



Police Science – A European Approach

By Hans-Gerd Jaschke

The increase of organised and cross-border crime follows globalisation. Rapid exchange of information and knowledge, people and goods, cultures and values, and last but not least, a growing social inequality, has produced new kinds of crime and disorder. These include trafficking of human beings, illegal immigration, organised crime, corruption, Internet crime and the threat of terrorism. Police and law enforcement agencies provide answers to these modern challenges. Since the 1990s, European Police cooperation has been established. The “9/11” event had a far-reaching impact on the dynamics of international cooperation: intensifying cross-border policing, accelerating institution building within the EU third pillar and facilitating extended and systematic exchanges of experience and common training for senior police officers (CEPOL). The interest in, and the use of, scientific methods and research findings is part of the process. Within the national fields of development, scientific approaches are growing. The police itself demands scientific solutions in forensic affairs, but also in social sciences. Practical crime cases, problems of police management and police training today include a huge variety of scientific approaches. Police management today partly applies scientific knowledge and it is open to developments of the academic fields.

On the other hand, academic police research within disciplines like criminology, sociology, political science, psychology, criminalistics, etc., has presented a range of empirical studies and theoretical discussions. It has been done with regards to the standards of the disciplines and their methodologies. Although interdisciplinary approaches have been undertaken, there are no disciplines such as ‘Police Studies’ or ‘Police Science’ that are accepted all over Europe. There are some efforts and some Professorships of police science, but police science as an integrated and integrating discipline is still at the early stages.

In 2007, an interdisciplinary, international expert group on “Perspectives of Police Science in Europe”¹ wrote a report. The group was asked by CEPOL - European Police College, to work on links between science and training, research and education and some perspectives of a European approach. The group worked for a period of two years on the report. The following article gives an overview of the groups’ work and some results of their discussions.

¹ Hans-Gerd Jaschke, Tore Björgö, Francisco del Barrio Romero, Cees Kwanten, Robin Mawby, Milan Pagon, Perspectives of Police Science in Europe (= CEPOL Series No. 2), Bramshill 2007. See full text on CEPOL’s website: www.cepol.europa.eu



History of Police Science

Although the term “Police Science” is not a common sense one in modern social sciences – others call it “Police Studies” or “Police related Research” – it has a long tradition. In the 18th century, police science (Polizeiwissenschaft) was the science of government, a very broad concept that encompassed nearly all tasks of government. Like the French word “Police”, the German term “Polizei” referred to a set of governmental activities long before the existence of police forces to carry these out – the latter occurred largely in the 19th century. Its original meaning, dating back to the 15th century, was coextensive with government or administration itself, although it was used largely in the context of maintaining order and prevention of civil strife.

Police science became an academic discipline in some European countries during the 19th century and was located at universities. Even those European countries, which did not use the term “Police Science”, had established similar university disciplines using terms like “Political Science” or even “Military Sciences”.

During the 20th century the governmental meaning of “Police Science” began to disappear, replaced with a criminological and criminalistics meaning instead. Since the 1970s, empirical police research is coming up in most European countries in two ways: research done by academics about the police and research initiated by the police itself.

Core Topics and Discourses of Police Science

Policing is – and will increasingly become – a knowledge-based activity. In the future, police leaders as well as police officers will need even more education and knowledge about policing and the challenges police officers need to handle. Police science provides the research basis for this body of knowledge.

Police research in Europe since the 1970s deals with the historical origins and developments of the police and policing. In most European countries, the police function gradually became separated from military power and the personal interests of the rulers to become founded in law, to uphold justice and serve the interests of the community as a whole. However, in many countries around the world this process is still far from being completed. Other research matters, following the historical perspective, are the interplay between police and politics and the diversification of roles and functions of the police. Police science and research can cover the wide variety of roles the police play as crime fighters, as providers of



services, as reproducers of order and repressors of disorder and dissent. Modern police officers are also information managers, communicators and crisis managers.

Strategies and styles of policing have become important parts of police research. The process of criminal investigations, the community policing model, Herman Goldstein's "problem-oriented-policing", the broken-windows-model and the intelligence-led policing are different styles that are known and discussed in many European countries. Looking inside the police organisation is completed by issues such as management discourses and police culture.

Modern European societies are becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. Relations between the police and minority ethnic groups – particularly young males – are often characterised by conflict and hostility. Understanding the preconditions and situational dynamics that produce such relations of mutual distrust and suspicion, may provide a basis for improving relations. The main research questions are: Which specific situations and relations provoke and generate the conflict-ridden encounters? Which factors have a particular influence on the ways these situations progress and the responses they create? How can the mutual distrust between young people and the police be overcome?

Recent developments in European societies, and research questions like those above, show the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach which aims to integrate the existing police-related disciplines. None of the existing disciplines are supposed to find answers by their own singular methods, discourse and findings.

