

July 2020

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Sarah Van Praet

Identifying and tackling problematic or abusive forms of police selectivity.

An action research on the problematic practices and/or mechanisms of police district of Schaerbeek-Evere-St-Josse (PolBruNo).

Final report

Promotor
Carrol Tange



Direction opérationnelle de criminologie
Operationele directie criminologie
Nationaal Instituut voor criminalistiek en criminologie
Institut National de criminalistique et de criminologie



The NICC would like to thank our partners in this action research for their confidence and collaboration: Unia who funded this the action research and the Police District of Brussels North gave us full access to the police district.

To all the police officers that I observed, interviewed or met more briefly, and in particular to the brigades who were subject to action of this research: I have greatly valued your participation in this research study and your willingness to share about your work and experiences. Thank you for your openness and warm welcome.

Sarah Van Praet

Introduction

This research arose from the response by UNIA to a request from the PolBruNo police force to develop a training course on the question of ethnic profiling. This course, a two-day discussion programme with the force's police officers, opened a space for discussion on the subject. It also led UNIA and PolBruNo to ask the NICC to draw up a research project that would make use of this training process for the force's managers. In the course of this project the three partners gradually defined the object of study, ensuring that the project would 'offer a dual interest: interest for the researchers and a different form of interest for the practitioners [and study commissioners] involved in the research' (Bednarz, Rinaudo, & Roditi, 2015, par. 18 – our translation). Already in the development phase the partners shared a common aim to set out the conditions for its success. In this area, for example, even though the training had garnered the management's support for this research, the project design took into account the political and professional sensitivity of the term 'ethnic profiling'. In view of this necessary prudence and, even more so, the principle to remain open to all the ways that police selectivity comes about, led the project partners to adopt 'police selectivity', a term that is more neutral and conveying a positive or negative connotation depending on the needs of the analysis.

From meetings among the project partners, it emerged that the most pertinent research method to address this type of issue was that of Action Research, in other words, in co-construction with the upper management and, as far as possible, along with all the police officers in the force covered by the project. This type of research should thus make it possible to objectivise the situation and lay the bases for a process of change, in particular by setting up an ongoing feedback with various professional categories working in the project and implementing change. Indeed, the objective of an action research is not just to produce knowledge and launch a reflection on individual or collective practices, but also for this process to have an impact on the practices themselves.

The research question, with the first step of extending the issue from the notion of profiling to that of (problematic) practices or mechanisms of police selectivity, was thus a continuation of the concerns that had guided PolBruNo and UNIA during the discussion days: to what extent can problematic practices and/or mechanisms of police selectivity be concretely observed in the daily processes and tasks undertaken in the force (research phase); and if so, what responses can be proposed, to be tested and possibly generalised (action phase)?

Through the inductive nature of the method chosen, the question was gradually narrowed down to become more specific. Special attention was given to the patrol teams processes, all the while clarifying the relative importance of the police officers' individual practices, especially in relation to a mechanism, the hitherto unnoticed result of a patrol process which, by nature, is selective. This mechanism, however, is one that the research (involving force members) has found to be potentially problematic (or even abusive) when certain conditions converge, leading to police interventions that are badly targeted, badly explained and occasionally poorly handled, and in any case misunderstood by those who are policed. As such, this mechanism

produces effects similar to profiling. It is conceivable that the people subjected to the mechanism may see the police's action as ethnic-based and voluntary, even if it is something largely outside both the police officer's individual intention and the force's strategy.

The notion of selectivity, central in this action research, has been discussed in several studies, especially those conducted by Monjardet (1996) who explained that police work is intrinsically defined by a (double) process of selection. Police officers are led to select both the objects of their policing and the methods they employ. Although their individual choices are important and to a certain extent the product of a professional culture, this process is nevertheless even more complex in virtue of a large number of institutional and organisation factors that come into play. It is thus a complex process that is liable to produce problematic forms of selectivity, liable to be somewhat voluntary and defined as profiling, ethnic in particular, but at the same time involuntary and definable as the (perverse) result of a combination of various factors.

The problematic nature of some practices or mechanisms of police selectivity is thus liable to stem solely from its effects, even when there is no intention (by the individual or the organisation) to target (profile) certain populations based on characteristics (ethnic for example). The question then arises as to how to define this problematic character. What framework does it refer to? A good part of the challenge but also of the possible strength of a collaborative methodology lies just there. We did not determine in advance what the nature of the problem should be. We rather thought in terms of Hulsman's concept of the problem situation (1981, 1986). Hulsman opposes this concept to a penal reading of a situation and aims to give back to the individuals concerned with a situation the power to construct together the definition and interpretation of the problem. In this research, the reference to this concept means that the participants, the police officers as well as the researcher, were able to construct themselves what they consider problematic with regard to police selectivity. Through the collaborative action-research approach, and in particular through shared diagnosis, we therefore defined together what, at certain times, posed a problem through which lenses we read the situation.

Some of these problematic forms of selectivity can be abusive, 'beyond the limits' of police selectivity. Arising, as we have seen, from a complex process, it can become excessive, even abusive through its problematic effects, particularly in the eyes of the community, for whom it assumes the appearance of ethnic profiling. These combinations of organisational and professional factors, and even the perceptions they may foster, will be detailed in this report.

The results of this action research are thus not restricted to the outcomes of the actions developed (examined in section 3), at the very least in so far as the analysis of problematic practices of mechanisms of police selectivity was reviewed and completed together with the police officers all the way to the end of the action phase. This analysis process (the results are presented in section 2) continued beyond the shared diagnostic step and was even intensified during the action phase. This is a characteristic of action research. Indeed 'the traditional

research process adopts a linear path while action research tends to adopt a cyclical approach' (Roy & Prévost, 2013, p. 134).

In virtue of this research approach, which hopefully can be applicable to other police services, the successful and constructive encounter between the PolBruNo police, UNIA and the NICC researchers is already an encouraging result in itself. It demonstrates the possibility and relevance for actors to become involved not only in a common reflection but also an action that is also highly reflective conducted undertaken in daily police practices. It also demonstrates how these actors can open to others in clear mutual respect and build on the skills and knowledge of each party. The action undertaken is yet a third result. We will present the main characteristics in section 1 (describing the context and the steps of this research). We will return to this in section 4 on the conditions for its generalisation to other police forces wishing to address this problematic mechanism of police selectivity with updated tools through the analysis. Setting up an action that makes sense to all the project partners, one that is accepted – encouraged even - by the force and rendered materially possible is definitely in the continuation of the process undertaken in the action research presented in this report. From the researcher's point of view, finalising this report goes hand in hand with the wish to extend the cyclical aspect of action research and to return to the partner police force in order to pursue this process.

1 An action research, a collaborative approach

This study was made possible through a partnership between UNIA, the PolBruNo police force and the NICC. The method was intended to be anchored in the reality 'on the ground', to arrive at a process of co-construction between the researcher and the police. 'In the approach, this co-construction process comes about in an organised reflection activity, an interpretive zone shared by the researchers and the practitioners where the each party's arguments and resources are mobilised, where the practitioners in collaboration with the researchers work to clarify a certain object linked to this practice. This is the central point for collecting data for the study. It is also in this space that the practitioners participating in these collaborative researches, through the questioning sparked by these interactions, are incited to professional self-development' (Bednarz, Rinaudo, & Roditi, 2015, par. 14). This research thus took shape on and with the ground. This is why it is important to situate the context in which it took place, a context that is also a project partner. Furthermore we must also stress the somewhat broad leeway of local police forces in Belgium in setting up a structure adapted to their specific contexts, in organising the various functions and even in equipping the police force. In order to guarantee a minimum service to the whole population, federal legislation laid out seven functionalities: community policing, reception and responsiveness, patrolling, police assistance to victims, investigation and local enquiry, maintaining public order and traffic. Although these functions have to exist, the form they take in organising the work is determined by the Police Council (for police forces composed by multiple municipalities) or by the Municipal Council (for

police forces composed by a single municipality). After an overview of some characteristics of the police force, that are important in understanding this report we will present the method that we followed.

1.1 Context and territory

The police force's territory is composed of three municipalities in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR): Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and Evere. It is one of the largest police forces in Belgium in terms of staff employed, approximately 940 people. It covers the most densely populated section of the northern part of the BCR. The zone has 198,042 inhabitants (figures from 1 January 2016), nearly 17% of the region's total population. Its population is fundamentally multi-cultural, with a high percentage of non-Belgians in all three municipalities, especially in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode. The population is relatively young and faced with problems of unemployment, poverty and crowded living areas, especially in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode and in lower Schaerbeek. The presence of the North train station in the area, along with the location of several federal public services (FOD/SPF) and the proximity of NATO, makes the zone a popular starting point for large public assemblies, calling for a strong mobilisation capacity to maintain public order.

The police force is sometimes presented by its managers, more or less as a quip, as 'the best force in the country and the neighbouring countries'; and this to stress both the reform drive of the police zone as its pioneering in creating a police that stands closer to the population. The force was created in the wake of the Belgian police reform and its characteristics traced by the first head of the police force, David Yansenne, who died unexpectedly in 2013. He remains a reference in many discussions, especially his belief in the concept of community-based policing, which was the guiding line in the force's organisation. The structure is based on three basic principles: territorialisation, decentralisation and de-concentration (Smeets & Strebelle, 2000; Tange, 2000; Van den Broeck & Eliaerts, 1994). These principles led the force to opt for police precincts covering territories that did not correspond to municipal boundaries, but to neighbourhoods. There are thus five precinct stations, each offering all the functions as well as 24-hour/day accessibility in order to guarantee that the local population has a police force on-hand and nearby.

Furthermore, since its creation the force has given special attention to a spirit of cultural openness and to have the image of the police force and civilian staff reflect the diversity of the area's population (Smeets & Strebelle, 2000; Tange, 2000; Van den Broeck & Eliaerts, 1994). It follows an active policy of attracting police officers of various origins. Each year a campaign fortnight is organised proposing information and training activities for the police officers. The topics alternate each year, focusing either on diversity or victims. Several projects of varying scope have been organised by agencies both in and outside the area. Some examples relevant for this report include: the force has drawn up a charter laying out its principles and has set up an internal network to work on questions of diversity, called `brun@ttitudes`. This network organises regular excursions to Auschwitz around theme of memory and awareness. A

collaboration with UNIA has been underway for several years, offering police officers training and reflection days. This action research, in fact, is the brainchild of this collaboration. Several police forces have already followed the Holocaust, Police and Human Rights training at the Kazerne Dossin.¹ One of the force's superintendents, in fact, is a trainer in this programme. The police are also quite accustomed to welcoming interns, students preparing theses and researchers.

1.2 Method

The objective of an action research is not only to produce knowledge and initiate thinking about individual or collective practices, but also to have an impact on these practices through the very process itself. The objective of this research was to encourage change regarding an element of police selectivity that the participants (both on the ground and scientific) had identified as problematic or even abusive. In order to identify this element, we started with drawn up in collaboration with the police officers. This diagnostic served to select certain categories of practices affected by problematic aspects of police selectivity.

In this perspective we began our research by building a body of general knowledge about police selectivity processes and the forms they take, as well as specific realities of PolBruNo in order to prepare a shared diagnostic. By analysing organisational and contextual elements the diagnostic aims to identify the resources and leverages for changes to come about. On the basis of this analysis an action to transform the practice can be proposed. This analysis is 'shared' at least with the directors who are to validate the conclusions (Couix, Pardo, & Arranz, 2015; Penven, 2013). In the framework of this research, from the very start the option was taken to work *bottom-up* and as far as possible to involve the front-line police officers in the diagnostic.

The content of the diagnosis had to be constructed from scratch, together with the police officers. As we stated in the introduction, through the collaborative approach, the police and the researcher defined together what the problem was, by cross-referencing different readings. We refer to Hulsman's concept of the problem situation (1981, 1986). This framework encouraged us to co-construct the situations deemed problematic, without immediately resorting to a framework, whether moral, penal or any other form of pre-established framework. The compass that has guided in this exercise is a reformulation of the idea of working on selectivity through a broad questioning: "what problems do you see in the relationship between the police and the population in terms of what the intervention is interested in and how it reacts to it?". Through the different methods we kept a long list of (critical) incidents reported or observed. For each one, we tried (1) to identify the referral or initiative that made the police intervene in a situation; (2) to summarize the story of the situation; (3) to describe the modalities of the intervention, including the motives for these modalities; (4) to write down any problems raised by the police officers, their management or

¹ For more information see: <https://www.kazernedossin.eu/EN/Onderwijs-vorming/Politie/Opleidingen/Opleiding-Holocaust-politie-en-Mensenrechten>

by myself². In order to carry out this overview, we employed three methods in order to do this: (1) interviews, (2) observations and (3) group analyses.

We began by interviewing members of the supervising staff. This gave us a fairly simple way to familiarise ourselves with the force and its functioning and to understand what these people saw as issues at stake in their force regarding selectivity; it was also an opportunity to negotiate the observation fields. During this phase we were also able to sit in on daily and weekly operational meetings.

We aimed to achieve a fairly broad understanding of how the force worked. We thus interviewed the head of the police force, the operational coordinator ('coordops'), the superintendents of the different directorates (administrative police, judicial police, community and traffic police, operational units and community liaison assistants - *assistants de concertation/ overlegassistenten*). We were also able to interview people involved in functions and cells providing other angles of information about the police force, such as the head of the police force's office, police force's secretary, special accountant, strategic analysts, training and internal policies. Thanks to this range of people we were able to gather concrete elements on the force's organisation and the way it actually works.

In preparing our observation fields, we also conducted interviews with the superintendents of two precincts where we concentrated our observations and also with managers of the Koban³ located in one of them. These interviews also provided a more local view of the way these stations are organised. Furthermore, the precinct management gave us precious information on the its territory, current (problem) issues, major phenomena of the past and the (ideal) way to handle emerging phenomena. We also discussed with them the profile of the local police officers. Here too, we were able to observe various regular strategic and operational meetings.

In a second phase we organised over 400 hours of observation with front-line police in various functions. These were concentrated in two precincts and in certain front-line services organised at the force level (centralised services). As it was impossible to do quality embedded work in all five precincts in the time allotted for the study, we chose to focus on two precincts that differed in a certain number of features.

In a third phase, we organised meetings using the Group Analysis Method. Group Analysis Method aims to bring researchers together with practitioners to co-produce a reflection and knowledge on the latter's practices. This method not only valorised their practical skills, but their experience and thoughts about their practices were also valuable. The aim was to integrate the practitioners' skills (which gives meaning to their action) in a research process. The group analysis is a research device centred on the accounts of actual cases (and the

² For our own view on what is problematic, we have been particularly attentive to the remarks, looks and other reactions from the populations directly concerned or witnessing the incidents as well as to our own intuitions. After all, in qualitative research, the researcher also always his own instrument of measure (Olivier de Sardan, 2008).

³ This Koban is a police branch station for neighbourhood agents whose beat is one street or one square. Unlike the area's police stations, it does not cover all police functions.

relations built around them) told by the participants (directly *involved* in these practices and not merely 'concerned' or 'experts'). This process is based on the idea of conflictual cooperation (for example, the possibility for the parties to agree on which aspects they do not agree). This occurs from the start until the very end of a highly structured process in order to make this dynamic possible (Campenhoudt, Chaumont, & Franssen, 2005).

We initially wished to assemble the different front-line functions on the same date, but then realised the logistics posed by the differences in the scheduling for these services, making it complicated to organise the analysis meetings. To deal with this problem, we turned to the existing set of operational meetings. In fact, each precinct has an extended neighbourhood team for each neighbourhood (with four to six neighbourhoods per precinct). The cross-sectional meetings of these teams are attended by the neighbourhood police, neighbourhood supervisors, patrol, traffic, assistance to victims, social and environmental laws, youth and family services, local investigations, precinct superintendent, the public transport security brigade and the support brigade (providing 'anti-aggression' support to the patrols). The neighbourhood teams meet every six weeks, with the same composition. It was thus easier to organise the analysis meetings in conjunction with these team meetings in three different neighbourhoods.

In keeping with the Group Analysis Method, we wished to return to these neighbourhood team meetings in order to discuss the analysis made of the convergences and divergences. On three occasions we returned to the same operational meetings. We were forced to record that those meetings gather specific functions within the police more than specific people. As a result the attendees at the later meetings were not necessarily those who had participated in the first Group Analysis Method meeting. After three attempts we abandoned the idea of giving feedback at a new Group Analysis Method meeting. Nevertheless, during the observations we were able to discuss particular elements of the Group Analysis Method with many participants. This exercise also taught us that if we wished to work with a group of police officers during this action, then it would have to be inserted in their existing work organisation and we should think it in terms of function entity rather than in terms of particular individuals. At the end of the group analyses, where the first results of the interviews and observations were discussed and analysed with the police officers involved, a shared diagnostic of the situation and the issues at stake for the research object was drawn up. This diagnostic was discussed with the force directorate and with the project's support committee. We will now discuss the various elements of this diagnostic throughout the process until it took shape in an action.

After these immersions on the ground in the force, we spent some time returning to the literature in order to allow some distance, select a precise action and provide motivation for it. This may seem as a "side step" of the general subject of problematic practices of mechanisms of selectivity. Yet, as side steps in boxing do, this allowed us to look at the subject from a different angle, enabling us to pinpoint the conditions that help produce the problems that

motivated this research and formulate an action plan that is able gradually to address the problems.

Thanks to the shared diagnostic and literature we were able to decide on an action plan that focusses on the operation brigades and more specifically on the patrols. Rather than striving to achieve "simple" results by way of "change", we decided that the focus of this action would be the deployment and experimentation of a process through the means of a specific mechanism: *intervision*⁴. This process aimed to reinforce a transparent approach, close to the idea of a procedural justice, combined with attention to organisational justice. This way the process stresses valorising the knowledge and *reflexivity* of the patrol police. At the same time, ascribing this value enables the police officers to identify, disseminate and discuss practices or initiatives that are interesting from a procedural justice point of view.

The *intervision* proposed as an action took the form of meetings that were integrated in the habitual organisation of patrolling: the brigades. These are the smallest work units, composed of 9 to 14 police officers. One is the brigade captain, who is responsible for organising the work. Each brigade has at least one other person who is generally on hand at the police station with the brigade captain (but not necessarily). The officers on inside duty remain at the police station to type out the report files, to conduct interrogations at the police station, to speak to the people who come to the reception desk with complaints, to contact the magistrates, to take care of the arrested persons and to carry out many other tasks within the police station. Other police officers form patrols of two to three officers per police vehicle. At night one brigade member must also be on hand at the reception desk. All five stations in PolBruNo are open 24 hours a day.

We observed four brigades during an average of two daytime shifts (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.) and two night shifts (7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) in order to gain a better understanding of their reality and to be better placed to organise the meetings based on concrete and actual concerns. After these observations, we spent three full night shifts with brigades so we would be able hold meetings while the station was relatively calm and as far as possible without anything urgent going on, thus to avoid infringing on the normal work organisation. This action enabled us to accumulate new intensive observations amounting to slightly more than 420 hours (meetings included) with the four patrol brigades over a period of two-three months.

