
2013 CEPOL Annual Police Research and Science Conference

*Police and Civil Society:
Police and Citizen Encounters:
Fairness, Legitimacy, Accountability*

Christian Mouhanna

The logo for CESDIP features the word "cesdíp" in a dark blue, lowercase, cursive font. It is enclosed within a thin, light grey circular border that is not fully closed at the top and bottom.

cesdíp

Centre de Recherches Sociologiques
sur le Droit et les Institutions Pénales

The challenge: to have “better” police forces => A theoretical answer

- Laws
 - Rules
 - Code of Ethics
 - Quality or service charters
 - Cooperation structures with local authorities and partners
 - The citizen as a customer
- ⇒ To control the police officer on the beat
- ⇒ To control police discretion

Improvements in many fields and in many countries

- Better answer to the citizens
- Less police violence
- Less racism inside police forces
- Better reception of victims

But... some critics against police forces remains

- Complaints against the lack of efficiency
- Lack of accountability
- Quality of the service
- Unfairness, racism, violence by the police
- One answer: to punish the police officer, considered as responsible
- One other: to enforce the rules
- Perhaps we have reached a limit: too many rules
- More interesting: to understand why

Police forces' contradictions

- To increase the quality of the service with budget and human resources cuts
- Accountability: in a centralized and hierarchical organization, what is the place of the citizens' demands ?
- Fairness: needs time to listen, and to find the good answer ... But in the culture of performance and efficiency = losing time
- Internal logic vs citizens' demands (and their plurality)

To put the pressure on the Police officers' shoulders

- Facing all these dilemmas, police authorities are putting the pressure on the PO in the street.
- He has to take into account all the constraints
- More and more rules (the vicious circle of bureaucracy)
- To apply the rules in a more complex world

The unattended effects of judicialisation (more and more rules)

- More straightness (rigidness)/less place for negotiation and adaptability
 - The lowest level is responsible for all problems
 - No question on the organization
 - The citizens are more and more able to use the rules in order to criticize the police work
- ⇒ More pressure
- ⇒ Police officer trapped => to refuse new rules

The question of legitimacy

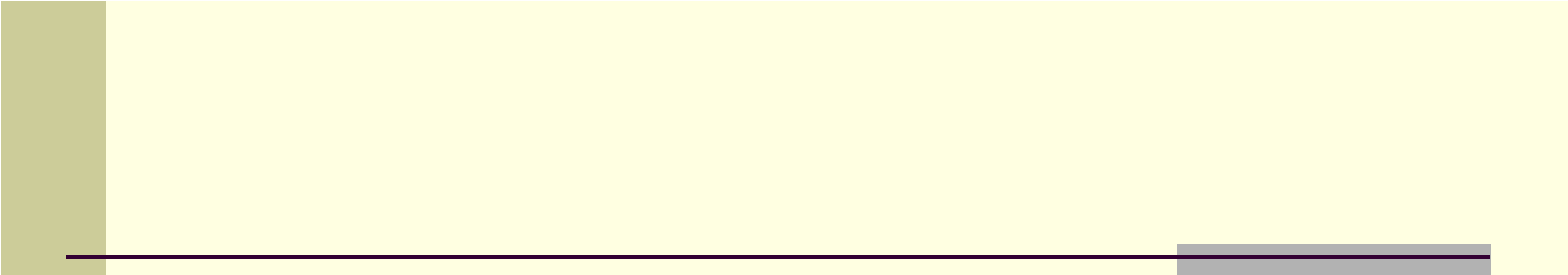
- If too many rules => a dead end
- The Police officer follows the rules without discretion
 - Unfair, no adaptability
 - Loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the public
- The Police officer doesn't respect all the rules
 - Adaptability... but he is above the law
 - Loss of legitimacy too

Some answers

- To be careful in using new laws and new rules to answer to all problems
- To take into account the concrete problems
- To make a global diagnosis instead of putting the pressure only on the police officer in the street
 - Sometimes: he is responsible
 - Sometimes: the organization is responsible
- To analyse the effects of « Culture of performance » and its measurement

To improve confidence first

- Police Officers not only to obey
- But to recognize he has to be a key player in the decision process
- The priorities have to be defined in a collective way (cooperation with the public)
- To help to Police officers to better understand the culture and the problems of the local communities
- Not to produce new law to hide the lack of work in this direction



Thank you for your attention