Police Science and the Science of Policing

Is police science a science of its own, is it a theoretical or an applied science, is it an independent discipline using its own methods and instruments? Police science is the scientific study of the police as an institution and of policing as a process. As an applied discipline, it combines methods and subjects of other related disciplines within the field of policing, including what the police do and the outside influences that have an impact on public order and policing. Police science attempts to gain knowledge and explain facts about the reality of policing.

Police science is located at the crux of research, training, education, improvement and innovation. It is not a science in its own right, but rather combines methods and instruments that are known from neighbouring disciplines such as social sciences, criminology and criminalistics. Police science also provides joint research questions in order to overcome the gaps and boundaries between the single



disciplines. Thus, it develops key questions which cover policing so far. As a discipline of integration, it addresses the academic world of police research as well as police practitioners who are involved in training, education research and managing problems that look for scientific based solutions.

By the “police”, we mean the public institution (or institutions) known as “the police”, that are, with varying differences, common to all European societies. In contrast, “policing” is a process: a term we might apply to the maintenance of order and security, through the prevention and detection of crime and incivilities and through responding appropriately to victims, which might be carried out by and on behalf of a number of bodies. Besides the police, non profit-organisations like NGOs are involved, but also profit making organisations in the private sector. Thus we might call this a mixed economy of policing. Although policing is still commonly commissioned by the state, the traditional public police are now responsible for only parts of policing services in many European countries. Much of the remainder is provided by the private sector, other public sector agencies, and other cheaper options within the public police. This can be termed the modern “multi-lateralisation” of policing and one of the core topics of police science must be its extension to this wider sense of police and policing. Future steps of establishing police science, police studies and police research cannot be limited to the police as an institution, they will extend research engagements to security and policing in a more general way of understanding.

Police Science, Police Education and Police Training

The Bologna Process has had a deep impact on the university system in Europe: Bachelor and Master Degrees are replacing the traditional ways of study courses. In some EU member states even the police training and education system is changing towards the adoption of the Bologna Process. Although not covering Bachelor and Master Degrees, CEPOL - European Police College is influenced by the Bologna Process in creating and adopting modern curricula for their training courses. Within the next few years, more Police Academies in Europe are expected to take further steps.

There is a split within the police on how to deal with these developments. Police training includes a process of getting knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform specific professional tasks. Lower-ranked police officers have to go that way to gain the ability to fulfil specific police related tasks. Police education also aims at knowledge, skills and attitudes, but it is offered and learned in a more reflexive way,



a more problem oriented and analysing way of learning. Police education is aimed at more experienced officers and those who want to pass to higher ranks.

Police science offers help for both police education and police training. The content (topics of police education), methodology (methods of research and problem-solving), and intellectual development (critical thinking) are parts of a link between police education and police science. It develops a student's ability to generalise, to see relationships and function effectively in new situations, which cannot be completely visualised or be defined. Police training, which is more based on practical experience and practical skills, should not be excluded from police science. In a modern, knowledge-based society practical skills can be based on scientific knowledge and research results although it does not aim at performing scientific ways of problem solving.

The police training and education systems in the EU member states clearly show the necessity of cooperation of practitioners and academics, of police officers and researchers. The implementation of police science results into police practice is a big challenge for the future. Some argue in favour of separating police training and police education, claiming that police research can only develop freely when it is carried out in research institutions independent of the police. Others argue in favour of integrating police training and education, developing Police Academies into accredited academic institutions within the university system in order to maximise the positive impact of police research and higher education on the police organisation. The Bologna Process provides a general framework for this development, where accreditation is taken care of by national accreditation bodies. Another approach, compatible with the one above, is to develop European-wide common curricula guidelines for police training and education, endorsed by an appropriate entity, such as CEPOL. Then it is up to the national police academies and colleges to decide to what extent they will implement this in their training and education, and up to the national accreditation institutions to evaluate whether the police education fulfils the quality criteria set by the Bologna Process.

A European Approach to Police Science

Police science deals with the knowledge which police managers need to do their jobs. It also offers the knowledge for democratic societies that are needed to monitor police practice and to take part in the process of policing. The main point of a European approach to Police Science will be the comparison of structures, police philosophies, working processes and case studies. The purpose of comparison in the field of policing is to get information about similar items abroad, to compare own



developments with others, to get a greater understanding of each other in Europe, to understand better one's own activities and to start or enhance international expert's communication.

The comparative approach puts the – often only additional – exchange of information and experience into systematic ways of learning from each other. It is an important step on the way to a European identity that knows what happens, why it happens and what could be the alternative ways of doing it.