2 From analysing police selectivity to identifying a problematic mechanism

During this action research, together with the police we compiled a body of knowledge related to police selectivity and more generally to the (multiple) problems that can be linked to it. The different methods and numerable discussions that punctuated these two years of collaboration

⁴ *Intervision* is a form of peer-to-peer consultation in a professional context. *Intervision* is most often organized in a simple format and structure and within a short timeframe. An important principle is the confidentiality of exchanges. This technique is considered an important trigger for experiential learning (Lippmann, 2013).

led to a shared diagnostic. In concrete terms, this means that all the people encountered were invited to participate and share their interpretation. To do this, we progressively shared the different steps of the analysis with the police officers. But this does not mean that a general consensus was systematically sought and achieved. Although the analysis undertaken attempted to respect the various interpretations proposed by the actors involved in the project, it is our analysis in so far as we assume the choices in the structure and the presentation of the results.

In particular, the option was taken to first present the highlights of the results of the analysis that uncovered the problematic mechanism of police selectivity. It was also decided to do this before returning with more detail on the action facet of the project, aiming to provide elements to address this problem. This report, therefore, will not follow the chronology of the project's various steps to production this analysis with the actors of the police force involved.

Instead we present first, in the course of this second point, the results of the analysis that made it possible to highlight a problematic mechanism of selectivity hidden at the heart of the ordinary processes of selectivity in police work. After we present in greater detail (in point 3) the action of the project that aims at a form of response to this problem (starting with the terms of the action).

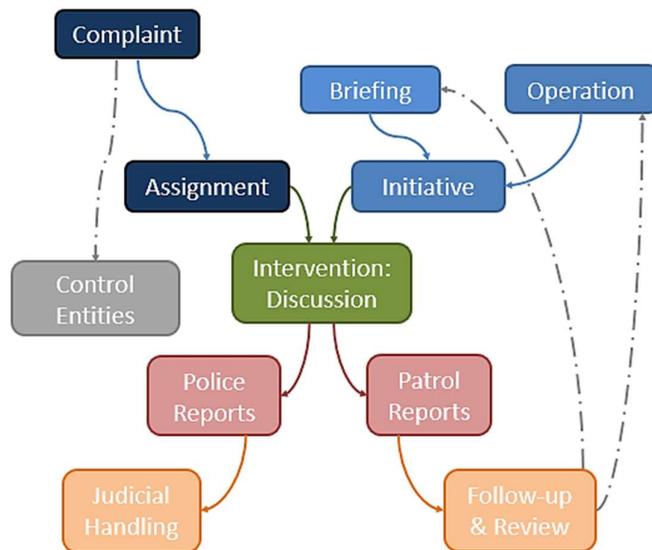
The second point is divided into two sections. In the first, we will endeavour to explain the selectivity process as it generally appears (*a priori* not problematically) at the heart of a patrol response. In particular, this will give readers less familiar with the policing and its various jobs are organised an idea of all the factors and processes (2.1)⁵. Once we've presented these characteristics and limits, it will be easier to understand how such processes and factors can be interfere to produce the problematic mechanism highlighted in the second part of this point (2.2).

2.1 Double process of police selectivity

Let us begin with another look at the process (which itself is part of a complex organisation structuring patrol work) that leads police officers to be interested in certain situations, that influences the first actions taken during a response and attitudes during these responses. This process is organisational: it is based on how the patrol service is organised, the other services liable to impact its work, and also decisions relating to its management or the general way the staff is organised.

⁵ Readers interested in further details on how interactions between police and the populations come about in public space, we recommend reading the PhD dissertation written by Caroline De Man (2015).

This chart displays the main elements that can influence both the situation in which a response will take place and the way it actually comes about. We will begin by looking at the first selection, shown by all the blue squares on this chart. Then we will look at the response *per se* (the green square).



Two types of competences are come into play both in the choices left to them (to intervene or not to intervene) and in the terms of this intervention. Some are of the order of "know-how", others of 'know-how-to-be' (life skills). In other words, we will discuss what the police officers do, especially at the start of an response when the

choices are made, but also – and perhaps especially – what influences choices of the terms of the response. The officer's life skills, opinions, attitudes and behaviour towards the community hold particular importance. These relational skills, in fact, have a significant impact on the way tasks are accomplished in a professional context.

Although this report focusses on the double process of police selectivity, we also visualized what happens after the intervention (the red and orange boxes) and the control authorities (the grey box). We will not explicit these steps, but these steps come back in the margins of the discussions.

2.1.1 *First level of the selection-process: Selecting the object/subject of the intervention*

The first level of the double process of police selectivity concerns the object or subject of the intervention. In the chart we see two classic movements: a reactive selection by means of a mission imposed to the patrol following a complaint; and a proactive action when the patrol officer intervenes outside these complaints, before someone makes a complaint about the situation. However, such a presentation would miss out on another, somewhat intermediate way in which patrol officers take an interest in certain situations. The complaints do indeed flow to the patrol officers in different ways: directly through the missions but also indirectly - through a form of reincarnation of the complaints.

That is why three ways of selecting situations are discussed: (1) selection imposed by a mission; (2) selection directed by reincarnated complaints; (3) selection by own initiative.

2.1.1.1 An imposed selection by way of the missions

From the outset we have to stress how little impact the patrol officer seems to have in the selection of the object of the intervention while patrolling. As other research studies have shown, most interventions follow a complaint. The Centre for Information and Coordination⁶ receives a complaint call and sends a report sheet to the police force dispatcher. Sometimes people call the dispatching directly to report. The data entered are processed according to the incident's urgency. The dispatching then assigns the mission to a specific patrol, if possible reporting to the precinct where the incident has taken place, and they are sent to check-out what has happened.

2.1.1.2 An oriented selection by way of the multiple lives of complaints

As announced: while missions are a form of handling of complaints, these complaints can find a kind of second life afterwards if, through patrol reports, they form the ground for briefings or for operations. Let us present here how briefings and operations guide the patrol officer's initiative.

Another set of patrol actions take place following briefings and in the context of operations. Although these actions are not responses in the strict sense of the term, the process of selection regarding the object and subject(s) of the intervention is highly oriented. The supervisors, in fact, are sending the police to a quite specific place to investigate a particular phenomenon.

Briefings take place 15 minutes before the start of a shift, under the direction of the supervisor⁷. The supervisor gives an overview of the latest main patrol events, thus ensuring the necessary follow-up. They also review a series of attention points, such as the level of terrorist threat as defined by the OCAM/OCAD⁸ and what this implies, as well as the priorities for action in the force. They also discuss phenomena the force is presently dealing with. The places requiring the brigades' special attention due to specific phenomena are also enumerated. During the shift that follows, the police can organise the patrol work at their own initiative as long as this addresses an attention point evoked during the briefing. On many occasions we noticed that, in response to the supervisor's briefing instructions and often after a reminder radioed in by the dispatching around 2:00 p.m., the police took the initiative to write up tickets for traffic

⁶ The CIC is the centre for information and communication, where all calls to the emergency number 101 arrive in Brussels. The call takers create a report sheet containing all the essential information about the incident, which they send electronically to the police force covering the address where the incident has occurred.

⁷ Supervisors in PolBruNo coordinate the patrols. They also share their expertise with the patrols and with other front-line units. This support entails not only making material available, for example, in the case of traffic accidents or forcible residential entry, but also for organising first emergency measures or requests for reinforcement in the case of large-scale events. At the start of each 12-hour shift, they also brief the teams to be working on the ground (patrol brigades, support brigade, public transport security brigade) to provide an overview of the situation and give assignments to the patrols. As these individuals are police officers with considerable experience in patrolling who are also the main inspectors, they are a reference on the ground when the brigades have questions or need help making decisions. They listen to the dispatch radio and occasionally also join the brigades at their own initiative for assignments that appear to be complicated or delicate to manage.

⁸ The Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis analyses information available in order to determine the probability of a threat by a terrorist group in Belgium. This probability is expressed in a level of danger. During a large period of our research this level was at 3, then 2 for the neighbourhoods. It remained at 3 for the police stations. Level 3 signifies a 'possible and plausible' threat.

violations. These tickets were for parking violations sanctioned by a municipal administrative sanction (SAC/GAS)⁹; they require no interaction with the public and the tickets are sent in the mail.

In other cases, the police patrol, on the supervisor's request during briefing, intensified its passages in certain areas in order to react to current policing circumstances. For example, this may be streets where the number of car or home break-ins is on the rise, street corners where the residents often report drug traffic or inappropriate behaviour, or else mosques that may be targets of an attack¹⁰. During our period of observation, no major criminal phenomenon had been observed in the force for quite some time. Although the patrols had had to deal with various specific criminal phenomena at certain times in the past, including a street gang that regularly committed acts of violence, a series of violent attacks, violent confrontations between groups of Turks and Kurds, as well as problems caused by customers in the red-light district under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they did not have to deal with a specific phenomenon during the two years we followed the force. This obviously does not mean that all was calm and peaceful in the police force.

The force and precinct managers or certain supervisors organise the operations. They are dictated by the same policing circumstances as those that inspire the briefings or else by recurring problems. They are undertaken at the request of, or in collaboration with, administrative authorities in the case of illicit trash dumps or clandestine stocks, for example, or in the context of national campaigns on alcohol. Specific operations may also be undertaken following even more localised analyses of hot spots for example. For instance operations may target pickpockets in a shopping district during clearance sales, or else traffic controls on mobile phone use while driving, seat belts or proper seating of children in automobiles. They can also concern social legislation, urban planning, smoking prohibitions or closing times in eating establishments, and so on. These operations are thus focused on a specific phenomenon or even occasionally on one single case, for example to arrest a particular human trafficker.

2.1.1.3 A selection following one's own initiative

During our observations we also saw cases where the police patrol intervened completely at its own initiative, for instance when they actually witness an infraction. Once a police car was patrolling as it awaited new instructions. Around 2:00 a.m., a van driving down a large thoroughfare, deserted at this time of night, went through a red light. The driver noticed the police patrol a bit too late and stopped right in the middle of the intersection. The police arrested the driver, informed him of the law he had just broken and checked his ID. The car was checked and the driver given an alcohol test (positive).

⁹ Specific police regulations can create communal administrative sanctions (SAC/GAS) for incivilities. See for more information, for example: Guillain & Cartuyvels, 2015; Van Gool, 2015.

¹⁰ This was the case of threat during the period following the 15 March 2019 attack against a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The police on patrol also make controls when they notice 'strange' behaviour. They come up to the person in question and ask what is going on, sometimes to make nothing potentially illegal is occurring and other times to protect an individual who seems to be confused. Here are two examples of these situations. One case was cited several times by both the police officers concerned and their colleagues, as interesting, motivating and exemplary. Here is how it happened: one night a patrol was passing through a calm neighbourhood where several robberies had recently occurred. Suddenly they spy a man hanging from a balcony. As the story goes, the police officers, not knowing whether it was a lover trying to escape or a thief, shine their headlights on him and use their megaphone to ask what he was doing. The man lets himself drop and takes off running for the hedge. In the meantime a second man jumps out of the same window and takes to his heels. In the end both individuals found themselves behind bars. They had indeed been robbing the house and their fingerprints corresponded to those taken at the site of several other robberies. Another example concerns a confused person: the 'unicorn girl'. It was 1:00 a.m. and the patrol car I was in was driving down a street completely empty at this time of night. They see a person dressed in a multi-coloured – mainly pink - onesie, with a unicorn hat walking down the pavement, carrying a large stuffed pink unicorn and wearing a matching rucksack. This somewhat strange outfit sparks the interest of everyone in the car. Given the person's appearance and accessories, they all agree it must be a little girl, even if it is hard to tell. They wonder whether she is running away from home or has been thrown out. They stop the car and ask the girl what she is doing, where she is going and how old she is. As she seems considerably younger than the age she gives the police, they ask for her ID. In the end, she is a young woman around 20 years of age, walking home. A bit frightened, she gently refuses the patrolmen's offer to drive her home.

Neither 'strange behaviour' nor cases of *flagrante delicto* systematically cause a response on the police's own initiative. When they have already been assigned an urgent task, they only interrupt it to stop somebody red-handed or for urgent situations breaching public order blatantly. For example, they will stop to break up a fight, but will immediately alert the dispatching. However, the patrol will not stop for a car or pedestrian who fails to obey a red light, is driving dangerously or behaving 'strangely'.

However, during patrols we also observed another form of "initiative". These are initiatives that answer a direct solicitation of the patrol officers by an individual. Indeed, local residents frequently approach the police officers to report a problem or ask for information, especially when a patrol stays in place for a longer period of time, like during a longer intervention or an operation. It is interesting to see how people come to speak to the police in the street, even in some cases when they are not in uniform. Whether in uniform or not, the police officers working in a precinct are well known, especially in the most densely populated neighbourhoods. Information from the citizens often concerns longstanding problems, like neighbours who infringe trash collection regulations, attracting foxes; streetlamps that are out of order; the smell of cooking oil from the ventilation pipe of a snack shop in the building next door; the presence of homeless people in an underground car park of a residential complex or

the suspicion of a drug traffic in the entrance of a building. The police officers often respond to these reports, complaints or questions by sending people to the neighbourhood police unit for more information. Sometimes people are merely looking for a service, street or bus stop. Other times, the citizens report complaints that require immediate action. In these cases the patrol contacts the dispatching to draw up a record, an essential before any action can be taken. This is because when a patrol is not officially involved with a record they can be called on at any time to react to a different task.

As we can see from these few anecdotes, the police only rarely initiate actions themselves. Selectivity is seen by police officers, but also by the researcher-observer, as guided by factors external to the patrol officers. In particular, the predominance of complaints, both directly and after a certain reincarnation through briefings and operations is striking. This can be partly read through the lenses of the very clear philosophy of the police force to create a police that stands close to the population. However, this orientation alone does not explain this observation. In our view, it is also the result of a series of factors: the number of complaints and therefore of missions; the administrative work following each mission¹¹; the number of operations organised during support shifts (more commonly known as "chore shifts")¹²; the imperatives of good procedure or the smooth running of a mission. While each of these elements is individually interesting, the sequence of these elements results in a significant workload for the patrols.

The absolute priority of these services during both day and night shifts consists in fulfilling their assignments. Most of the work they do is therefore shaped by the complaints reported. Police officers in the patrol units are almost always the ones assigned operations during the shifts when they are on duty. They can only follow-up on items of attention from the briefing and actions on their own initiative after they have finished their assignment, including the report, and when no other assignment is foreseen. The patrol does not always have the time to finish all the tasks assigned to them in their 12 hours shift, even at night. The lack of time can be partially explained by all the administrative work for each assignment (we will return to this later), compounded by the long waits entailed by various types of responses. During these waiting periods the patrols are 'blocked'. For example, an interesting policy established in the force is for any person placed under arrest to first have a medical examination at a hospital before they are locked up. This procedure can take time, from 30 minutes to several hours if the person arrested is not examined immediately. The Nixon procedure, whereby the police take an individual to an emergency psychiatric service so that a psychiatrist can decide the usefulness of the person's forceful internment, is another common task that can take several

¹¹ The administrative processing of police operations takes a long time, despite the use of increasingly refined software and applications. Some programs and equipment were installed while we were on site. It was surprising to see that these novelties did not always save time. And this was even without considering the time taken to learn the new programs, problems with slow computers or difficulties inherent to managing a vast set of data and hardware.

¹² The support shift or "*corvée*" takes place, in this police force, between day duty from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and night duty from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.. During this 8 to 10 hour shift, the police officers support the other brigades: they transfer arrested persons to the courthouse, detainees from the courthouse to the prisons (or vice versa), they participate in operations or in security duty's organized by the police station or at a zonal level, or to finalize administrative work.

hours. Having a vehicle towed can also take time when the tow truck is already busy elsewhere or stuck in a traffic jam. Yet another times taking procedure is installing a police perimeter in case of a fire or road accidents.

These observations are heard quite often. Research on policing has long established that patrol officers are mainly occupied by tasks other than crime fighting and that most of their patrol work consists of assignments that are not professionally fulfilling, primarily involving long, highly bureaucratic procedures. These tasks are what Ericson (1991) calls the 'dirty work'.¹³

Through the three movements of the first level of the double process, the primacy of the complaint in the selection of the situations where the patrollers will intervene is striking. Already because it possibly intervenes twice: once through the processing of missions and once through a certain form of reincarnation of these complaints, giving rise to an orientation of the patrol's initiatives through briefings and operations. But this primacy is all the more striking after having presented limited patrol boats' own initiatives.

2.1.2 Second level of the selection-process: the terms of the intervention

After discussing the - largely involuntary - selection of the object of the intervention, the second level of selection concerns the intervention methods. The selection of these modalities takes place in the integration of the know-how and soft skills of the patrollers. Let it be clear: each option is first and foremost a form of communication skills, but the different identified objectives have an influence on what will be said and how. The choice is made based on the objective of the patrol officer. The patrol officer's soft skills determine the reading of the situation in function of the police organization and are translated into attitudes. The selection of the outline of the intervention is the result of this combined play.

2.1.2.1 Selecting amongst a broad range of multiform knowhow

Police selectivity, however, is not limited to deciding to look into a situation or not. The choices made by the police officers also concern the practical details of a patrol action. Although, as we have seen above, police cannot take on too many initiatives because of the pressure on them and strategic guidelines from their superiors, it is nevertheless up to the patrol officers on site to determine how they will intervene. For the most part, we can affirm that the decisions they take are primarily of a pragmatic nature. This pragmatism aims to re-establish order as quickly as possible, in the sole presence of the conflict's protagonists, and to enable the police to understand the nature of the conflict as well as the 'profile' of the persons concerned. The police attempt to resolve the problem after gaining an idea of the context of their response and any related risks. To do this they base themselves on specific directives communicated by their supervisor during the briefing or elsewhere, but their main goal is essentially to make sure they will not have to return a second time for the same incident, at least not during the same shift. Preferably, therefore, the problem must be dealt with on site or, if the situation does not

¹³ For an idea of the large body of sociology literature analysing the police profession, see especially: Bittner, 2001; Brodeur, 2003; Smeets & Strebelle, 2000; Tange, 2000; Monjardet, 1996; Kane & Reisig, 2014.

allow this, transmitted as quickly as possible to the police station. The brigade officers on station duty are the ones who write up the reports and also handle the administrative work for arrests.

When asked what motivates their decisions during a response, the police cite the courses on 'technical and tactical intervention' followed at the police academy, their personal experience and that of their colleagues. They also indicate that they take the law into account as well as the police force principles. They often also indicate that the concern to avoid appearing before the internal control bodies or the complaints committee is a determining factor in their actions.

