); and M. Marks, *Transforming the Robocops: Changing Police in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2005).

⁴⁷ This community court covers a number of northern suburbs neighbourhoods, including Parkview, Rosebank and Norwood, as well as those in the inner city, Hillbrow and Yeoville.

⁴⁸ The custom is to arrest 'loiterers' (beggars, prostitutes, homeless people) on Fridays, and keep them in jail for the week end: then they are 'judged' in a package, 30 by 30 – they just have to plead 'guilty' when confronted with their 'crime', and they are out on the Monday afternoon. As the National Prosecutor hesitantly explained to me, it is mostly a 'preventive' measure aimed at keeping 'those people' off the streets for the week-end.

⁴⁹ 'Police Update', *Rosebank Killarney Gazette* (week ending 3 June 2005).

efficiently. There are a lot of shopping areas in Parkview. We used to deploy these guys with the police, we would clean up the area according to the zero tolerance principle: no hawker, no drug, no graffiti, no people at the robot [traffic lights]. We have few policemen, so we couldn't leave policing officers behind the following day. But these guys, they could stay (Parkview police officer, 2005).

The exclusionary and segregationist practices, the criminalisation of poverty that in South Africa also smacks of blatant racism, are therefore not only private practices inherited from an apartheid mentality or 'culture'. They are also directly encouraged by public authorities (and primarily the City) through 'zero-tolerance' approaches and by rendering poverty invisible in public 'premium' spaces. This is made quite clear in the following statement from the City Safety Strategy:

The City intervention should be focused on 'geographic focus areas'. [...] They are generally areas where the City, Gauteng [Province] and the private sector are investing or planning to invest. [...] It must be remembered that Jo'burg 2030 strategy requires the Johannesburg City Safety Strategy to focus on the crimes which affect the perception of investors. The majority of violent crime takes place out of sight of investors.⁵⁰

By relying on residents, the police are also encouraged indirectly by such crime prevention policies. These, in turn, lead to practices such as 'risk assessment' that are necessarily exclusionary and racist. To argue for 'different security norms' according to the place and to the people, giving residents the ability to impose the social norms they consider locally acceptable and adapted seems indeed to be a very ambiguous discourse. Racist and exclusionary behaviour in the northern suburbs is largely in line with the neo-liberal policy of the government; primarily, it seeks to make crime less visible.⁵¹ Vigilantism, moreover, does not appear as such a threat to public authorities, international investors and wealthier residents as long as it is contained in the townships. It is, after all, an 'efficient' form of social regulation, if not perfectly in line with constitutional principles.

Far from being contradictory, the enhancement of local social orders at the neighbourhood level and the metropolitan policies of 'zero-tolerance' and community participation seem to be reinforcing one another. 'Zero-tolerance' justifies exclusionary practices against the poor, especially in the wealthier areas; the enhancement of street patrols gives some scope to informal justice and vigilantism to develop in the poorer neighbourhoods. Of course, no one can argue that another security policy is easy or obvious.

Rising criticisms

There is increasing criticism, however, of some aspects of the current crime prevention strategy from local orders dissatisfied with the imposition of national norms and of centralised state power. Firstly, one cannot assume that the valorisation of community policing and informal justice are commonly shared by all township residents. Mistry has documented the ambiguities of the restorative justice processes and of the use of informal arrangements to avoid formal policing and judicial

⁵⁰ City of Johannesburg, *Johannesburg City Safety Strategy* (2004).

⁵¹ C. Bénit and P. Gervais-Lambony, 'Globalisation as Local Political Instrument in South African Metropolitan Areas (Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni): the "poor" and the "shop window"', *Transformation*, 57 (2005).

systems.⁵² These forms of community justice could lead to increased community participation, an important tool for crime prevention. But they could also imply threats from the offender to the victim for a withdrawal of the case, or payment of the former to the latter – a solution that may appear more efficient to the victim than a long and unpredictable legal process. Moreover, this form of informal justice could allow the offender to repeat his offence over and over, especially in cases where the social pressure from the ‘community’ is weak. Street patrols are not always considered the best form of community participation either, and some residents are aware of the brutality it implies:

In 1991, a guy I grew up with killed his mom, his grandma, and attempted to kill his aunt. The community made him confess, then they threw stones at him until he died. He was my friend’s brother; he was the main guy involved in the Red Cross in Soweto; he was a good guy. We had to bury 3 people from the same family, the same day. Why? I started realizing that vigilantes are used to certain solutions. They have the person confess: when this happens with SAP, we call it torture.

[...] At the CPF, they are busy encouraging street patrols; they will actually get paid to do street patrols. Patrol groups, I don’t think they’ll make any good. Hiring people with guns and sticks... they become a target. Themselves, they can be tempted. It can promote crime. They just act as vigilantes, beating up the criminals. You find a robber, what do you do? You hold that person, you wait for the police, what if he fights back? Crime can rise because of these patrols (Given, ANC Youth League, Meadowlands CPF, 2005).