Police science is an applied science and it follows comparative perspectives and methodological standards of other sciences. The methodology includes two ways: Seen from top-down, it is near the methodology of social sciences. Seen from the reality of policing it generates methods in the line of the problems. Police science is no methodological belief system however, which is applied to problems. On the contrary: First there are problems and research questions and then, in a second step, a useful methodological approach will be selected and developed.

A European approach is not one of methodology but one of selected subjects of research, combined with research techniques that fit into the subject. The core issues of police science in general have been described and discussed in chapter four of the report. Here the European dimensions are underlined.

Modern policing is not an autonomous, independent profession. It depends very much on developments of societies, policies, politics and crime structures. Changing crime structures demand developments in policing and the adoption of suitable instruments - changing the ways of policing as a normal business. To ensure best research and knowledge, police science in Europe has to continuously discuss some general questions: What are the main tendencies in the development of societies, crime and policing, which are influencing the ways of policing? What is the mission of the police? What is police in action? What is policing? What are European ways of problem-solving, where are the differences and obstacles?

Facing current activities of national and international police research, education and training, it can be said, that most of them are single issues, driven by practical demands, but general questions are more or less neglected in police culture. It might be there is a relation to the research and training culture, which is dominated by practical and empirical domination and a fear of "theory". As soon as a researcher within or near police institutions is under suspicion to produce "theory" instead of "practical knowledge", they are soon out of the game. But European police science needs "theory". Not only in proper methodological aspects, but also in the



discussions of key questions. One of the most important tasks in the future is to cover general aspects of policing, watching, describing, analysing and giving inputs to specific research and training activities. Another is to keep alive and to implement the history of the European movement into research and training activities. This might also be an element of a European identity in the field of research and training activities.

The classical studies in the Anglo-American research tradition (Manning, Reiner, Waddington, etc.) could be followed, as well as the existing European and national approaches. Drawing attention to a cross-border perspective, it has to face the comparative point of view. Until recently, there is a lack of comparative studies in European countries. A few existing ones deal with single and very specific issues like comparing the moral values of Slovenian and American criminal justice students, a comparative view of public perceptions of police corruption or the resembling mentality of French and Hungarian prisoners.² A comparative view on general matters like police systems, police philosophies, police history, styles of policing, police cultures and so on is needed and is an important task for future perspectives. It has to be stated, that police science has not yet reached the level of neighbourhood disciplines, for example in political science, where comparing political systems belongs to the core business. Nevertheless, there is a tradition of comparisons in policing outside the EU system, whose methods, approaches and outcomes should be included in further research.

Thinking about the purpose of comparative perspectives, two more points have to be mentioned: a theoretical one and a practical one. The comparative approach makes police science an international or European-oriented discipline. It is the key for understanding and explaining what is going on within the European fields of policing. In other words, there is no understanding of these fields without comparative points of view. Another purpose is driven by practical needs. "Benchmarking" means learning by comparison. In recent years, this concept has been adopted by private companies and public services. Policing concepts and realities in national frameworks can learn from each other by comparing their systems and outputs. Benchmarking is put into practice in the field of European policing as soon as trans-national expert groups meet and discuss. But activities like CEPOL courses show that there are hardly systematic ways to do it so far. Furthermore, collecting information in additional ways has to be transformed in systematic ways of getting and disseminating research based knowledge.

² Found in the CEPOL-eDoc database under the thesaurus-item "comparative research"



Comparative studies of single issues could help go towards effective benchmarking, even if the term will not be used.

Police science addressing comparative issues in a European context might test further research questions. For example:

- Given variations in the expansion of mass private property in different countries, how is this related to variations in levels of private policing?
- How far are differences in the emergence of the private sector as commissioners and/or providers of policing paralleled by differences in the welfare sector? And are these equally reflected in government ideology?
- Similarly, do variations in voluntarism within policing parallel those in welfare systems and reflect governmental priorities?

An additional dimension for police science is one based on policy rather than theory. Perhaps looking at the policing mix in different European countries and considering how far developments in one country have been more successful than in others. One aspect of this is an evaluation of effectiveness. For example, it seems that neighbourhood wardens have been effective in England and Wales in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and in improving perceptions of quality of life. Are these findings replicated elsewhere, and if not, why not? In contrast, neighbourhood watch has had minimal effect in Britain – is this also the case in other European countries? If so, why, and why does it appear less effective than neighbourhood wardens?

The European approach to police would have some negative impacts: Policing Europe would be a field of very specialist knowledge without an integrative umbrella that would create common debates among specialists. In the academic world criminology and neighbourhood disciplines would go on fighting for competencies and the first rank in analysing problems of policing. Police training and education would continue as an independent field with a mix of disciplines. Police science could be an instrument of integration both on national and international levels in the future. Its perspectives in Europe depend on the activities of both the academic world and the police world. Science is more than ever a long-term process and it will be a long way to acceptance. But, if not pursued, the established disciplines in the field would stay as they are in the EU Member States.