In the following paragraphs we will discuss four recurring options when intervening: to refer the situation, to analyse the situation, to mediate the situation or to control the situation. These options have a direct impact on the form the intervention will take. Let it be clear: each option is first and foremost a form of communication skills, but the differences in what they aim for has an impact on what will be said and how. This does not mean that these are exclusive options: they may follow each other in an intervention, depending on the outcome of the previous option, on the reactions of the people involved or on the events surrounding the intervention.

a. Referring the situation

When police officers are stopped in the street, and to a lesser extent when they are on an assignment, it can happen that the situation is not urgent, that they do not have enough information or the request calls for a response that is mainly administrative. In such cases they refer the individuals to the police station, advising them to contact the neighbourhood police officer or other services. In other types of situations, they may send the people towards other emergency services, like the ambulance or fire department, as it happened for example during the mission that was initially presented as "a person in danger on the streets". It involves a man in a wheelchair with a flat tire. Having no money to pay for a taxi to return to his centre and not being sure if the centre would still let him in at this late hour, a passer-by called the police. The officers explain that the problem is outside their jurisdictional scope. Something unusual then occurs: the patrol officers do not all agree on what should be done. One wants them to simply move on, while the others wants to make sure another service can help the gentleman out. The clinching argument is that if the patrol did not take action now, they will certainly have to return because someone else would call them or the man would be robbed or worse. They decide to call the fire department, who explain that the situation is outside their remit. The person who reported seeing the man does not have any money either and has already asked the train station security service, who has also replied that it was not their responsibility. So the police call an ambulance. When the ambulance arrives, the rescue team express their discontent because the man actually does not need any medical attention. The patrol nevertheless walk

on, convinced that the ambulance will take care of this man¹⁴. The situation has been referred to other services. Usually in the case of a referral the situation is handled way faster.

The duty assigned to the police is occasionally much less interesting than what is going on in the street. When another assignment is more exciting, appears to call for more action or in any case less waiting time, the patrol is happy to look into it. For example, a (young) lady who did not feel safe, because a man was spreading rumours about her in the attempt to get her to go out with him, received a lot of attention from the patrol. The officers asked the dispatcher to create a new sheet for this problem and assign another patrol to their original duty relating to 'parked cars blocking a garage' or else postpone it until later.

Patrols also sometimes ask permission to assist another patrol that has been assigned a high adrenaline mission, for which an officer deems it best to have several patrols on hand. This assessment is made on the type of assignment, the place where the response is to take place, friendship between two brigades, or sometimes because the first brigade is considered to be less competent or the second brigade considers itself more competent for this specific problem. Thus, it may happen that several patrols suddenly arrive at the scene, which often frightens the people concerned. Examples are street fights in the rue Aerschotstraat, or arguments that degenerate in a café or reports of an ongoing robbery. It is true that assistance from other patrols may occasionally be quite useful in all the above examples, even though the response, in the end, is not always as exciting as it sounded.

b. Analysing the situation

During a patrol response, sometimes the police's main concern is to create a safe environment, a return to order. They aim to analyse the situation, both to visualise it better and to better understand what is going on. This is why they begin by separating people who are fighting, calming people who are crying and lining up the suspects. After checking if anyone is on a wanted list, the identity check serves as a way to analyse the situation. They ask for an ID card or any other form of identification and send the data to the dispatcher. The dispatcher, in fact, has access to the database and can check whether any recent action involved one of the same parties, if one of the parties had problems with the police in the past, if there is a police record or if this is a case of someone with mental problems. Based on these data the police try to assess the explosiveness of the situation. The supervisor, who always listens to the response on the police radio, can also decide to visit the scene, or else ask other patrols to come as reinforcement. During several observations we were also able to follow some responses via radio. This type of information is considered especially useful and relevant when it concerns domestic arguments, neighbours quarrelling, an individual who has already been the subject of a police call or else those known for contempt and obstruction or for filing complaints against the police.

¹⁴ In the end, the ambulance team did not help this person either. A bit later, we passed by again. We saw that the man was still under the tunnel, with his flat wheelchair tyre. There was a group of people around him as well as a taxi.

Police officers with several years of experience under their belt are sometimes acquainted with the people involved in the response. Consequently they know a bit more about their situation and do not need to ask for an ID card. Their identity is thus not considered as checked if no detailed document has to be drawn up following the incident.

During identity checks, the police officers also check whether the person is the object of a citation. Several times, therefore, they were able to inform the person that their driving license had been revoked and they were invited to hand in their license at the police station as soon as possible. On just one occasion, we encountered a person who was under an arrest citation in virtue of a warrant transmitted by Interpol. He was taken off to the closest police station, but due to a lack of information it was decided to release the individual.

In addition to these checks, consulting an identity card also enables the police to know someone's exact identity and mention this in the patrol report.

After re-establishing public order and evaluating the risk, the police officers then try to understand what exactly had happened. They first try to contact the one who made the call for an initial idea of the problem. For example, they check whether there is a conflictual situation and, if so, they try to find out what kind of dispute it is. They then identify the persons involved, i.e. the victims, suspects or witnesses, and determine each person's role in the situation. They ask the people involved if they can identify or describe the suspects or whether they wish to file a complaint.

c. Mediating the situation

Once on the scene, the police officers' main job will be talking. They talk with the people on hand to gather information. They explain certain things and, in some cases, try to negotiate some common grounds so that the situation can calm down. In short, in many cases a response consists in talking on and on in order to mediate the situation. In one of the intervision meetings, an officer answered one of our remarks by saying: 'Communication is our strongest weapon' (something that Manning, 2008 also point out). The police officers ask questions to understand what is going on. As situations are rarely clear and simple, they have to ask the right questions to learn what is happening and among whom. Once a situation is clarified somewhat, the police officers attempt to find a solution. This may reside in procedures and prevailing law. In the case of robbery for example, they will question the victim to describe the damage and possibly also the perpetrator, before they examine evidence of the infraction and explain what will happen next.

The police officers also give several types of information, in addition to the legal-administrative context. Some officers, with several years' experience, provide valuable and concrete information on the services available. In cases where the police cannot themselves confirm the disturbance caused by noisy neighbours, they often suggest that the people reporting the noise procure a decibel meter from Brussels Environment so they can measure the problem. In parent-child conflicts, people are sent to the municipal service for youth, homework assistance

or other services with which the police are in contact. The police officers themselves are often certain that their response has done nothing to solve persisting social conflicts and feel this is just an expression of their lack of effectiveness. When the police are not aware of specific organisations, they often send callers on their way, inviting them to 'contact the municipal services or the neighbourhood police'.

Communication by the police, furthermore, is not limited to applying procedures and providing information. As explained earlier, one objective of the response is simply to make sure they will not have to return later the same day or night. Explaining procedures thus can be quite useful if it enables them to close the assignment. Sending someone to another service, however, is not ideal when the problem is not urgent. In such cases, the situation must effectively be unblocked to a minimum extent. The police then act as referees, mediators and sheriffs. They advise, define limits and indicate how people should behave towards one another in the case of marital disputes, parent-child conflicts or complaints among neighbours.

Consequently, the police travel back and forth to the site of a (yet another) angry outburst by a middle-aged woman who complains about her neighbours working on their recently purchased house over the weekend, just when the lady is looking forward to sleeping in. Then they finally decide that the new owner should wait until 10:00 a.m. before working and stop at 6:00 p.m. The new owners must also promise to invite their neighbour to their first barbeque.

Another example, mentioned several times in our intervision meetings during the project's action phase (see point 3 below), is that of a couple who regularly call the police – at least every other month. The tension is often quite high, both between the two spouses and towards their adult daughter who lives with them. They explain to the children that their parents have the right to want to know where they are going, and to the parents that they must also grant the same right to their children.

In the case of couples who argue regularly, often we also observed the police officers' enthusiastic attempts to explain how the husband and wife can interact in a less conflictual manner.

In addition to explaining procedures and what is expected from the people they respond to, the police often choose to solve situations via dialogue instead of sanctions. One additional reason for this choice is that this approach often leads to a more rapid and definite solution. When someone reports a car parked in front of their garage, the police almost always first ask the dispatcher to check whether the owner or their family lives nearby in the neighbourhood. They can then call the car owner, explaining the law and solving the problem at the same time. Sometimes they look for the owner in neighbouring streets. Anything is preferable to waiting for the tow truck.

From both observations and discussions the primary goal of police officers appears to expedite missions as best they can, but more importantly even to rush them up as quickly as possible, in a way they can get rid of the situation until the end of their shift. In our view, the following

situation involving an 11-year-old boy is a good illustration that, even if the police officers invariably stress that their main motive is to get the job done as quickly as possible, the solution applied is often also the best for the person policed.

One evening, some youth counsellors suspect that the young boy has set fire to a waste bin in the institution where he is living. In view of the facts, he is expelled from the institution. He is to appear the next morning before the juvenile judge who will find a new institution to take him in. The child has no parents caring for him, no family where he can pass the night. The police brigade on the night shift see the boy for questioning. The question, however, is where he will sleep. The police do not think it is a good idea to put him in an open jail cell because he will hear the other people being arrested, often drunkards who make a lot of noise. Having him sleep on a chair in the police station is not advisable either. One patrol decides to first return to the institution urging the people to let him spend one last night there. The police explain at length why it is not a good idea to have the boy spend the night at the police station. On the contrary, the instructors think that this would be a suitable sanction for the boy's behaviour. The patrol then take the boy to the Region's paediatric emergency services in the hope of finding him a bed. Two hospitals turn down their request, after they already wait an hour for the first hospital to reply. Following insistence by the police officers, the boy is finally allowed to spend the night in a third hospital, where we arrive after midnight. In the end, the patrol spends two and a half hours on this response.

Communication holds a key role in most operations. This is generally an obvious choice. However, communication does not always appear that easy in the force covered by our research. Indeed, communication requires ideally that the police and the people involved can speak a common language. But this is not always the case. Although the force tries to have at least one agent in each brigade who is fluent in Flemish, this does not solve all linguistic problems. Italian, Spanish, Polish, Arab, Bulgarian, Turkish and English, in particular, are languages the police often encounter. Luckily many police officers speak other languages in addition to French; neighbours or witnesses are often willing to act as interpreters. During a night response at the North Station to help a girl and a pregnant woman whose water had broken, the police resort to Google Translate to determine the identity of these persons and the urgency of the situation. Generally, miming can also help but the language barrier can be a real handicap during a response, especially in complicated cases. One example is a call to report a couple arguing in the apartment below. On site, the wife confirms that there has been a fight, due to her husband's mental problems. The man speaks French and the woman, of Scandinavian origin, speaks English. Although one of the officers speaks a bit of English, explaining procedures for forced psychiatric treatment requires knowledge of a too specific set of terms.

Not being able to handle some situations without calling on an interpreter, along with irritation at the fact that people who are Belgian citizens are not fluent in any of the national languages, lends a particular dynamic to these responses. Although in most cases, the police officers try as

hard as they can to be of assistance, several brigades are more prudent. The calls are more often, and especially more quickly, referred to police station. This is especially the case when the person speaks Flemish and none of the patrollers are fluent in this language. In some exceptional cases, the call itself is 'refused' for language reasons and with the call marked as 'not within the scope of the police'. One night, around 4:00-5:00 a.m., a lady in slippers and a mini-skirt runs into the station. Several complicated calls had already arrived that night, including one where a whole family came into the station, completely distraught, to ask what would happen if people without resident permits were arrested on the charge of fraud. The lady in question is confused and speaks only a few words of English. The police on hand cannot understand a thing and send her back home telling her to find someone who can translate for her.

One communication resource stressed on many occasions is the use of humour. Humour lowers the tension of a situation, helps manage frustration and allows some of the steam to blow off. The frustration may also be felt as much by the people involved as by the police themselves. In the most comical examples, a humorous reference to football scores, sexuality or a Freudian slip help the police elicit a smile and obtain a bit of cooperation. We were able to observe a good example of this. Lacking more experienced colleagues, two police officers, a man and a woman who have just finished their studies, form a patrol. They are sent to check out an 'undesirable'¹⁵ individual in the street. On site they find someone who has had a longstanding quarrel with his brother. The person has several contagious diseases, mental problems, no fixed abode, and after an ID check, is found to be someone known for fighting with police officers. During a first attempt to control the person, the officers see that the man is fairly strong. He nevertheless seems more at ease speaking with the policewoman, who manages to convince him to let them take him to a hospital for a medical check-up. On the way the man explains, among other things, that it is 'nice little a** day' and thus that this should be a good day. During the whole episode the officers regularly remind the man of his humorous words whenever he starts to tense up again.

It is also striking to see that the type of humour the police tend to use is appreciated by most people, especially among the working class. Through our observations and discussions with police officers, we understood that wealthier people do not appreciate do not tend to appreciate forms of humour that are more vulgar and sometimes they over-react. Although most people dealing with the police are generally able to not take themselves too seriously, even in the most delicate situations, this is not always the case. Humour is sometimes used to hide a feeling of being powerless in a situation. Police officers often start speaking in a language that they think the person does not understand. Especially when the latter does not know any

¹⁵ It is a concept used by police officers to refer to a situation where a person is considered by a complainant or by police officers to be disturbing the public order by one of its characteristics and location. Examples are a person who is drunk in front of a nursery or school when the children are present, or a homeless person who settles down to sleep in the entrance of a building.

national language, they police begin to speak in Dutch or sometimes in French or German, in the attempt to make their colleagues laugh.

Courtesy and respect, even if lacking in the other party, are communication elements that also help wrap an operation up quickly by lowering the risk of a complaint. For example, one evening a patrol from another station was sent to answer a call from a woman who wished to speak with her 18-year-old autistic son, who has just started his university studies. The father, however, refuses to say whether the son is with him or not. A bit later, a second patrol indicates that it is going to assist the first one. Meanwhile, the patrol from the street's own precinct has finished its earlier job and also decides to go to the father's address. A man in a maroon dressing gown is standing on his balcony looking down on the two patrols. He refuses to answer questions or open the door. The son is apparently there, but asleep. The police yell at the man, who laughs and says he is filming everything. Tempers are rising. The two officers of the patrol we were accompanying have over 15 years' experience in patrolling and know the precinct neighbourhoods well. They immediately go up to their colleagues still banging on the door and ask them to step back. Politely, but firmly, they call out to the man on the balcony, calling him by name and asking him to open the door. The man addresses them with a polite 'Good evening, Commissaire', comes downstairs and indicates that only these two officers can come inside. Later they explain that they have already answered several calls regarding conflicts between this divorced couple. The man thus knows them well and knows that they act 'fairly' so he listened to them. The police also highlight the importance of adapting the communication mode to the person concerned so as to gather the right information quickly.

d. Controlling the situation

In other situations, however, communication is kept to the strict minimum. Keeping things under control is thus the main goal of these patrol responses. In these cases, all the communication is in the imperative. The suspects are lined up, they must take their hands out of their pockets, wait silently keeping a certain distance from one another and obey orders. During our observations, this line-up procedure was used for small groups of individuals under suspicion or for identity verifications. It is nevertheless not done systematically during this type of verification, but mainly when there are more policed involved than the number of police officers, or else when police officers have not been working that long as patrollers for the force. It is always employed if a supervisor not belonging to the patrol brigade is present or when people are caught in the act. For example, one case we observed involved that of a local resident who called to report seeing a group of 8 to 10 teen-agers, 16 or 17 years of age, dressed in dark clothing, vandalising a motor scooter. She reported that they were always there in the street. The call came in on a fairly calm day and from a neighbourhood that had recently been having problems with youths. Here is what happened: Three patrols rapidly arrive on site. One goes off to find the motorbike at the address indicated. The two others quickly find a small group of youths who more or less match the description. The youths run off when they see the patrol car, but the police quickly manage to round up seven of the young men who, once stopped, accept to follow the police. They are lined up along the pavement, placed a certain

distance from one another, their hands in plain view. The police ask few questions, merely checking their identity by asking them to hand over their identity card or give their name and date of birth. The youths try to learn what the problem is, claiming they have done nothing wrong and were just looking at the motorbike. The police tell them to keep quiet. The officers have only a few years' experience and are wary of the neighbourhood's reaction. Finally the first patrol returns indicating that the motorbike has been parked at that place, and in the same state, for several weeks; the youths were indeed simply looking it over. They are allowed to go on their way.

The line-up confers a completely different dynamic to an operation compared to the use of communication, even when it does not lead to an arrest as in the above example. Nevertheless, when the people being policed fail to obey injunctions, the operation can become quite tense. In such cases the police proceed to immobilising on the ground, body search, immediate handcuffing and rapid transport to the police station. On one night beat at 2:00 a.m., we learn that another patrol nearby has been called by a bar owner. He has just been threatened by four men with a knife who refuse to pay their tab. The dispatcher communicates this to other patrols asking whether they have seen four men of African origin dressed in leather jackets. Just at that moment, the police we are observing spy four men who match the description leaving the street in question and order them to halt. They report this immediately on the radio. The men, however, do not stop. Quite the contrary, they take off running. All the while pursuing them, the police order them once again to stop. They refuse to comply. After effectively stopping them the police then decide to place them on the ground in order to proceed with their arrest.

2.1.2.2 Sets of soft skills giving way to a situated stance

Faced with rather massive observation that police officers have rather little choice faced with the importance of interventions motivated by a complaint, by a strategic directive (given during the briefing or at the beginning of an operation) or the (not so often) possibly by a situation of a red-handed act, it is evident that our attention slid to the observation of the attitudes or, even more so, the very different postures of police officers with regard to the population. Without going so far as to classify the police officers observed in different typical categories, we were nevertheless able to see that the same police officer did not systematically adopt the same stance in all circumstances. This stance depended on their analysis of the situation and the type of response or task that the officer was performing. So the stances are situated. In the analysis, one question seemed to be crucial: What objective did a police officer consider to be the one to aim for and which response modes were available to do so? It is based on the police officers' soft skills that they will choose one stance or the other.

The facets entering into play in this questioning were identified and used to draw up a typology distinguishing three stances that could be adopted (and observed) vis-à-vis the area and the people living there. These stances are ways to view situations that influence how to manage

the way response proceeds.¹⁶ Depending on whether they adopt one or another stance the officer will decide to adopt one of the four forms of communication skills presented in the previous point.

A first stance may be adopted when the police define the situations encountered as working for the neighbourhood and its residents. The operation takes place in a neighbourhood the police know well. This knowledge concerns the people living there, the shops, associations or other services available. It can be acquired over long years in the neighbourhood but also through personal ties that are reference points for the police officer. In this stance, the officer defines their role as the one who protects the neighbourhood, with various particularities in terms of social network, habits or cultural traditions. The police thus become experts at these local social codes and will use them to not only to manage a situation but also to take a position against someone who does not know or respect them. Some people, for example, will be seen as invading a space that is not their own. If their presence becomes a problem, we see that the police consider the ideal way to handle this problem – if it is not a criminal act – is 'to have the intruder disappear'.

This stance can be illustrated by two responses by the same patrol. The first concerns a 17-year-old girl described as a 'gypsy' who has tried to steal some bath and beauty products in the lining of her coat. The police explain that she has no reason to be in the neighbourhood, that gypsies are 'incorrigible thieves' and that when they turn up in the neighbourhood they have certainly just stolen something. Some weeks later, by coincidence, we are observing the same patrol. Once again they are called to a store. This time, it is a 15-year-old boy, along with a friend, who have been stopped by the store detective after they tried to steal a bottle of hard liquor. The youths, Belgian citizens, but each of a different origin, live in the neighbourhood and were on their way to party with some friends. They are still too young to purchase this alcohol legally. The police officers' discourse towards these 'kids' is completely different and focused on recognising their desires and activities. Another example concerns disputes among neighbours against the backdrop of gentrification of a working class neighbourhood, where more well-off people purchase and renovate houses. In the context of arguments about parking, noise or rubbish, these 'bourgeois hippies who don't know what they're getting into' are defined by some police officers, in the end, as being ill-adapted to the neighbourhood and its residents. Some officers consider their role as one of standing by the longstanding residents, especially as the 'new people' have different expectations which they try to 'impose' via the police, town mayor or the media.