What weight does Given’s view against street patrols and vigilantism hold? Contestation over these norms is very difficult at the local level. The minority’s support for the constitutional principles is set aside by this public appeal to patrol the streets. Constitutional principles have little meaning in situations where communities have been granted rights to apprehend the ‘criminal’. We find the same difficulty in the expression of a minority view in the suburbs. After being repeatedly ignored by the chairperson of a wealthy property owners’ association, one resident timidly asked:

We as residents are encouraged to report loiterers. I myself have done that on some occasions. It has occurred to me, when we are patrolling, on what basis are we going to identify suspect people? This whole patrol groups thing... [is disturbing] (Resident, Craighall Residents’ Association AGM, 2005).

Such criticisms of both the patrolling policy and the ‘zero-tolerance’ approach and their consequences have greater political potential in an area such as Soweto. Indeed, in spite of their growing social diversity and diverging aspirations, most townships residents are still linked, or close, to the victims of poverty. ANC Youth League Member, Given, is quite aware, and critical, of the way the police applies its zero-tolerance policy against the poor:

The most cases we find in Meadowlands are people who drink in public. Last Friday up until Sunday, the police arrested 37 people, for drinking in public, T-shirt off in public. These are the cases they concentrate on. How are we going to deal with crime if we focus on that? ‘Most crime is linked to liquor’, it’s not real. The crime in police eyes is

⁵² She refers in particular to *legkotla*, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms enhancing dialogue and restoration between the offender and the victim, often mediated by the community leaders or elders: Mistry, ‘The Dilemma of Case Withdrawal’.

drinking in public; it is not a crime, just a disturbance (Given, ANC Youth League, Meadowlands CPF).

Such an analysis has echoes in more official circles. The report of the Inspection Judge of Prisons expressed clear alarm at the fact that prisons are not able to cope with the large influx of offenders who have been jailed on all kinds of grounds:

We have to get away from the notion that imprisonment is the only answer to crime. Slogans such as 'tough on crime' and 'zero tolerance' may be popular, but are not only not reducing the crime rate, but could be increasing it ... Far too many people are in prison: 4 out every 1000 South Africans are prisoners ... These prisoners remain in prison waiting to be tried for an average of 3 months, some for years. About 60% of them will not be convicted. Until their court appearance they just lie or sit all day in overcrowded cells without any instruction that could improve them. Unnecessary arrests by the police, unaffordable bail and delays in completing cases are the main causes.⁵³

The National Prosecuting Authority also recently warned that these 'zero-tolerance' measures should not be applied too harshly, announcing its resolution to 'focus increasingly on crimes occasioned by greed rather than those arising out of poverty'.⁵⁴ But the pressure on the cities (which all want to become 'global') remains strong, and tackling crime in the growth areas in order to attract investors remains a high priority.

Conclusion

There are indeed different sets of norms, histories and experiences regarding the meaning of policing and crime in different neighbourhoods of Johannesburg. Indeed, as Carrier puts it, different local orders and different types of policing are to be considered in contemporary Johannesburg. This view may conflict with some of the rules, laws and principles that the new government is struggling to implement, through its vision of an integrated (if not non-racial) and democratic society. The current reassessment of public authorities over policing practices – visible in its rejection of road closures and in police practices against the most prominent vigilante groups – is attempting to spread these democratic values in the suburbs as well as in the townships.

However, what we considered initially as conflicting norms between the 'bottom' and the 'top', between local communities and public policies, might not be that contradictory. The crime prevention strategies adopted by the public authorities, relying on strong community participation in the production of their own security, provide room for such local social orders to develop and give them tools for implementation. By promoting both street patrols and zero-tolerance approaches to crime at a metropolitan scale, public policies paradoxically encourage two extreme forms of local social ordering – discrimination against the poor, vigilantism and use of illegitimate violence in the name of the state. These policies impact strongly on the existing pattern of social fragmentation and encourage the reproduction of racialised

⁵³ The Inspection Judge of Prisons, *Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004*, submitted to Mr. Thabo Mbeki.

⁵⁴ 'NPA to Shift its Attention to Crime of Greed, Not Poverty', *Cape Times*, 6 July 2005.

and unequal urban spaces. They are indeed deepening the existing gaps between highly-policed and high-income residential areas and pockets of self-policed areas in the lower income neighbourhoods. This also shows that even in areas where the state is perceived to be absent or weak, there are strong and constant interactions between community building and public policies. Public discourses and practices have an important impact on the way communities structure themselves: in the way they gather to fight a specific policy (as in the road closure case) and in the way they are able to use public discourses to legitimate their own local practices. Their security initiatives have also had an influence on policy making. The 'civic' model in particular is still very present in the political representations and public policies, as a good way of promoting community participation.

Although an analysis of crime prevention strategies in terms of community identity or culture is interesting in academic terms, it runs the risk of blurring the debate on security policies and their social consequences. The criminalisation of poverty, the dualisation of policing practices (zero-tolerance in the growth areas versus containment in the townships) are easily attributed to different local 'cultures' of policing. The danger of post-modern studies, focusing on cultures and too often neglecting class, is reproduced in the current debates on security: they seldom discuss the social consequences of public policies and they construct crime prevention strategies that tend to forget that 'crime prevention' means not only preventing the occurrence of crime, but also preventing people from turning to criminal activities.

CLAIRE BÉNIT-GBAFFOU

Senior Research Specialist, HSRC, Urban, Rural and Economic Development (URED)134, Pretorius Street, 0001 Pretoria, South Africa. E-mail: clairebenit@hotmail.com or claire.benit@wits.ac.za