A second stance can be described as the one whereby the police consider certain spaces as needing to have public order restored, or even needing to be 'cleaned' in order to put an end to a series of nuisances or criminal behaviour. To do so they feel they must take action against a population deemed to not respect or not know the law. This stance places the police in an 'us

¹⁶ We thus concentrated on the police officers' evaluation of their objective and role towards various situations. For the police's categorisation of the populations encountered in their operations, see the study by Boussard, Loriol and Caroly (2006).

versus them' polarisation. The relationship with these populations takes the form of responses interpreted as efforts to '(re)conquer' a territory. Police action is thus seen as necessary to check the development of criminality and re-establish the presence of a 'leader' in the territory. One part of the discourse clearly revolves around respecting the policy, public cleanliness and order. Also detectable is a will to show the administrative authorities that 'something is getting done' to 'bringing some order' to the neighbourhood.

An example of this stance can be seen in police operations aiming to keep people from loitering on a square, in a park or on the street. Either they must keep moving or go home. Particular targets of such responses follow calls to report youths 'in hoodies'. In this context, the unstated objective was often to take back the territory and 'educate' people who must be made to understand that they must not hang out in public spaces after dark. Another type of example concerns many actions regarding road users and the Brussels 'jungle'. In this 'jungle' no one cares about the traffic code, be they cars, cyclists or pedestrians. Responses in the area of mobility and obeying the law, for some police officers, in certain situations – especially if they have spent long hours in traffic jams – are tinged with a will to bring some order to the streets, to organise them, getting rid of all obstacles to a smooth traffic flow.

A third stance in police-community relations can be described as procedural. If in the first stance the police define their role as protecting the neighbourhood, and in the second as fighting to reconquer it, the third stance defines the role as one of respecting procedures. In some situations the police do have a detached attitude towards the territory or towards an objective to fight disorder. They feel that, after all, their job is just about earning a salary; they do what they have to do (but nothing more). For some, in fact, this is the sole aim of their work. It is important not to shake things up, not expose themselves to either bitterness or to re-questioning of their work in the field, for example, by the internal affairs department. They limit themselves to completing the tasks imposed by the procedure. Some police explain that this stance is justified by the fact that in the end they no longer see any purpose in what they are asked to do.

An example of this stance sometimes concerns tasks to 'make someone else's work easier'. This especially includes damage reports for insurance companies or helping fill out accident reports, even if they have to do so without even seeing the accident themselves. They see little use in making the work of insurance companies easier. A similar stance was observed among certain police officers who had to accompany a control on the MIVB/STIB public transport line. Other than making the controllers' jobs easier, the policeman felt he was merely doing what he had been ordered to do, with no other objective in sight.

A final stance has to do with the fact that the police may sometimes see themselves as those who have to manage 'the misery of the world'. They feel powerless in dealing with the situation of particularly disadvantaged populations, who accumulate problems with money, relationships, health and housing. They fume against the lack of means, and health risks for the police themselves when they are in contact with some people. These patrols are seen as an

endless process with no solution in sight. Thus, when such situations do not fall clearly in the scope of the police, no one wants to deal with them. And in the end, it is the police who are called to manage this misery and endeavour to make it less visible. This stance comes with a large dose of defeatism and a note of cynicism.

Such a diversity in stances is not surprising, given the quite polyvalent nature of police operations, which entail a broad range of missions and tasks. Nonetheless the operations unit police often admitted that they felt a bit lost in this multiform profession. During discussion throughout our presence in the field and especially in the context of the Group Analysis Method, this feeling was expressed in a search for purpose, but even more in our view as an attempt to find some value in their work. This searching especially involves wondering who actually benefits from policing. If they basically feel that they are working to preserve social order, some aspects of their daily work make them wonder, for example, about the (lack of) follow-up given by the justice to the results of their work. Or it seems as if the primarily financial interest of administrative authorities is what prevails in the area of municipal administrative sanction (SAC/GAS), rather than a true search for a long-term solution to certain problems. This loss of meaning and lack of understanding regarding the goals of the institution they embody in the eyes of the community is compounded by the feeling that the media and some members of the general public adopt a cynical attitude towards them. Such exchanges often tend to conclude with a question: which social order, defined by whom and answering which principles, should the police be defending in our times?

At the end of the description of the selectivity process that determines the work of the police intervention brigades, it becomes clear that a large number of the operations start with a duty being assigned. This is generally in response to a request or a call from someone reporting a situation they deem problematic. In addition to complaint calls, the police, wishing to demonstrate their concern to respond to phenomena that their 'customers' see as problems, some police operations may involve returning to a site. Other operations and briefings may require police to pay particular attention to other phenomena, this time something perceived more by the police hierarchy or the object of a particular policy. This full set of solicitations means that in reality –at least the reality formed by the context of the police force that was out partner for this project– the patrol officers' leeway when it comes to intervening is actually quite limited. Their action is even strongly shaped by these solicitations. Thus it is during the course of the response that another level of selectivity comes into play, regarding how it comes about in concrete terms. It is through a panel of other choices that the police express their margin of manoeuvre, the ability to do what the situation requires them to do: what to do and how to do it? With what concern? This facet of their work is less circumscribed, other than by the production of documents imposed by the procedure and the respect of certain values. The internal control of the force we observed is fairly well known for its tendency to open enquiries in the case of complaints regarding police actions. During our observation period, the force

itself conducted an active campaign aiming to promote the 'force values',¹⁷ to implement them and, generally, give them a central place and disseminate them as widely as possible.

2.2 Derailment caused by an over-oiled organisational mechanism

As already explained above the central issue at stake in this research action was to identify abusive police selectivity practices and mechanisms. It thus emerged that within the normal processes of police intervention work, intrinsically selective, various elements that make up these process can converge in the form of a mechanism that renders this mechanism of selectivity problematic.

If we stick to the image of mechanics, we can start its description with the gear. Here the gear is formed by the police officers within their organization. Police officers work within an organization and the perception they have of their profession within the larger organization plays a major role in the way they carry out their work. In order to deepen this aspect, the literature on organizational justice proved to be fruitful. We will come back to it in the first point.

The motor is the other important part of the mechanics: it moves the gear and through the gear the motor comes into action. The more general central theme of this research is the relation between the police and the population. This is the most essential formulation of our handhold in this research. Within the framework of this action research, it was not possible to also look at how the population perceives their relation to the police. That is why we started our detour in the scientific literature from this concern: our attention was initially focused on the literature on ethnic profiling and, more generally, on procedural justice. In the second point, we present the most important elements.

If the relationship between the police and the population is the motor that is set in motion by mobilizing the gear, it is within these mechanics that the problematic aspects appear. Unconsciously, hidden in the core of problems that may seem distant for problematic mechanisms of police selectivity (such as organisational justice), we found the problematic mechanism. It presents itself as some kind of derailment of the mechanism due to high pressure from adding too much oil. Indeed, by adding too much oil in the gear, the pressure in the engine can increase. The motor becomes restless and can run wild. The system is disturbed. For us, this is the picture that emerges from the combination of elements in our research: the selectivity process of the police derails because of this problematic mechanism. This mechanism is organizational, but the gear, the police officers, can inhibit the effect of the pressure. Our action plan will focus on this inhibition.

¹⁷ The police force has adopted eight values: Respect, Resolving problems, Responsibility, Availability, Team spirit, the Uniform, Integrity and a Spirit of openness. They are regularly recalled through posters but they were also the object of working groups with police officers holding various service roles and at different levels that were organised in 2018-2019 to discuss the concrete expression of these values in the field.

This mechanism not only affects the populations that are the victims (questioning the procedural justice applied to them by the police), it also affects the patrol officers, through the conditions in which they must do their work and the purpose they derive from it (thus questioning the organisation justice applied to them within their own force). These effects are even more crucial to point out as they tend to affect the relations between these police and these populations. The fact that it was possible to underline these sensibilities in the response process in the police force, highlighting them, made it possible to go back through the analysis and uncover this mechanism, which is even more problematic because it is imperceptible and involuntary.

2.2.1 The gear: police officers in the organisation

In the first point of this section on the analysis of police selectivity, we started out by discussing the dual process. Noting that there is own initiative in terms of the modalities of police intervention, we delved into this element by discussing several forms of know-how how they are mobilized according to the stance adopted by the police officers. This stance is in turn influenced by the patrol officer's life skills. These social skills lead to an interpretation of the sense of their intervention in relation to the various purposes of police work. The development of specific know-how is influenced by their perception of the place of intervention in their career, but also in the organization of the police force. In addition - and we have not been able to address this important element - police officers do not decide individually. It is a profession, the patrol profession, in which one almost never acts alone. Group dynamics take place within and with reference to the professional organization¹⁸.

This path lead us to pay attention to the organizational aspects affecting the process, particularly the perception that police officers as employees have of their place in the organization. Indeed, this perception affects the skills to be mobilized in intervention, which need to be strengthened if they are to protect this function from certain problematic forms of selectivity and at the very least make it possible to mitigate the effects of a selectivity mechanism such as the one identified in this research project. These organizational problems of police selectivity can indeed be analysed as a concern for organizational justice.

Yet, the overarching image that the patrol officers conveyed regarding the meaning and objectives of their police work raises important questions. On top, as we have seen in the previous point: depending on the police officer's soft skills, the perceived sense of the intervention will find its way into the concrete selection of the know-how that will be mobilized. Instead of clearly announcing that patrolling is one of, or even the only basic police job, the front line officers we met, patrol officers and others, constantly evoked the feeling that this facet has become devalued. Their words reflect a discomfort about the place of this service function in the police organisation.

¹⁸ A doctoral research is ongoing at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel by Chaim Demarée on this topic.

Whether or not they consider this a problem, the patrol police have little time 'to lose' in contact with the community as they are always in such a hurry to go on to the next call. Furthermore, not knowing how other services in the police work or certainly not other possible relays in the neighbourhood or town, they are only occasionally able to pass cases on to another service or resource. This circumstance limits partnerships within the police force and keeps the police from handling a situation in a holistic manner. Pressed for time, the police officers' decisions are not grounded in the outcome of a problem reported, by calling on a relay, but founded on an evaluation of the investment required by its service alone, and in particular their own time in relation to other assignments. The problem raised is thus the partitioning of service and a certain indifference entailed by the patrol's almost instantaneous temporality.

The work pressure is fairly high in this force: the briefings always cover a large number of assignments and areas for special attention. Furthermore, our observation period took place when the OCAM level was fairly high, at least during part of the study period. As a result, the officers could not go on patrol alone and the tasks relating to OCAM were assigned to the police officers on duty at the station. It must also be remembered that this Brussels district, located close to the European institutions and along the habitual North-South path for demonstrations, is often assigned public order details. The workload was thus particularly high during part of our observation period, during weekly demonstrations on climate change and, especially, the 'demonstrations' or gatherings of the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vest movement). There was thus a permanent penury of police and lack of time. The time invested in long discussions with parties of a domestic argument or a dispute among neighbours and, likewise, time spent in a quiet office where skills and knowledge about an operation can be shared, in these circumstances are quickly dismissed as time 'wasted'. And sometimes moreover, when colleagues from other departments see police officers in discussion they cannot refrain from telling them to 'get back to work'.

As patrolling is also an entry job in the police profession, few officers seem to imagine they will be there for long. This aggravates the problem of their socialisation. Few police officers have a long experience in this service role, meaning the skill, know-how and life skills that, in our view, seem to be a guard against certain weaknesses that may affect this process. This transfer comes about mainly through commented anecdotes. On this subject, it should be noted that there is not always a direct link between the way the officers express ('off record') opinions regarding the populations and their observable practices (Waddington, 1999). Yet, it is these stories that build narratives about meaning and futility, success and failure. Part of the socialisation of police seem to be transmitted this way (Fielding, 1988)¹⁹. We noticed that in brigades with patrol officers having over five years of seniority, these stories mainly reflect frustrations or futility. But, there is another set of stories about completely grotesque situations which, despite a repetitive discourse that 'we are the trash bins of the police force' or, depending on the day

¹⁹ Schaefer and Tewksbury (2018) also discuss critical incidents where violence was used that are also found in the police stories. Unlike their observations, the PolBruNo police officers also sometimes talk about 'epic failures' and completely outlandish situations.

'we're the ones who sweep up society's rejects', tell the story of completely unexpected, successful, outcomes that often convey the importance of 'feeling', knowledge or the ability to 'chat' to people, portrayed as what clinched the situation and made it work. As van Hulst (2013) also noted, these stories are recent, they do not seem to remain as a tradition.

One recurring idea is the importance for patrol police – and not just for the neighbourhood police – to get to know the population and the neighbourhoods in the precinct and force if they want to maintain the philosophy of a police at the service of the community. This is a key problem, especially in the case of young police officers, who for the most part have been sent to the force by the federal police and they do not know Brussels, sometimes not even an urban context. This is without even mentioning the broad diversity and high population density in neighbourhoods like Saint-Josse-ten-Noode. These young police officers often mentioned to us how this environment was so 'foreign' for them.

To be quite clear, we are absolutely not suggesting that they are all doing a bad job, that they lack motivation or even that they are apathetic. What we want to stress is that patrolling is an 'entry job', a first contact with the force, and for many officers, the first contact with police work in general. A large number of these new recruits are not acquainted with the force's specific environment. Some recognise that it holds a degree of interest, while others (e.g. living too far from the force) wish to be transferred as soon as possible. Yet others see this assignment as a temporary step leading them to the judicial police or force-level patrol units. The job is only rarely seen as a long-term objective.

If police officers see the time spent in intervention as a stepping stone to another function within the police force, or to another police force, than it is in their best interest not to be noticed negatively. But in order to establish a good contact with the public efforts are required: the development of specific skills, showing some form of initiative and risk taking. It is therefore sometimes safer to stick to (formal) procedures. All the more so as this initiative is not always explicitly encouraged and, according to some police officers, even discouraged. Many police officers seek above all not to have anything to do with internal control. Because even if the investigation opened is suspended or decides in their favour, police officers are generally afraid that it will remain in their file.

Ultimately, if they do not plan to stay in the case for long, why would patrol officers cultivate such skills, especially when they are not valued by many in the organization (outside of the intervention). This is why it feels safer for their professional future to keep a low profile and not take any risks. They thus avoid conflicts with the internal control and intervention from the complaints committee. Given that somewhat unclear assignments that involve policing groups of people assembled can be liable to lead to a complaint with the control body or publication of a video on YouTube, the police officers may be especially prudent in such situations and limit their action to the strict minimum. At the end of the day, it is neither their city nor their future, but rather an obligatory stint in a place that has nothing to do with them, and a place governed by norms and values that are different from their own.

On the other hand, patrol actions that lead to a clear-cut judicial report are seen as having high value with little risk. Judicial reports record facts that can be qualified undeniably as criminal acts. On several occasions we were told that filing this type of report was interesting in furthering the police career when the person aimed to move on to investigations or force-level operations. In certain cases, therefore, ambition can be a driving force in the patrol. It pushes the officers to try to multiply the opportunities to draw up a report for a thief caught in the act, a human trafficker or a gang of drug dealers. These occasions nevertheless require a bit of luck and, especially, having enough time to get to know a neighbourhood in depth. It can happen that an isolated patrol decides to write such a report for drug users, in the hopes of finding someone underage among them. People have also been stopped time after time in a park or public square to find out if they have drugs in their possession. The prime spot for such controls is public areas where people can smoke a joint without being bothered or seen.

For the police officers, the way a response is actually carried out is clearly determined by the supervisory modes installed for the action in question. The police officers point to a combined impact of functions like that of 'supervisor', along with increasingly constraining procedures, compounded by controls and pressure to justify their actions coming from the hierarchy, the prosecutor's office and the public in general. All this makes them feel they are not being treated as adults, that they are stripped of personal responsibility. In the eyes of the police officers, these overviews, supervisions and controls, certainly installed with the best of intentions often fail to take into account the realities in the field and have repercussions on front line police work. Among those mentioned include not being treated adults, which erodes recognition of the knowledge and know-how specific to patrol officers and disparages the value of a profession. Furthermore, to a certain extent, the controls encourage a mind-set during the response that is already more focused on justifications that will have to be made or sometimes the thought that it is better not to intervene at all. The officers attempt to cover their backs as far as possible and if necessary, the lack of contact becomes one way to do this.

In a discreet and perhaps ironic way, control procedures designed precisely to combat certain forms of abusive selectivity, can have these immediate repercussions that are ultimately accompanied, more indirectly, by a devaluation of certain skills and know-how like speaking with the residents, taking time to listen and to refer or follow up, which are powerful ways to gain a sense of purpose to one's work. They all become a form of risk taking. In a context where the 'outside world' often calls into question the police and their work, where each response is liable to lead to insults (towards them and their family), when the operations get posted on YouTube, the lack of support and value given to patrolling reinforces a lack of interest in the job and thus diminishes the meaning derived from it.

Steps like valorising certain approaches to patrolling by recognising and encouraging certain knowledge, both know-how and life skills; promoting the value of taking time and dialoguing as worthwhile procedures; working with the front line police to clarify the meaning of their jobs can apply to more general problems of the police function. As such, this analysis may seem

slightly outside the general subject of problematic practices of mechanisms of selectivity. Yet, as discussed when presenting the method of the research, they actually serve to look at the subject from a different angle, enabling us to pinpoint the conditions that help produce the problems that motivated this research and formulate an action plan that is able gradually to address the problems, especially with the help of certain knowledge acquired in the field of police sociology.

These organisational problems of police selectivity can indeed be analysed as a concern for organisational justice. Within the organisation, patrol work is not seen as having value, certainly not in these public order assignments that do not lead to actions that will reverberate on to the second line services. In search of a meaning and objective in their work, the police will have to either aim for a different police function or redefine the job's objective themselves.

The patrol brigades thus reflect a problem in terms of their perception of the organisational justice at play in their police force. In other words, this refers to the behaviours, decisions and actions of their organisation and the way they influence their own attitudes and behaviour on the job (Greenberg, 1987). The employees are sensitive to the decisions their employers take daily, whether at a small or large scale, and then judge these decisions as fair or unfair. These are judgements that influence a worker's behaviour (Frimousse, Peretti, & Swalhi, 2008; Molines & Fall, 2017). This makes it all the more crucial that these police officers feel like being treated fairly. Indeed, this impression affects the skills mobilized during the intervention, which need to be strengthened if they are to protect this function from certain problematic forms of selectivity and at the very least if they are to make it possible to mitigate the effects of a selectivity mechanism like the one we identified in this research project.

2.2.2 The motor: the relation between police and population

The stances described in section 2.1.3 above are not in themselves problematic, but they can become problems when they lead to incidents that pass a certain limit. In addition to the valuation of their tasks and their treatment within their organisation, other factors are indeed likely to reinforce rather than inhibit the selectivity mechanism affecting the selection process. As we have seen, some problematic practices or mechanisms of selectivity lead the police to treat some populations on their beat 'more favourably'. We will instead look into the effects of stances that lead the police to be more inclined to check or question someone or do this in a way that does not enable them to understand why the police are checking or questioning them.

The problems more often arise from the police officer's rejection of or at least distancing from the some sections of the population. This distance can be found in each type of stance. Through various forms of reasoning, some populations are effectively considered as being in the wrong through their mere presence in certain areas, and this despite the fact that being in a place is not sufficient reason to be considered suspicious. For the neighbourhood protector stance, these are people who are not part of the neighbourhood; for the fighting disorder stance, they are people who hang out in a public area. The distancing from these populations can be

resumed in rejection of certain fringes of the population because they disturb and/or act suspiciously; in any case they are not a potential interlocutor who could shed light on a situation. This mindset plays an important role in the way these people are approached and is essential in understanding how the moment of selectivity plays out.

It is compelling to see, from our observations and questions, that the front line police themselves, especially those with the most experience, often mention that they do not understand the purpose of their work. On several occasions they have confided how hard it is to juggle the purpose they give to their work and the meaning of actions or procedures requested by their hierarchy, whether immediate supervisors or those higher up the police hierarchy. The purpose stressed by the front line police is often that of a service to the community or maintaining social order. However they feel that a large part of the actions, operations and procedures requested by their supervisors aim to meet objectives that can be described as 'making the mayor happy', 'getting our numbers up', taking a 'shot in the dark' (through the perceived lack of knowledge of the environment), 'selling snake oil' to the population or the political class, or even simply 'to give someone overtime pay'.²⁰ These front line police on assignment in the force for several years also point to a lack of interest by some new arrivals in the meaning of police work (beyond the personal aim to have a stable and well-paid job). It may be that this lack of interest by the rookie police officers is linked to another reality: the fact that they are often working in Brussels in order to be better placed when they apply for transfer to a force closer to their home. In fact, in this force the police 'enter' through the patrol unit door and a career plan is not drafted until they apply for another assignment in the force. Having a clear idea of the meaning of their job is no guarantee against a problematic mechanism of selectivity occurring. Yet, in the prospect of avoiding problematic effects, there are grounds for initiating a discussion with these police officers, hopefully leading to a clarification that is beneficial both for them and for the quality of the police service provided.

Such thoughts, emerging gradually as the project progressed, led us to consider that it might be a good idea to analyse this situation in terms of procedural justice. Indeed, if a police officer is generally 'launched' into a response and must cope using the means available and the meaning they can lend to it, the person interpellated does not always understand why and wherefore of the motive²¹. Although the subject of the project was the police as actor, we had available a large body of literature on procedural justice that enabled us to look into this other angle of analysis

A whole body of research in police sociology is devoted to what is called procedural justice (Hough, Jackson, Bradford, Myhill, & Quinton, 2010).²² These studies show that the quality of

²⁰ These are expressions actually used by the police officers.

²¹ For an analysis of police management of the motivation for interactions (in England and Wales) see: Quinton, 2019. Gauthier and Jobard (2018) stress that while controlling identity is a commonplace and legitimate action for a police officer, if it is without justification then the person being controlled will see it as discretionary and discriminatory.

²² Procedural justice (with several nuances) posits that there is a greater feeling of justice, of a fair thus legitimate public action, when it is apparent that guarantees of the procedure have been followed. Procedural justice, therefore, can be

an encounter with the police is actually just as important for people as the very fact of being interpellated by them. Although little research has been undertaken in Belgium on the subject of police procedural justice, existing studies by NGO's show that it is indeed an issue for people subject to certain forms of ethnic profiling. A profiling based on belonging to a specific group may be motivated by a police officer's stereotyped judgement, something that we did not observe as such, but the impression of an ethnic profiling can emerge just as well from the way certain people are addressed. During the analysis of the stances it appeared that certain actions were understood entirely from the police officer's point of view. The public does not necessarily perceive them the same way because they do not hold the keys to understanding them. Obviously, as this study was not undertaken with the policed population, our interpretation is based on the interactions observed. Our interpretations, nevertheless, are supported by two recent studies, one by the Human Rights League, the other by Amnesty International. As such we can mention the words of a young woman of Moroccan origin, extracted from the Amnesty International Report issued early this year. The extract underscores the impact that being checked has on someone. The young woman also points out the fact that being approached in an impolite manner gave the impression of already being judged: 'Some agents are friendly... But nine times out of ten, we hear things like: "Go on, keep moving", "shut up". Or sometimes they ask weird questions like "Do you have drugs on you?" or "What are you doing here?" We really get the impression that we're criminals... The police should know that being stopped really affects us, psychologically, physically and for our future.' (Amnesty International, 2018, p. 12, our translation). In the Human Rights League report that quotes some people who have been targeted, a young man also explains that he is controlled less often when he is in a business suit than when he is wearing a sweatshirt. Furthermore, he explains, if he is controlled while wearing a suit, the police 'are polite and explain why they are controlling you, even if it's just a traffic control' (La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, 2016, p. 40, our translation).

For Hough and his colleagues, procedural justice stresses the link between the way people are treated by the police and their trust in the institution. The public's trust in the police is necessary partly because it can lead to better cooperation with the institutions, but mainly because public trust reinforces institutional legitimacy and thus respect of the law (Hough e.a., 2010).

Fostering procedural justice thus becomes a highly efficient means of policing. Jackson and Sunshine also reach this conclusion (2003). If the public generally see the police as legitimate, a large part of their daily behaviour will comply with the law. Furthermore, police efforts to manage problematic situations is aided by the public's cooperation. According to the authors, an approach founded on procedural justice creates social order by obtaining the public's cooperation with the law and the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). The police, through the way they interact with the public, bear witness to the norms and values upheld by society. When they understand that their response can (and must) be perceived as fair, the police assume the

seen as the perception that the process methods used to reach a decision are based on general principles of correct justice procedures.

role as representatives of the moral structure of this society (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007). This idea clearly evokes many other thoughts on the police, explaining the heightened importance of the police, especially in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods where other institutions have withdrawn. There more than anywhere else, the police are the ones who represent the State (Gauthier, 2010; Monjardet, 2008).

What is more, this trust in the institutions and more specifically in the police goes beyond just the person policed. People of immigrant origin show less trust in the police because of discrimination they are subject to more generally in society (Van Craen & Skogan, 2015). In their study of responses of people of Moroccan, Turkish or Polish origin, Van Craen and Skogan (2015) discuss the extension to the police of a perception conditioned by other experiences with institutional actors, a perception influenced by a wide range of interactions with various institutional actors (not just the police): the conviction that the police are stricter with people of their origin is not always influenced by personal interactions with the police, but also derived from experience gathered through contact with other social actors.

Other authors have conducted studies on procedural justice and building trust in the fairness of police treatment, in function of the group with which the person identifies and his/her observations on the way the police behave in interactions with this group, thus showing an extension to experiences of other people sharing the same origin (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

The perception that people have of procedural justice thus definitely derives from the way they consider the relationship between the police and people they consider as belonging to the same group as them. Furthermore, groups that see themselves as exposed to unfavourable police treatment, different methods from those applied to other groups, may oppose the police in so far as the latter is not considered as sharing the same norms as them (Radburn & Stott, 2018). Envisaged in this manner, policing that reflects a guarantee of procedural justice does not just aim to influence the functioning and construction of police legitimacy. It, obviously, also aims to influence the issue of ethnic profiling²³.

Meares has identified four factors that intervene in achieving police procedural justice:

- enabling people to state their case and point of view;
- enabling fairness in decision-making by fostering factuality and transparency;
- fostering courtesy and respect for rights and dignity;
- showing concern for people in interactions with them (Meares, 2013).

Tyler and Wakslak also stress the link between profiling and police legitimacy, as well as the quality of the decision-making process, that of interactions and the importance of trust as three

²³ From a scientific point of view it is interesting to note that the literature on procedural justice that we consulted almost exclusively starts with a quantitative analysis (something also noticed by Radburn et Stott, 2018), underlining shortcomings in appreciating how interactions actually occur. Our study can thus add a building block to this discussion.

key elements for procedural fairness. This applies not only to the victims of the profiling but also to other groups (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004).

An article by Van Craen and Skogan nevertheless underlines another factor to bear in mind in efforts to instil among the public a stronger sense of the police's actions conveying procedural justice. Functional shortcomings mentioned in the Group Analysis discussions invite us to heed their words concerning the importance of working concomitantly to promote an internal procedural justice, from the hierarchy towards the police officers if there was to be a change towards greater procedural justice.²⁴ This is a way to promote accountability in the police's professional practices in the field, in other words interactions based on providing rationale and encouraging critical questions. Such a professional attitude would indeed be crucial in building greater trust; it calls for the police to take care to communicate with the community regarding norms and values, fostering mutual knowledge and the conviction of shared norms and values (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017).

The relationship between the police and the population is the broader theme on which this action-research wishes to act. The use of procedural justice as a notion shows two interesting elements: on the one hand, the importance of investing in this relationship because of the increase in the populations' confidence in the police as an institution and the effect on the interaction between police and populations; on the other hand, the fact that respecting procedures does not automatically mean that populations also have the perception of being treated fairly. It is important to be able to explain what one does as a police officer and why. And here, given the previous section, it sometimes hurts. Now, the pieces are put on the board to describe our analysis of the problematic mechanism of police selectivity we've identified.

2.2.3 Overfilling the oil: the mechanical disposal of response calls

After looking at various elements that make up or influence policing processes and its intrinsic selectivity, let us look now at a crucial result of the analysis work undertaken during various phases of the project. We will thus return to the chain of steps in this process, which in the end can become a mechanism that renders this selectivity eminently problematic, all the more problematic that the patrol officer must bear the burden of attempting to limit its adverse effects. As noted in the previous points, such a mechanism is discrete and complex. Anchored in the organization, its management exceeds by far the resources of the front-line officer.

Indeed, the way into the issue, the most complicated one as seen from our own observations and discussions with several police officers we spoke with, is to note that police in this force are most of the time mobilised in reaction to something, and this for several reasons. There is a worrisome combination, on the one hand, of the specific context of a force with several young police officers on the patrol squads, with a limited knowledge of the field and fearing 'trouble' if they 'contradict' the callers, together with the instrumentalization of the police by a section

²⁴ Along the same lines: Worden & McLean, 2017.

of the population who see them as its 'armed wing'. We will try to clarify as far as possible the impact of these interferences in the process we described above.

The combination described above: a heavy workload requiring a large degree of reactivity in police work and the presence of several young officers who are not familiar with the environment and adopt a risk-management attitude while waiting for their 'real' career to begin, implies that the police can be instrumentalised (also see Devresse & Hubert, 2008). Furthermore, this process characterised by an approach that is hardly proactive, relying largely on handling complaints, leads to a problematic mechanism of selectivity, even if this is not the officers' intention. In the course of our observations and discussions we saw how this context does indeed lead to a certain a problematic mechanism of selectivity that originates in some types of complaints and assignments.

The calls for police response do not always concern crimes or misdemeanours²⁵. Quite the contrary - the large majority of calls involve public order and peace. The police are called about bothersome interactions among individuals. Police services can be instrumentalised for private purposes in two cases. First, some calls are received in the context of longstanding disputes among neighbours or spouses/partners, for example. One party decides that now is the time to finally change things by calling the police, who will surely say that he or she is in the right. These calls regarding public peace are made in the aim to avoid other methods of winning the argument.

Secondly, there are conflicts that happen just once, or an annoyance that occurs suddenly. In this case, instead of speaking directly to the person causing the disturbance, the police are called in to do the work. We are thinking for example of a woman who calls to report children raising a ruckus outside her window instead of being in school. She is afraid that they will break her shutters or windows with all the balls they are kicking about. The responding patrol quickly realize it is Wednesday, a day when school is out in the afternoon. When they reach the site, they park their car at a distance. They do not notice any particular noise. Not far from the caller's address, they see two young boys playing football in a small common courtyard. The twelve-year-olds explain that a neighbour has already complained about them to the police. They think it may be the elderly lady on the ground floor, even if she has never said anything to the boys themselves.

In this case the police decide not to control the boys' identities and not send these data to the dispatcher, since the elderly lady is undoubtedly too anxious. They nevertheless ask the boys to be careful not to kick the ball towards the building wall or windows. To avoid any reprisals they do not say who called and neither do they ring the lady's doorbell. Although this reaction may seem completely logical, interviews with the police made it clear that this type of police response actually put them at risk. These types of interactions are conducted in a tone of negotiation and based on 'common sense'. But it can also happen that people lose their temper

²⁵ Il s'agit d'une observation « classique » de la sociologie policière. Voy.not.: Bittner, 2001; Brodeur, 2003; Ericson, 1991; Reiner, 2000.

and one of the those involved can feel frustrated by the response and let the police department know. These responses require a good dose of psychology, patience and time. The police try to maintain public peace by avoiding an escalation but also by enabling people to live in peaceful co-existence by agreeing on certain terms, despite circumstances rendered difficult through the high demographic concentration, bad housing conditions, problems of mental health and a wide diversity in habits and traditions.

People express discontent in different ways. Sometimes they file an official complaint through the internal service. They can also call the dispatcher to complain about the response or they can write to the mayor. Sometimes during a response people mention that they 'know the mayor' or someone in town hall or even the 'police chief' in an attempt to convince the police to be on their side. As we have already seen, the police do not want to have any trouble with the internal inspection nor have to answer about how the response went, even if reports do not systematically lead to negative feedback or to a sanction. Nevertheless, they never know what to expect from these situations. The police officers generally feel that these tasks are not considered as 'real police work', thus receive very little recognition and even less correctly supervised. Yet, they are extremely frequent occurrences.

For these reasons, some patrol officers invest less in these tasks and try to get them over as quickly as possible, in order to not take too many risks. As a result, sometimes without giving too much thought they heed the caller's requests, since this is the person who may call back or complain to the police if dissatisfied with the outcome. Thus, when an agent receives a call about a group of young men sitting on a bench in a small square, making too much noise or looking like they are dealing drugs, the police submit them to an ID check and may also frisk them before ordering them to go home. The most risky encounter we witnessed on our observations involved three young black men, sitting on a bench. A neighbour on the small square nearby called the police asking them to come arrest these three 'Africans' because, 'well, they were certainly selling drugs'. The dispatcher tells the patrol squad that this lady habitually calls up 'to arrest people for any old thing'. The squad thus has a bit more background information. The police observe the situation for a few minutes before going up to the young men, whom they recognise as living in the neighbourhood, without controlling their identity. The main aim of the discussion is to ask the young men not to smoke in front of the house in question and to put their cigarette butts in the trash can.

Things can also be difficult when the police are not willing to give in to requests from problematic callers. We also saw a clear example during our first observation phase. The callers are often straightforward discriminatory in their references, as the previous example may illustrate. The following incident also illustrates this, even if the stereotype reasoning only hits later on in the intervention. The patrol we were observing are sent to the coach stops at the North station to intervene in an argument between a woman who wants to board the bus and the driver who refuses. Seeing that the situation was getting ugly, the bus controller calls the police. A scuffle ensues. The police supervisor also arrives on site after the patrol. The Dutch-

speaking woman has a European ID card as she lives and works in Belgium. She has a ticket to take the bus to return to the Netherlands. The bus driver nevertheless points to a notice posted at the bus entrance saying that only a Belgian ID card or a passport is considered as a valid document, not a European residence card. In his explanations, several times the bus driver points to the woman's black skin to say he doesn't believe her identity card. He even tells the police that they know how these 'blacks' always cause problems. The words are so explicit that the supervisor finally indicates to the woman once the coach left (he could not force the driver to let her board the bus) that she has a complete right to file a complaint for discrimination and xenophobia and that she can give the police officers' names as witnesses. Several officers repeat the same thing to the woman. The supervisor also invites the patrollers to indicate this incident in their report in case the coach driver decides to file a complaint against the police response.

This mechanism, where, for all practical purposes, complaint reports are not filtered, can have problematic secondary effects. A small number of people do call often, frequently for the same (type of) problem. They reiterate exactly same complaint, sometimes about different people. If, for the reasons evoked above, the police follow through, the complaint gets repeated along with the response. For a small number of complaints, the callers act under the cover of sending in 'their' police to settle a problem. And this is exactly what happens when the dispatcher transfers the complaint as is and the patrol squad deems it is best to give in. This is how these attempts to instrumentalise the police find their way in reports on both day and night shifts.

In turn this can pose the risk that, on the basis of the patrol's reports and in view of the repetitive nature of the complaints concerning a precise location, an operation is deemed necessary on site to question and check those who are generally found there and to address the nuisance.

Furthermore, to add to the problem, the reports are not used to identify the 'recurring complainers'. When a patrol sent out for this type of complaint deems that there are no nuisances and do not proceed to any controls or frisking, the report merely indicates 'nothing to report'. The callers who complain frequently about matters that the police feel is not worth reporting or callers whose words are clearly discriminatory are never identified. We obviously are not speaking here about individuals who simply mention skin colour or other physical characteristics, but callers who formulate accusations based on age, skin colour or another characteristic.

Several officers also recognise these attempts to instrumentalise them, but do not know how to handle the problem. Temporary strategies are sometimes adopted, both at the dispatcher level – where some call-takers discuss with the caller in the aim to factualise the accusations, or at the patrol level, as we described above. The general impression is that 'the complaint caller is king'. Consequently the police fear that a caller who files unfounded 'complaints' about a fellow citizen will also complain to the internal control service. In the absence of expressed support in the force to prevent this instrumentalization, the responses, especially in the case

of repeated complaints, are problematic forms of (de)selectivity. The police officers themselves are aware of this.

As a conclusion to this section, it should be noted that although there are no grounds to talk about systematic and structural ethnic profiling, the mechanical processing of complaints that aim to instrumentalise the police as an 'arm' against certain people is liable to pervert the ordinary police selectivity process. Furthermore, if the police sometimes raise questions about the both the reasons for their response and its modalities, the same can be said for the people who are policed. Sanselme (2007) and Vandenbroek (2012) also noted a similar tendency. For these authors, this instrumentalization is to be seen as a deviation in the implementation of a community policing model without taking into account crime fighting-based tendencies, leaving the populations to define police problems in a world that is increasingly unequal.

What is mainly called into question is actually the mechanical, well-oiled, nature of the way complaints are processed. They are not always analysed with regard to the general interest. Even if not a matter of conscious strategy, this unperceived mechanism is induced perversely through the very aim to listen to the community, to evaluate police service based on the satisfaction of a customer (who is able to file an appeal). Far from being limited to the scope of this project, it is a serious tendency that affects all the public administrations, the police and justice included.

These different elements cannot be dissociated and most police officers, whether the youngest or the most experienced, notice this instrumentalization and often develop their own tricks to fight against it. They nevertheless do not feel that these efforts are valorised for there is very little interest in aspects of their work that do not lead to opening a judicial investigation or imposing a SAC/GAS fine. Nonetheless, it is in these practices and the exercise of these skills that are found the means to reinforce the local community's perception of a procedural justice at work. The scientific literature shows that populations who feel respected and supported by the police will more readily collaborate with them. These different aspects are now to be combined in developing an action.

3 An action focused on patrol work

The action part of the research was aimed at valorising the work of the patrols, but also at allowing them to participate in the analysis and formulation of the approach to relations with the population (from the perspective of procedural justice) and the functioning of their organisation (from the perspective of organisational justice). We propose to go through this action in chronological order: how the action was set up and the practices discussed in support of the objectives of the action.

3.1 Setting up the action: valorising knowledge and skills and promoting certain practices

We have seen that certain areas of this analysis needed to be combined in order to set up an action that addresses the problems observed and the potentials in the field. We explain them here below. After developing the underlying ideas we will present the content of the action inspired by the intervention method. We end this section with more practical information on how to effectively set up this action.

3.1.1 *The ideas retained from the shared diagnostic*

Certain key elements were determining factors in drawing up the action plan. Several different service functions are represented among the frontline police officers. We chose to look into the those handling responses, for they are the officers most frequently in contact with the local community. We chose to focus more specifically on the work of the patrol officers. Unlike those on duty at the police station who deal with people coming to the station or brought in by the patrols, the patrol officers can decide whether or not to take an interest in an individual or situation. The support brigades²⁶ might have also been interesting subjects for this action, but they are not in activity everywhere and intervene mainly 'in support': in the context of situations that the patrol squads are also involved in. Furthermore, the patrol squad is the post assigned to many new recruits who are less accustomed to the philosophy of the force and the communities.

These patrol officers are thus the ones most in contact with local residents and the ones in a position to intervene proactively. We have seen that they can adopt different stances towards this local population. One stance, that of getting to know and recognising the people in their patrol neighbourhood can improve the contact with them. This contact also enables them to make more relevant fine-tuned analyses of problems with offenders in the neighbourhood. These skills seem important ones to valorise and disseminate more broadly, among the patrol officers and management alike.

At the same time the patrol officers, and police in response units more broadly, are those the most in search of purpose and a clear objective for their work. This feeling of their profession being devalued hampers the development of skills specifically valuable for the patrol officers. In a way, the skills that enable them to move on from patrol work are the ones seen to have more worth for they help the officer evolve towards a more valorising police function.

These officers who feel they are devalued in their tasks are, additionally, during long days on patrol confronted with a population that is generally in crisis. The police are usually called in the middle of a crisis or at least some kind of emergency. When the patrol decides themselves to look into a situation, the tension usually rises to a crisis limit. After all, this is a profession involved in emergencies. At such times it is important to be able to explain the context for the

²⁶ These are anti-aggression or crime-fighter brigades that are the best equipped in arms, with an unmarked car and more physical recruitment requirements. Brigades of this type are mainly operational in the most urban zones.

police action, the procedure followed, or to follow, and possible outcomes. It is not always easy to communicate these elements, especially to people who are angry or in a crisis mode. The literature has shown that if a patrol officer is not sure of the sense of what they are doing or feels that their institution does not listen, explain or motivate what they are being asked to do, then it becomes less probable for this patrol officer to have the spontaneous reflex to explain to the community what they are doing (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017a). As nothing was found on the side of the police indicating abusive selectivity practices, it is thus mainly on the side of the community 's perception of the police response where work can be done. But this work, in the light of the context observed, goes hand-in-hand with valorising a profession and the specific skills to be cultivated.

The objective that we set in the action plan was to valorise the experience found in various patrol officers in the force, especially their ability to manage the quality of interactions, directed towards solving problems. A more constructive form management requires a responsible attitude which means taking the time to understand a situation, but also taking risks: taking the initiative to propose a compromise or referral elsewhere, convincing people to file a complaint or contact the police station. Constructive management means officers who explain their actions in an instructive manner, who know how to take time to patch up a bad situation. Explaining the reason for the action, its scope and limits, looking around to have sufficient elements of the context so as to evaluate it judiciously all seem to be skills that let the population feel they are respected. This averts an escalation or keeps a situation from turning against the police. These skills are quite specific and are related to a certain environment or particular population. In particular, they are skills held by certain patrol officers with long experience. Nevertheless they are often unknown or even neglected by others.

Thus, rather than banking on forms of training more divorced from the daily work context, we can work more immediately and build on the skills and know-how found in actors who seldom have the opportunity to talk about them. Indeed, the knowledge most valued by the police officers is that which is streetwise, that can lead to concrete results (Loftus, 2010). We thus think it would be interesting to work with the patrol officers to identify and look deeper into response methods 'that work', in other words response modes that are perceived as fair, and that bring a more solid result in the medium term. The aim of the action is, by doing so, to valorise and promote the adoption of these modalities by their colleagues.

3.1.2 'Pie meetings' as intervision-training

These findings led to an action plan that may seem a bit strange in the light of the origins of this study. The action plan we implemented with the patrol officers, in fact, was to set up a 'pie meeting'. This is a method that aims to capitalise on the experience at hand, especially that of the patrol officers with a certain degree of experience and/or skills in the way to invest in contact with the population. The modules were formatted based on real needs and the solutions proposed were either presented in a peer group, especially among the most

experienced group of police, or else organised by themselves by searching for the information needed. Valorisation of experience and capitalising on existing know-how were intended to enable the newest colleagues to draw inspiration from the knowledge and good practices of the 'old hands'. And this in a context somewhat supervised, involving the hierarchy.

The objectives were, on the one hand, to identify the response methods that 'work well' because they are fair and bring convincing results in creating links with the citizens and, on the other hand, to spawn a reflection among the patrol officers regarding improvements or adjustments to mechanisms involved, whether this be the object of operations, coordination among various services or else ideas about possibilities for relay or referral outside the police. The choice was made to invest in culture and exchanges between colleagues in order to make the professional skills of police officers more visible, valued and, more generally, strengthened, and to do so by ensuring a link with the decisions taken by the force hierarchy. In the light of the shared diagnostic and, more particularly, in view of the logistical hurdles in meeting systematically with the same people (compared to the same functions) for the group analysis, the method set up centred on organising meetings with the patrol officers in the context of daily running of the police station.

In order to include these meetings in the habitual patrol rhythm and to ensure that the discussions could revolve around recent problematic responses experienced by the patrols, the researcher participated in the patrol's routine by following them during two day shifts and two night shifts before conducting the three meetings during three night shifts. All this was spread over a period of approximately eight weeks per brigade; the meetings assembled the police officers of a brigade along with their brigade chief.

The principle of these meetings was that of *intervision*, which fosters a dynamic of discussion and exchange among professionals about their recent activities. *Intervision* is a special device comprised of meetings among peers in a professional framework. The objective is exchanges about their experiences and collective thinking about their professional behaviour. These meetings take place among peers, in a confidential setting, outside any relation with hierarchy (Lippmann, 2013; Marshall & Etcheverry, 2010)²⁷. During our action, the brigade chief was also present. Although this person is "chief", he is mainly a colleague who handles the administrative side of the brigade's human resources. In addition to this administrative dimension, he participates in the work of the brigade with his colleagues and is present at the brigade's office during the same hours.

To make sure that an objective on the order of continuing training could be met, it was essential to be able to actually free up some time outside the patrols and operations. During the *intervision* meeting, a solution had to be found to remove the brigade from any emergency or imperative requests all the while warning the other squads in the field about this lack of availability. Furthermore, the time could not be taken from the little time the patrols had left

²⁷ An interesting example of application of this tool with judges in order to improve the way they communicate with the accused who appear before them can be found in an article by Marshall and Etcheverry (2010).

to write up their reports; it had to enable the brigade to meet in a space away from the adrenaline and immediacy that characterises policing.

Regarding the agenda and content of these meetings, the exchanges among the participants concerned incidents, responses or operations that had recently occurred. The participants thought about and exchanged points of view about what they did, and how and why they did so; they also discussed the outcome and the way the communities regarded these actions.

This pooling of experiences and thoughts made it possible to expand the discussion to other concerns identified by the police, all the while taking care to return to the analysis of problematic, or even abusive, forms of selectivity. As such a continued training for and by people in the field was made possible. This continued training promotes a knowledge in the field as well as life skills comprised of attitudes and general reflexivity about one's own practices and about the institution. Continued and continuous training takes place in meetings. The process itself is a form of training on its own. The meeting facilitator nevertheless wrote up short memos in order to lay out the main areas for questioning or lines for a solution and ideas going deeper into the questions, completed for each brigade from one meeting to the next. This meant that the spoken word, an important part of police culture in the patrols, was respected. The members of some brigades even used the memos to bring these findings to the attention of their authorities.

Through the different phases of implementing the plan, a formula developed that gave way to a constructive and concrete training process. The issue at stake was to make room for a frank discussion, in an informal tone of speech, based on 'cases', situations encountered, such as those regularly heard in the narratives that move throughout the patrol brigades. Frank, informal and in an agreeable setting, this time, however, something more had to be done with these stories, namely, to analyse the practices and elucidate the points of interest. Before organising the meetings the researcher followed the squad during four shifts, two day and two night, in order to get to know them better and have the chance to present the project, assess the group dynamics in each squad and understand the phenomena animating the patrol services of this precinct. After these observations, three night shifts were followed during which the meetings took place. During a first meeting the participants were encouraged to think about and exchange their points of view on the problems encountered and how they could be analysed. During a second meeting, the exchanges focused more on how these problems were managed: what the officers did, and how and why they did so, what the outcome was and how the communities regarded these actions. The last meeting served to think about constructive and concrete steps that could improve responses to these identified problems, including those the group may decide to bring to the attention of the hierarchy.

3.1.3 A few elements about setting up the action

The training tool was set up on the basis of an agreement in principle and with the support of the directors. In each precinct where we were implementing it for a brigade, we made sure that

the project was explained to the management and we had their collaboration. The brigades were chosen at random. We took the time to explain the project to the brigade supervisor and to ask for agreement to integrate this brigade into the action plan. Some people welcomed us with open arms, others were more reticent. The discussions as well as the assurance of being on hand during the shifts to anchor the tool in the profession and actual problems managed to convince all the people we spoke with. We received a warm welcome during the observations and meetings, in a spirit of openness, most of the time expressing a true interest in the approach.

In order to create this 'time of parenthesis away from emergencies' within the usual running of the station, we had to find a relatively calm time. It was not possible to foresee a time when another brigade could come in to replace the one in the meeting. Furthermore, given that tasks generating from the local population formed the major part of the patrol operations and that even specific operations could come up during the shift, it was hard to 'plan' the calmest periods with precision. During the initial observations we nevertheless saw that the neighbourhoods calmed down after a certain hour (generally from 1:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. during the week, and from 2:00 a.m. to after 7:00 a.m. on the weekend). This did not at all mean that nothing happens, simply that it would be easier to remove and organise a meeting with one of the five operational brigades.

After that, the solution proposed, which worked fairly well, was for the researcher, each time, to follow a whole 'night' shift, from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., in order to hold the meetings whenever the duties became calmer. A code 'NICC meeting' was agreed with the force dispatcher enabling the brigade to be removed from patrolling for about two hours, barring sudden emergencies. In concrete terms, the meetings took place mainly between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m., often just after the breakfast break. This timing gave the patrol officers a decompression time before starting into the thought and exchange process. Other, younger, teams preferred to first drive around a bit or take advantage of these hours in the middle of the shift to write up some of their reports. In these teams the meetings started around 4:00 a.m.

Some pies were ordered and set out on the table for these meetings. This detail may seem trivial, but in fact it was something that each brigade appreciated, especially the fact that they were pies well-known in the Brussels region for their quality. In addition to their role in valorising these brigades, they had the effect that the 'NICC meetings' were immediately rechristened as the 'pie meetings'.

A total of four brigades were followed in four different precincts. Altogether, the researcher observed slightly over 420 hours during the action phase. The participants, selected at random, each time gave us a warm welcome. After the expected questions and clarifications about the use of this information, the police officers, both those on patrol and those on duty at the stations and the brigade chief as well, gave us a considerable amount of time. The teams quickly integrated the observer, all the more so because it was interesting to talk with someone who – a plus – could also lend a hand sometimes with Dutch speakers. Often they passed on ideas

about things to bring up in the car. They commented their assigned tasks, both before leaving and on their return. These rich discussions were quite helpful in organising the meetings, but they also nourished the analysis. The observations undertaken before the meetings were priceless, enabling the researcher to get to know the police officers and letting them become acquainted with her, but also making it possible to anchor the meetings quite concretely in recent occurrences in the field.

Altogether, 10 complete meetings were undertaken. On three occasions a meeting had to be postponed until the next night because of long-lasting duties that occupied most of the brigade members. One meeting also had to close early (after 80 minutes) when a fire broke out near the police station. In this area, weekend nights were more at risk.

On some occasions, the brigades took advantage of the presence of other people and invite them to participate in the meetings. For example, one highly appreciated supervisor participated in a meeting. On two occasions, people working at the dispatching were invited and on one occasion when a meeting was held early the next morning, the team coming on for the 7:00 a.m. shift were able to participate for a short while. Whenever a brigade clearly expressed its interest in having a colleague attend, we integrated this person in the meeting. On the other hand, when police officers did not wish this person to be there, the colleague (for example from another brigade) was not integrated in the meeting.

Some meetings were more prolific than others, but overall the police officers participated without much difficulty. The hardest meetings were the ones when the researcher was already too tired. Despite all the potential in conducting these meetings at night (fewer duties after a certain time of night, calmer police station, a more tight-knot atmosphere at night,...) occasionally it was nevertheless hard to manage fatigue. Facilitating the interview meeting mainly served to announce the general theme (of the research and the meeting) and to launch the exchange among the police officers in reference to a recent patrol duty. We also took notes during the meetings so as to be able to structure the ideas based on the remarks made in order to continue the work constructively during the second and third meetings. It often occurred that after the meetings, at the station or in the car, the officers continued the discussion on the topic or a specific element. The youngest officers were often less talkative during the meetings, yet without fading completely into the walls, but were eager to continue the discussion with us back in the car.

A few weeks after these meetings had taken place, a more informal debriefing was set up with one of the brigades, at their request. Two other brigades said they would like us to contact the precinct in order to tell them about the discussions that had taken place. This feedback was given and both superintendents expressed their appreciation of the approach.

3.2 Focusing on the police-community contact

The observations undertaken in the same brigades during at least two day shifts and five night shifts, the night meetings and the informal discussions before and after the meetings gave us a

more precise idea about concrete situations of the selectivity that was problematic, in the police's view and in ours. Parts of the meetings, but also informal discussions, obviously discussed the issue of managing this selectivity at the brigade level as well as improvements that could be envisaged outside the brigade. The results are presented below.

The proposals range from concrete ideas of practices considered to be interesting, to more general areas where attention is needed. In analysing problems linked to patrolling, many police officers at first seemed a bit ill at ease. While some discussed working conditions, most – if not all – spoke of the impression they had that patrolling was nothing more than a first step in the police career, a job the rest of the police force did not see as a full-fledged profession. The more experienced police officers and the younger ones wishing to remain in patrolling perceive the lack of valorisation as an obstacle.

It clearly emerged from our meetings and informal discussions that the mechanism affecting patrol tasks and its instrumentalization lead to a problematic mechanism of selectivity. In order to deal with this, it appeared that a sufficiently broad approach of the process constituted by the intervention function was indicated, insofar as it takes into account various factors which have been shown in point 2 to have an impact on this selection process in general, and the selectivity mechanism affecting it in particular. Indeed, a procedural justice approach implies that the police themselves have the impression that they are working in an institution that deals with them fairly, that valorises their work. It is the police officers' view that some work in this area remains to be done in achieving this organisational justice.

In the end, three points came up in each brigade: (1) recognising basic police work and the police officers' workload; (2) a discussion on the place and the role of patrol work; (3) recognition and training in a set of know-how specific to patrolling. All the brigades brought up these three angles that we have proposed. A few readers may wonder where some of these aspects tie in with the object of this research. We have decided nevertheless to present them all, precisely because of the link, as we explained, between organisational justice and procedural justice. Furthermore, at the same time as valorising the patrol function, all these approach angles contain possibilities to develop procedural justice practices involving the relationship between the police and the community. The facet of the police at the service of the community or community-oriented policing is thus strengthened.

3.2.1 Recognising basic police work and the police officers' heavy workload

In all the initial meetings with the brigades, one point invariably came up first: the lack of interest given by the police force to patrolling, whereas the brigade's police officers saw their work as the very base of policing. To underpin this argument, they often pointed out the tools 'from another era' that they had to use in their work. Slow IT equipment was a particular source of irritation. Information searching is often quite slow or the program can crash at the very end of a police report which is impossible to save. One night we saw for ourselves when a computer crashed at the end of the initial questioning of a boy who had just reported sexual violence.

Other elements cited frequently, with slight variations from one precinct to another, was the state of the patrol offices. The officers mentioned mice, dirty walls and the staff-room with broken chairs, and so on. We also heard citizens making similar remarks when they came into the police services in a police station located in an area with a slightly better-off population. The staff room looks more like a youth group meeting room than an place where someone can take a break during or after a 12-hour shift. In addition to these material aspects, a few remarks by police officers in other services did not seem to resonate with respect for the job. What to think, for example, of a neighbourhood agent who said: 'Well, if you're going to stay inside, you can at least bring me my mail?' or a second line policewoman who refused to open the shooting gallery door to a uniformed colleague of Moroccan origin, but did so for a 'not of colour' colleague hired barely ten days earlier, adding: 'There are so many people who steal uniforms, you never know, huh?'

Other aspects pertain more to the patrolling role and the feeling that this role is not really clear 'because it's just patrolling'. The personal interpretation of the function, based on the training the police officers receive, is that of a crime fighting or emergency service, a bit like an ambulance for social conflicts. Action, along with a dose of adrenaline, holds the starring role in these two definitions. Consequently, tasks that take a lot of time, that call for waiting and waiting, undermine the function's credibility. Nonetheless these time-taking duties are countless. In this force, a person placed under arrest must undergo a systematic medical control. The doctors in the hospitals often make the police officers and the detainee wait a long time, sometimes quite a long time. This gives the police the impression that the doctors make them wait on purpose because they do not have a lot of esteem for them. The same can be said for the Nixon procedure (accompanying someone arrested to an emergency psychiatric service), where moreover it is often particularly hard to keep the person calm. These long waits are just part of the job but lead to an impression that the directors do not understand how much time these duties take, with the result that it is impossible for the police to carry out their other duties correctly. Several officers also pointed that this time spent waiting is also hard for the person under arrest. They propose making the doctors aware of this problem. Other forces have apparently reached an agreement with a hospital to be able to bypass the 'normal' waiting line so that the detainee can be examined quickly. Another person indicated that something could be learned from another large force where a large area has been set up to combine fingerprinting, medical control, holding cells and a questioning room, in order to limit the waiting and transfer time. One possibility may be to collaborate with a neighbouring police force on this question.

3.2.2 Clarifying the place and role of patrol work

In this area, on several occasions we hear some police officers say that the role of patrolling seems mainly to do what the other services do not want to do or must not do. For this reason it is sometimes called the police force's 'trash can service'. It is a joke, generally heard after evoking one of the elements of the above section, but it reveals a deeper question: what is the

place and role of patrol work? In the reflection groups, we also noticed this search for the purpose and nature of this function.

This is a recurring question, at the origin of many other questions. Many proposals by the police are based on their own intuition. Some of their questions are: 'What is the use of the police?', 'What is its role?', 'What precisely is the mission of the police patrol response?' Although some officers at the *mid-level management* describe it as an intrinsically polyvalent function, this answer is not enough for many police officers. In a context of complaints and distrust of the police, they want to know exactly what is expected of them. More precisely, they often mention their doubts about the aim of a response: restore peace and order, hand out fines, do paperwork for insurance companies, and so on. Caught in the middle between instructions that are occasionally contradictory and the expectations of the local population, the brigades are not completely clear about what their mission is exactly. To formulate this as concretely as possible: does patrol work serve to maintain a vague public order (and, if so, what is meant by 'order')? Are the police at the service of those who file a complaint, an 'armed wing' for people who do not want to resort to the civil code, kind of a factotum? Or is the police's role actually that of keeping the municipal budget out of the red and making sure the town council gets re-elected? This question of the patrol's *raison d'être* is raised especially in the area of the SAC/GAS fines. The police have the impression that their job is instrumentalised, exploited, for financial purposes, when they are asked to impose SAC/GAS fines that seemingly have little 'educational' purpose. The police ask these questions all the more when the objectives of maintaining peace and order or fighting crime seem to be distant. For example, when asked about the SAC/GAS fines, their reply is often laconic. Striving for *procedural justice* is unfeasible when they do not even know themselves what to strive for. Many police officers thus think that the objective of the patrol service should be more circumscribed and that another team could be assigned to hand out SAC/GAS traffic fines or control closing hours if no complaint has been filed. The service role's 'overall mission' would thus be clearer, making it more possible to strive towards the ideal of community-oriented policing.

Yet, objectives defined via directives handed down by a hierarchy is not seen as the sole limitation. One question heard regularly was that of the 'excessive solicitation' of the police by the local population. When they take the time to clarify the limits of their response to a caller, the police often spend a lot of time explaining that the power of the police is actually quite limited. It is not rare for these explanations to generate a certain frustration and/or disappointment in relation to the police response, often with repercussions on the police officers. One suggestion raised during these discussions is to explore in-depth not only the patrolling assignment – the main duty and prime objective, but also to question when a patrol response actually begins and who participates in it. In concrete terms, the brigades often ask whether the patrol officer teams are actually the best place for all these assignments.

Among the calls questioned by the police are those that truly do report an emergency, but one for a service other than the police. The police have a unique feature: they are free of charge and available 24 hours a day. Ambulances and the fire department, for instance, invoice callers for certain costs. The fire department services are always free of charge in the case of a fire, explosion or saving someone in danger, but the municipalities are nevertheless obliged to invoice costs for extra-legal jobs handled by the fire department. Likewise, the ambulance services often bill certain costs. On the other hand, the police never send invoices and, if they are the ones who call the fire department or ambulance, the invoice is never passed on to the caller. One rather telling example is a case discussed earlier: the woman about to give birth at the North Station told the taxi driver to call the police and definitely not call for an ambulance. According to the police involved, she never could have afforded an ambulance. Another case is a call for a 'dangerous situation in a bathroom' around 2:00 a.m. A woman wishes to take a shower after coming home. As the shower drain is clogged, she pours some draining fluid, but the product remains stagnant in the shower stall. She calls the police to ask what she should do now that there is corrosive acid in her shower. The patrol visit her home before calling the fire department. Obviously, the reaction of some police officers to such examples is to suggest that policing could also become a payable service. However, many fear that this would not solve anything and wonder how the call takers, especially those of the CIC, decide where to route the call. Some patrol officers wonder whether they ask for sufficient information enabling them to transfer the call to the right service.

This facet of their work, being an emergency service, also reflects another ambiguity felt by the police. In their contacts with the community, the police feel they are assessed on how quickly they answer an emergency call. It is nevertheless clear for the patrol officers that incidents involving a person facing physical danger, *flagrante delicto* and ongoing cases hold priority over other tasks. The dispatcher also applies this theory, but it is not always easy to implement. There must always be a sufficient number of brigades available to intervene immediately when something particularly urgent happens. Furthermore, as mentioned above, some patrol jobs take a long time. On this subject, the patrollers mention that it is too bad they do not have access to the dispatcher information sheets. Most of the time the officers do not know when a call came in or how many times the problem has already been mentioned. Neither do they have the short description given (which is not always completely communicated or understood). The idea of having the force's dispatcher play a larger role in a call was suggested on several occasions. As far as possible, the call-takers and dispatchers could no longer take new calls if the line of calls in waiting were already too long. Or else they could be instructed take down the information missing when no patrol was available to reach the site of the call immediately.

Some police officers go even farther and wonder if certain, less urgent, calls could be transferred to other services. For example, they propose redirecting calls regarding longstanding disputes among neighbours to be sent to the neighbourhood police when it is not a matter of an urgent confrontation. Other services are also possible, in addition to police, such

as municipal services. They also propose to start by asking their neighbours for information or assistance.

Another point raised, primarily about the night shift, concerned the legitimacy of all calls and requests at any time of the day or night. These remarks were considered somewhat taboo in a force that aims to be as accessible as possible, but what is urgent for the caller (thus almost all calls) is perhaps not always that urgent from the police point of view. Some, for example, wondered why some calls arriving or people coming to the station in the middle of the night could not be referred to the day shift. A larger staff is available during the day, especially more specialised police officers. In one station, they discussed the line between a police force close to the people and one that became the 'community's servant' expected to leap to a call without question whenever they were asked. This applies for both forms of instrumentalization indicated above, in the case of family or neighbour arguments, and for administrative requests. Must a lost identity card, driver license or passport be handled as an emergency when, we observed several times, the person filing the complaint lost it three months earlier? Some forces allow the administrative staff to draft certain documents. Many police officers, especially those on station duty, would be relieved to see special hours set up for administrative documents.

On this subject, one may certainly wonder how all this ties in with problematic mechanisms of police selectivity. Yet the link indeed exists. If we want the patrols to be convinced of the importance of procedural justice when they approach people, the patrol officers therefore must be certain of this interest by having the hierarchy's support. These principles should have to be part of the specific culture of this police profession so that they can explain why they have stopped an individual without a 'personal agenda' – thus not simply for fear of an internal control. They must know clearly why they are intervening and for what purpose, both when they are sent on a call and when they decide themselves to investigate a situation. When the police officers experience organisational justice, this procedural justice can be undertaken more clearly. This is why the police officers' remarks and suggestions are also included in this report if the objective is to eliminate these practices without requiring excessive control or a mechanistic application offering no advantage to relationships between the community and the police.

When the social aspect of patrolling and the time spent is recognised, greater attention can be given to this facet of patrol work in the police training or the shared knowledge culture. The literature shows that police are reticent about this more social aspect of their profession (see a.o. Brodeur, 2003; Monjardet, 1996). Although this discourse was also heard in discussions with police officers during this study, occasionally along with strategies intending to avoid these types of duties, the police nonetheless defend them as the only work method that manages to obtain results. Indeed, the police feel that these tasks enable them to assist or 'educate' the people in the neighbourhoods, thereby avoiding repeated response calls. We are thinking about patrols where they must search bags containing a homeless person's sole effects because

he is afraid of other people hanging around in a park; or an elderly lady who called for help finding her dentures. Other examples are calls involving discussions with neighbours to negotiate the time for renovation work going on at one neighbour's home, or about the appropriate place to store empty wine, beer or vodka bottles, or even talking about ways to behave with neighbours who have strong paranoid tendencies.

Getting the dispatching service more involved, reinforcing communication and follow-up, but also reformulating the calls, are ideas perhaps offering another way to process calls that aim to instrumentalise the patrols in the context of disputes or even use them in xenophobic scenarios. Greater awareness of basic patrolling tasks and increased recognition of the 'social' purpose of this service as a guardian or organiser of public peace and order provides an opportunity to increase interest in the job and provides clearer guidelines. This is a way for the force – which already aims for diversity and for police action to be close to the community – to lay the grounds to instil a culture of openness and an approach that is mindful of the social implications of each patrol action.

3.2.3 Cultivating the know-how specific to patrol work

Another important aspect with a more direct impact on *procedural justice* concerns recognising and valorising the professionalism of the patrol squads. To ensure that the patrol responses play out the best way possible, whether they involve crimes or relate to public order, the police on duty must be polyvalent and also have specific types of knowledge. The latter does not merely concern 'knowing the procedures', knowledge that a supervisor must have, but also pragmatic knowledge enabling police to solve a problem or stabilise a situation. Giving greater value to knowledge specific to the field and the know-how of certain patrol officers, as well as consolidating these skills, would help all the police to intervene correctly, without taking useless risks in conflictual situations. They would have greater awareness of their job and maximise the possibility of achieving a satisfactory result for both the police and the local population. This is a true challenge in a situation where a large number of police officers are relatively new on the job and not accustomed to the specific environment of a densely populated – and highly diversified – city.

Knowledge, especially deep-seated knowledge of the various aspects of a police response, makes it possible to handle difficult situations. This primarily involves things a police officer knows about the patrol area, which varies depending on the place or the period. Another idea that emerged from the action research is that this culture of valorising and sharing knowledge can be developed through direct guidance of the patrol response.

3.2.3.1 [Knowledge is essential](#)

Patrolling thus calls for mastering knowledge that is 'street wise' and 'police wise'. This report will not discuss knowledge about police techniques and procedures. This type of knowledge is valued and transmitted in police academies and training courses. The police force under study also has a set of supervisors who can always be reached to provide information to the police in

the field in the case of more complicated responses. This function is in the hand of police officers with the most seniority and an excellent knowledge of procedures and techniques (and, to a certain extent, they often also know a lot about the knowledge we are speaking of here).

This knowledge is generally described as 'feeling'. Meetings and discussions helped us discover more about exactly what this means. To begin with, knowing about the neighbourhood on one's beat seems to be especially useful. This enables the police officers to have a better of the place they are headed towards and the social phenomena found in the neighbourhood when a duty is assigned to them. Thanks to a strong familiarity with the neighbourhoods, the police can intervene more knowledgeably and more surely. A certain feeling of being responsible for peace and order quickly emerges in these neighbourhoods; it is also communicated and conveyed to the people in contact with the police on their daily patrols. Even if they live far away, they gain hold in the neighbourhood in the way they communicate (when they assume more a stance as the neighbourhood's protector). Something thus changes in favour of a better understanding of the neighbourhood. This knowledge can be valorised for officers on patrol, as it is for the community police.

One appreciated practice was introduced in one of the force precincts that was not covered by our study. As explained in the discussions, this practice consists in a way to organise the work in the aim of closely following preoccupying evolutions, without falling into stereotypes (which might arise from problematic complaints). Here is how it was described to us: a middle-management officer regularly visits the brigades to hear about things they have observed. All the police officers are asked to think about one-off operations that may be of interest, which they must describe as precisely as possible. The proposals must be argued by their observations during patrols and be focused on a specific phenomenon, at a specific location. They must also foresee a specific time for this action. When a proposal sounds interesting, it is submitted to the other brigades so they can offer additional information or nuances. The name of the police officer or the brigade showing their in-depth knowledge of the field and the results obtained are always mentioned in the memo about the operation. In addition to the fact that the operations are set up solely on the basis of the brigade reports, this way of working is also very interesting in the view of limiting the impact of complaints with the propensity of being instrumentalised. We can also refer to a practice set up in the Netherlands: during their operations, the police actually explain to the community what is happening and why (more information: Beekman & Gademan, 2018). From the angle of transparency, this attitude appears especially interesting.

Knowing the neighbourhood also incited one of the brigades we followed to express their wish to work with a social housing area where several complaints had been received. This is an interesting case because it addresses the problem of recurring (almost heated) encounters between groups of youths and the police. Several people had reported drugs being used and sold in a very precise location. The youth facilities in the municipality had already been broken into twice and the manager had had a long discussion with the police explaining the high degree

of tension in one particular group. Cameras had been installed and the police, during the briefings, had been asked to pay special attention to this neighbourhood. During discussions with the brigade, the police had often mentioned this neighbourhood as a place that needed to find a new dynamic, preferably without having to police the same youths time after time. During our meeting, the proposal was launched to organise meetings with adults in the area, preferably the parents of the youths in question. Providing them with support and discussing the problems seemed to be an interesting strategy for this brigade, which includes several officers who have a long close acquaintance with the neighbourhood.. The precinct directors accepted the proposal.

When we speak of knowing a neighbourhood we mean, as shown in the examples, knowing where the people live, what their needs or concerns are and what goes on in the area. Another type of knowledge, undoubtedly less localised, is in-depth knowledge about the culture and the traditions of the people living there. For example, this would give a context for complaints about noise when neighbours celebrate a religious feast. Highly precise strategies were shared in the group discussions. For example, an agent with a thoroughly Belgian background told us information received from a colleague who explained that during response calls involving people who identified themselves as Turkish, it was important to first greet the eldest woman, to ask her what was happening and place oneself strategically next to her. It was a sign of respect that helped avoid confrontations when people were policed. Beyond the example itself, the brigade discussed the importance of having practical 'real-life' knowledge of cultural practices and indicated that this knowledge was gained primarily through direct contact. Brigades that are mixed, men and women, Dutch and French speakers, city and rural dwellers, people from a range of cultural backgrounds are considered as genuine treasures, especially when this diversity can express itself during coffee breaks together, when they are the occasion to share knowledge and experiences.

Knowledge of procedures other than criminal law is another aspect discussed. Many calls actually concern issues that are outside the realm of criminal acts. We have already mentioned procedures relating to forced psychiatric admission, but others include divorce, child custody, ordinances on noise or other types of nuisance among neighbours. Other topics like consumer protection or the rights of foreigners are also specific sets of regulations that most police know little about. One brigade wondered whether it might be possible to create a reference guide available online, including a few elements or flow charts and references to agencies to contact for one problem or another. The better an officer can provide precise information or guidelines, the more satisfactory the call will be both for the caller and for the police. This brigade, active in a precinct where several people are in Brussels on temporary assignments in one of the city's international institutions, immediately added that the 'Patrol Yellow Pages' would be even more useful if it included a version of the main notions in French, Dutch, English and Spanish at least.

This brings us to a somewhat thorny issue: knowing other languages. As communication is (luckily) at the heart of a police response, knowledge of other languages is indeed priceless. We have seen that not all patrols in each brigade have someone who knows Dutch and is at ease in this other national language. They all agree that this language skill must be on hand, if not it is liable to give rise to a complaint. When a Dutch speaking caller or suspect underlines the polices' failure to master this language, the response dynamics can quickly go downhill. Not knowing Dutch, however, is nevertheless not always due to lack of will. Linguistic training needs to be organised taking into account the variable shifts of the patrol officers. While some police officers also pointed out that Belgian citizens should absolutely have to be fluent in at least one national language, it is immediately clear that some local residents who know neither national language are in Belgium temporarily and, in most cases, are at least slightly fluent in English. This leads some officers to point out that despite all the efforts devoted to linguistic knowledge in Belgium, in a changing world and in the areas where they work, help in learning English would be extremely useful.

The 'Patrol Yellow Pages' were also mentioned during discussions about interesting practices or possible improvements to the possibility to direct people towards specialised services. Some police officers not only know the neighbourhood like the back of their hand (through personal interest, experience or their professional career), they also know other services that local residents can consult for special problems. These include external services, such as tenant unions, consumer protection associations, services providing legal assistance free of charge, Brussels Environment for noise questions, agencies offering educational assistance for parents, and so on. Nonetheless, the police's own internal services are not always well known. Police officers often ask for more information about the tasks and services of the force's second line services, but they would also like to include in their 'Patrol Yellow Pages' information such as contact data for the neighbourhood police, the service responsible for supervising worksites or the social legislation service.

Police officers who have worked on patrol for several years are often sought out for questions. They get the impression that they have to train a new batch of young graduates every few months. This is one reason why some prefer to leave the patrol function. Knowledge is not just restricted to knowing the neighbourhoods, procedures or services. It is also useful to know how colleagues react. What are someone's strong and weak points, for example? We were able to observe a patrol sent to enquire about noise coming from the offices of a feminist association. Once they arrived, the patrolwoman immediately went inside to establish contact while the other patrolman checked where the noise could be heard and spoke with the neighbours who had reported it. Back in the patrol car we learned that the male colleague did not really appreciate militant feminists and this is why the policewoman took the initiative to talk to the concert organiser. A response handled with a colleague one is used to working with is accomplished knowingly, in good collaboration. With a new colleague, things can occasionally be more difficult. And if the colleague in question has but little experience in patrolling, this can be an additional source of stress.

A final form of knowledge is information on how the prosecutor's office handles cases. The police officers would highly appreciate knowing more about the way the prosecutor's office works, how it takes its decisions. The prosecutor's office is seen as a black box where cases are sent off to. Apparently other judicial districts inform the police forces about the evolution in one or another case and the motivation for it, or else they enable the police officers to see the follow-up given to the reports they have written up. The police officers mentioned that this information would improve their collaboration with justice. Occasional internships by deputy prosecutors with the police are also an interesting idea, because they send the message that the judge may become more versed in interpreting the official reports. This eases the impression that all the patrol reporting work was in vain and the ensuing frustration. It may also bolster confidence in the justice system's ability to settle problems.

3.2.3.2 Managing through the lens of concrete situations

The brigade chiefs play an important role in the brigades observed. In the exploratory interviews, three of the four chiefs we spoke with described their role as primarily administrative, not as that of someone with influence over their brigade. On the other hand, they all admitted that their function only rarely enabled them to truly 'get out', leave the police station. The three who did not mention having an influence over the way their brigade's police officers did their jobs nevertheless said that they occasionally tried to get out in the field. Two of them took a place in the car on shifts we observed, either because a team member was injured or did not feel well and preferred to stay at the station. One brigade chief explained in detail how he assisted the brigade's police officers in their patrol work and how they were trained.

This diversity in approaches perhaps is not representative. In fact, there are 30 different brigades, each with their own internal functioning modes, depending on the number of police officers (from 4 to 14), the different personalities and different degrees of seniority. What we noticed nevertheless was that the three brigade chiefs presented themselves less as 'bosses' and more like other peers, who were mainly responsible for the burdensome paperwork inherent in a work organization. Yet, the police officers mentioned them more often in informal discussions about the way responses came about. Their brigade members mentioned them more often than the fourth, in remarks such as 'the chief would do this or that, or he would have let this or that happen'. The police officers justified the way they conducted their police responses and the time they dared to take on them by referring to their - highly appreciated - chief. A brigade chief who adopts a certain leadership style, who strongly believes in a democratic police force at the service of the community, who has enough time to hold informal discussions with the other police officers while going along on patrols every now and then is a great influence. This influence is at play both in the way the police officers intervene in the field and in the way they perceive the usefulness and relevance of their work.

We also noticed, even outside informal exchanges, that knowledge is transmitted largely through anecdotes. Stories are often told about successful cases or those that went wrong, along with the 'best stories' – the most exciting or shocking that often keep the police officers

talking for several weeks. These stories make their rounds among the brigade and are passed on to police contacts outside the area;. We also heard several anecdotes coming from other brigades. They are not just mere stories. Although one senior manager interviewed dismissed them as 'all the gossiping that goes on here', we nevertheless detected a deeper meaning to these stories. They reinforce the essence of communication among the teams about their concerns, the phenomena they encounter, their experiences and warnings. They express the narrative tradition that is part of several police cultures and in themselves represent material that is quite useful for analysing a specific police culture. Unfortunately we did not have time for such an analysis in the context of this study. However we did notice how this narrative tradition is an important tool in influencing this professional culture. In one precinct studied, the middle management seemed to be more aware of this aspect. The patrol supervisor regularly spent time with the police officers, informally. He actively listened to the stories of the strangest patrol incidents and also gave a personal point of view and interpretation of the events. The supervisor often congratulated the police officers when they talked about the long convoluted discussions they got into during responses. We heard him give some advice about what the police officers could do, could do better or should avoid. In addition to being highly appreciated, this supervisor is also a person of reference, someone the police know they can always ask for advice. This person's influence in the field, even beyond the precinct, was clearly felt.

4 From action research to proposing a course of action

Here starts the end of this research report that presents the main results of an action research on problematic or even abusive mechanisms of police selectivity. This view of police practices was already an extension in relation to training organised earlier by UNIA and PolBruNo on ethnic profiling. Although the angle of approach in our study certainly places it alongside other research on police selectivity in the context of the patrolling function in general, it focuses attention on elements that enter into play in installing and maintaining problematic forms of selectivity in particular. What is more, it aims to propose action orientations that can be applied more generally in order to address such problems, in our case a mechanism that combines a set of processes in the normal functioning of a police force, in relation to which the patrol police constantly position themselves.

4.1 Stances and skills conducting the problematic mechanism

In the course of this action research, we were able to start with individual stances we observed and trace them back for an in-depth look at the general process of patrolling, in particular the problematic mechanism in relation to which the police officers adopt the stances observed and summarised during the shared diagnostic phase. This mechanism was defined as a possible problematic effect of a selectivity that was part and parcel of the police patrolling process, arising from certain combinations of organisational options and stances the police officers

adopt in situation. At the same time, for these police officers, this selectivity, especially the choice to take action or not, is largely restricted by these same organisational options.

The police essentially retain selectivity regarding the choice of the methods they employ, especially the stances to adopt. These stances mobilise/foster certain capabilities (or *incapabilities*) , depending on whether they are available or not, valorised or not (especially through a perception of organisational justice, which affects the meaning that police officers ascribe to their work). In turn, these capabilities (know-how and life skills) are liable to inhibit/curb, accentuate/favour (unintentionally) or simply give leeway to the mechanism in question. This mechanism is tantamount to forms of profiling (deliberate selectivity) in its concrete effects for the populations concerned (thus representing forms of procedural injustice, whether they are merely felt or fully averred).

We identified three stances that reflect both the police officer's approach to patrolling and the meaning ascribed to the work they are asked to do. The first is defined in relation to the neighbourhood they feel they are in charge of. The officer is thus working for the neighbourhood's well-being. One might say that actions are marked by the aim to protect. As such, during patrol responses police officers assuming this stance will implement relational capabilities expressed in taking time, discussing and referring the caller to other local services. They may harbour suspicions towards people who are not where they should be, who are not 'part of the neighbourhood'; their knowledge of the turf tends to inhibit the problematic effects of the mechanism in question.

A second stance, the 'conqueror', is assumed by police officers whose objective in police actions is to restore public order. This public order is above all something to restore, the neighbourhood needs to be tidied up, people have to toe the line. These officers see the (public and highly urban) spaces they patrol as diametrically opposed to their concept of order. The objective, thus, is to (re)conquer these places. As regards know-how and life skills, these police officers redefine the citizens' requests, and even those of the police themselves, through the lens of this objective. Achieving it calls for everyone to comply with their instructions, do what they are asked, in other words, 'get out of' the space so it can become more orderly. The capabilities associated with these goals have little to do with negotiation, but express an assertiveness intended to underpin a logic of affronting the populations that disturb public order in the area. The impact of this stance on the problematic mechanism is mitigated. Depending on the way an officer conceives public order, this stance can either inhibit or heighten the problematic effects of the mechanism in question. While the stance is liable to reinforce the mechanism's impact if an officer also considers certain population groups to be more 'disorderly' than others, it is not just the mere reflection of an attitude expressed in a possibly stigmatising complaint call.

And here is where we find the eminently problematic nature of the third stance – legalistic – that police officers may adopt. This stance, in fact, is characterised by a retreat from the local populations, but also a retreat in relation to patrolling and even the profession itself. Police

officers reflecting this stance express misunderstanding and even powerlessness. This does not mean that they do not do a thing. They will apply the procedures, as literally as possible and do 'what they're asked to do'. Far from inhibiting the problematic mechanism, this stance reinforces it by definition, in so far as the police officer's action is reduced to a cog in the wheel of the process, limited to mechanical handling of calls and requests. It unthinkingly transmits the selectivity set in motion, whether problematic or not. In other words, problematic requests are handled mechanically, which naturally feeds a mechanism to get it going: requests (and procedures) are followed without considering the context. The legalistic stance is thus the most problematic: reacting to the mechanism without thinking, it merely reinforces the problematic effects of targeting and undermines the relationship with certain populations.

4.2 Action leads and their preconditions

Identifying this mechanism wasn't the only objective of this action research. Developing and testing possible responses was the main objective of the action phase of this project. Various elements of this action deserve to be highlighted. Some elements are crucial but at the same time may limit their generalisation, either in virtue of the circumstances of this action research or because they are conditions that must be taken into account if the aim is to guard against the problematic nature of the mechanism that was uncovered.

We should also point out that we chose to focus on the patrol police. Although this police function is definitely at the heart of the problem motivating the action research, something that the shared diagnostic confirmed, and although it makes up a large part of the local police force, it is not possible to merely extend the conclusions to other police professions or functions that do not share the same characteristics. For example this is the case of brigades such as 'anti-banditry', which generally have more effective tools available, whose actions are clearly less determined by assigned duties and urgency, and who must pass tests and follow specialised training. In virtue of these elements such groups do not meet the conditions emerging from the shared diagnostic that led to developing the specific action based on intervision meetings. However, one cannot preclude that similar elements and a similar tool could be relevant after they have been adapted for other professional and organisational circumstances.

A set of circumstances more specific to this force also affected the observations and the action set up. One thing worth mentioning is the fact that there has been no particular violent phenomenon in the force for over three years. Another is the context of investment following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, leading notably to implementation of the 'canal plan' which included hiring new police officers, but which also compounds an already-longstanding phenomenon: assignment of a good number of these new recruits to Brussels forces, not necessary their 'first choice'. Some of them, from the very start, try to obtain a transfer to a force closer to their home. Briefly, in the brigades we observed, the turnover was quite high during the period of the project.

Lastly, and maybe most of all, the research was undertaken in collaboration with a single police force with its specific configuration. It is thus not possible to conclude or certainly envisage

generalising such conclusions without recalling that there are 'pre-conditions' affecting the experience and its potential generalisation, along the same lines as preconditions for implementing community-oriented policing (Vanden Broeck & Eliaerts, 1994, pp. 165–176). In order to discuss the potential contributions of our research to policing practices in other police forces, it is important to note initiatives in the force at the heart of this project which we consider to be important, if not determining, factors in the success of such an action.

4.2.1 Contexte institutionnel et préconditions

In order to discuss the potential contributions of our research to the policing practices of other police forces, it is particularly important to identify the initiatives in the force where we ran this project that we consider to be important factors, even conditioning the success of such action.

This project did not wish to limit the perspective to the sole notion of ethnic profiling. Furthermore the research context meant that we needed to take into consideration the fact that the PolBruNo directorate had, from its inception, followed a policy to promote diversity, especially aiming to prevent various forms of profiling, particularly ethnic. In this area, we should note that profiling denotes the expression of an intention and is liable to follow from a policy and/or professional culture that fails to discourage it. This said, a large number of measures were taken that undeniably produced effects on individual forms of ethnic profiling, liable to be conveyed by staff in the field, whether this was due to an evolution of the local professional culture or the fear of suffering the negative consequences if management detected such attitudes. What this project was able to bring out, is that problematic forms of police selectivity, in this case not only involuntary, but also largely unperceived, may have evaded the management's best intentions and policies. And now, through both the analysis and the action deployed, this directorate now has new resources to complete its range of initiatives to address problematic practices or mechanisms of police selectivity in general and, more particularly, profiling (ethnic or other).

These are initiatives that, in a way, constitute a prerequisite, the importance of which was discussed in the context of our research. It is important to take them into account when weighing possibilities to apply the project more generally. A work published by the Open Society Justice Initiative provides a synthesis of a hundred European initiatives addressing the problem of ethnic profiling by police, including the PolBruNo initiatives (Neild, Bridges, & Open Society Justice Initiative, 2012). Although the subject of this book is narrower than our report, the reflection developed in this work gives a good overview of various types of initiatives. Reflecting the approach towards problematic mechanisms of police selectivity in which we wished to place our study, this report proposes a holistic approach in order to rein in the problem of ethnic profiling. The authors thus point out that a good number of these initiatives are not limited solely to discriminatory practices, but also enhance the police's general quality and effectiveness (Neild e.a., 2012, p. 15). In a holistic approach, each step effectively reinforces the other, sending a coherent message – to the police officers as well as to the community.

The structuring of the elements important for such a holistic approach is particularly suitable for presenting the preconditions found in various degrees in PolBruNo. Formulated as actions, they are: (1) reviewing legal standards, operational and institutional practices; (2) setting up systems to monitor practices; (3) building policing skills and capacity to operate without profiling; (4) during recruitment drives endeavouring to create diverse law enforcement agencies; (5) engaging with communities to identify and address local problems and build trust. These approaches have the dual effect of enhancing police efficiency and improving the quality of contacts between the police and the local communities (Neild e.a., 2012, p. 30).

First, regarding legal standards, operational and institutional practices, there is no one particular standard in Belgium. Nevertheless, the principles of equality set down in the Constitution, but also more especially the law on the police function stipulates that in the exercise of their duties as administrative or judiciary police, the police services ensure the respect and contribute to protection of the individual liberties and rights, as well as the democratic development of society. To accomplish their duties, they only use means of constraint in the conditions foreseen by the law.²⁸ This prohibition is further elaborated in the circular of 2 February 1993 concerning the Law of 5 August 1992 on the police function²⁹.

In PolBruNo, in addition to this legal framework, the hierarchy gave special importance to principles associated with community-oriented policing³⁰. Since its inception, the directorate has been particularly attentive to questions of diversity, including attention to ethnic profiling. This action research is thus another sign of the importance the force's management give to this issue.

Secondly, police officers in this police force seem to be aware that the internal control service is quite active and that a control of their decisions to stop someone is liable to have real consequences.³¹ In addition to a follow-up of complaints arriving via the complaints committee, the local community can also contact this service directly.

The decision by the patrol officers to check someone's ID is also recorded at the level of the police force. As the police officers do not have portable access to the databases, they have to contact the dispatcher to look the person up. In this context, any check made at the police officer's initiative requires a duty slip created for this brigade. To do this, the dispatcher asks for a quick summary of the context. Even if there is no explicit report for each identity control,

²⁸ Art 1, Law of 5 August 1992 on the Police Function, published in the *Moniteur belge* (MB)/*Belgisch Staatsblad* (BS) of 22 December 1992.

²⁹ For a more complete analysis of the legal framework in Belgium see: La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme. "Contrôler et Punir? Etude Exploratoire Sur Le Profilage Ethnique Dans Les Contrôles de Police: Paroles de Cibles." Brussels: La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, 2016.

³⁰ The most evident consequences of this reference to community-oriented policing can be seen in the way the force is organised: decentralised sites for decision-making, deconcentrating means, (relative) de-specialisation through neighbourhood teams, valorisation of neighbourhood inspectors, enquiries sent to the local population, and so on.

³¹ The PolBruNo police officers are also liable to a control by the Complaints Committee, an institution mentioned in *Open Society* because of its independent control functions, its broad means of investigation and the possibility for a direct referral by the general public and even on the institution's own initiative. In practice however, complaints sent to the Complaints Committee are transmitted to the Internal Control service of force concerned. After this investigation the Complaints Committee decides on the follow-up to the complaint.

a trace of this check nevertheless remains along with the motivation for the check given to the dispatcher colleague who is the one to actually verify the ID in the database. The force's strategic analysts can access these data if they want to analyse the time, place and (brief) motive.

Thirdly, efforts taken in the area of diversity are also liable to reinforce the skills and ability of police officers to work without profiling. Every other year training sessions are organised on various facets of diversity. The police officers can participate in these training sessions during their shifts. The topic varies and the training can revolve around sociological approaches, science of religions, updates on legislation and information on the way the prosecutor's office addresses certain issues. The Brun@ttitudes network also organises various initiatives to promote the idea that diversity is enriching. This network enjoys a very good reputation among several police officers. It is particularly appreciated for the fact that it is composed of peers who propose activities that are both useful and enjoyable (for example shows or films).

It should be recalled that this project itself arose from a training course, lasting several days, on the topic of ethnic profiling, primarily designed for the force's main inspectors. This training included both scientific analyses of the phenomenon and the consequences on the targeted publics, followed by discussions on concrete ways to adapt police officers' practices.

Fourth, an area concerning some of the force's earliest and most visible efforts, the PolBruNo directorate, during hiring procedures, was attentive to the diversity of its staff, wishing for it to be a reflection of the population it served. The objective was also to match the police officers' cultural knowledge with the realities of the populations of the different neighbourhoods and as far as possible have police officers who know several languages. Constant efforts are made to make sure the staff is neither too male nor too white. The results of these efforts can be seen each day in the force. Obviously, bringing in police officers of various origins, as important as it is, is not enough in itself. It is not reasonable to place on this new recruits the whole burden of changing police culture (Smeets & Tange, 2015), all the more so as these people themselves integrate into the police culture and in doing their jobs are first and foremost police officers (Gauthier, 2015). Nevertheless, this diversity at least contributes for forging the image of a police force that is closer to the socio-cultural reality in which they work.

Lastly, the fifth aspect of a holistic system, as proposed by *Open Society*, concerns engaging with communities to identify and address local problems and build trust. In this area, Neild and her colleagues (Neild e.a., 2012) cite PolBruNo as an interesting practice, primarily through their neighbourhood police whose beats are composed of only few blocks. They are thus presumed to know the needs, problems and concerns of the neighbourhood. Another form of contact between the police and the local community was developed through the 'MEGA' project ('My Commitment to Guarantee the Future'). It is a project focused on 52 classes in the sixth year of primary school in order to develop personal contacts with youths and groups who are hard to reach. The police we encountered who had participated were mainly neighbourhood police and patrol officers who had been working over 10 years in the force. Also

worth mentioning is the presence of community liaison assistants (*assistants de concertation/overlegassistenten*) who can be contacted by the community when they wish to report specific problems, and organisation of operations composed of police officers from different services in order to address problems are that reported.

This set of efforts undertaken in the zone in the realm of diversity definitely represent not only the preconditions for the observations that emerged from the analysis, but also that of the action itself, both of which were organised together with police force actors. If, in the context of generalisation, another police force were interested in such an action, it would be important to think about the preconditions. The police force must integrate in its identity the willingness to work with the residents, in all their forms of diversity; it must be aware that this requires a constant investment and most often an openness to outside viewing and opinions. On this subject, the opening to researchers is actually just one particular example of the general openness.

4.2.2 Action leads

Recalling such preconditions, our project also obviously underlines their limits and the importance of also questioning (and acting on) selectivity from a different angle, in other words a combination of taking into account the reality of the organisation's processes alongside the realities of the professional stances adopted in the patroller profession.

The analysis made and the action tested in PolBruNo brought out two elements that appeared to be crucial in the perspective of generalisation. The first concerns the consequence of the analysis (and the action aiming to respond to the issues raised by the analysis) for the police district superintendents. The second more specifically concerns the modalities and ambitions of patrolling as the action tested with the patrol officers.

Let us begin with consequences at the organisational level, occasioned by uncovering the mechanism that is problematic in virtue of the selectivity it entails. The nature of this mechanism undeniably points to a reflexion and changes that the management of the police district will have to tackle, especially the perverse effects of giving priority to the citizens' request calls and their satisfaction. That the weight of these calls falls on the patrol officers is certainly no surprise. Such pressure, reinforced by a philosophy of customer (caller/report filer) satisfaction, largely contradicts a professional tradition of mistrust (not necessarily defiance) towards these customers. More basically, what our research tends to show is that, when the police officer, including the whole police organisation, is not allowed to take the time to assess the validity of a request or a series of processes (set up for multiple reasons all deemed valid), this undermines the whole notion of a police whose role is to analyse and respond to these request calls, for example in the notion of peace and order. This situation spawns a vision of the job that continues to diminish the image that the police officers have of the nature and purpose of their work ('totally at the service of the community', 'the police as the menial servant of the community '). Paradoxically, neither does the situation automatically improve the

relationship between the police and the community, at least with some of them. These are members of the community who are more hesitant about putting themselves out front by calling the police with complaints about other people. Members of hard-to-reach or hard-to-hear communities have less tendency to call the police to manage problems they may have with others (Neild e.a., 2012, p. 163). As long as calls received by people from population groups more at ease with contacting the police also include calls motivated by stereotypes and racist reactions, this undermines the very idea of a police available for all the residents.

One element, methods inspired by intervision, contributed not only to this analysis (and the discussion points for the directors) but also in providing a path to reinforce professional resources in the force, especially concerning the abusive selectivity mechanism in question. Intervision is thus another element that is worth being generalised in other police forces (as long as the circumstances or preconditions described above are met). The objective of this process tool is to valorise the patroller profession, to recognise and support the development of their skills by taking into account their professional realities. It encourages a perspective where the police organisation takes a greater interest in the various facets of patrolling, including tasks that are more akin to those of administrative police all the way to the broader mission of preserving public order. This is a perspective that is not afraid of raising and clarifying questions regarding the purpose and objectives of this basic police work. The intervision meetings can provide leverage to promote and valorise practices adapted for a particular context. To do so, this quite simple tool, grounded in the police officers' reflexivity, valorises also their function and tasks, and in particular the tools that intervene in the practice of their profession.

This reflexivity holds a double advantage: on the one hand it helps promote police selectivity processes that are fair, but it also promotes ways of communicating with people that aim to give more room to the rationales and procedures that structure police work, enabling the communities in contact with the police to have a better understanding of what is going on. This reflexivity is also an advantage for the police organisation, providing it with an enriched view of this work to nourish its directors of the various professional functions and practices that are at play in the organisation. In the case at hand, these are processes relating to undesirable effects of selectivity, but which the organisation is now better placed to ask the necessary questions and undertake the desirable adjustments. The tool implemented helped to gradually structure and refine the ideas expressed by the patrol officers. In doing so, in addition to elucidating the problems that all these police officers encounter, it also provided the opportunity to highlight the know-how and life skills of some patrol members which were recognised and became the object of exchanges which in themselves were valorisations of this patrol profession.

Intervision is definitely a form of continuing training among peers that is worthwhile extending in the police force and promoted in other police services. As a tool to promote their reflexivity, it enables the police officers to view their own practices from a critical angle, to communicate good practices identified and to refine their analyses on emerging phenomena and the

mechanisms to call into question. An essential component of these interventions is concrete discussions on actual cases, recently experienced by the people sitting around the table. Doing this, however, takes time. In order to organise a 'time out' context away from patrolling, without being harried by emergencies, to be able to get into a serious discussion, but in an agreeable manner, it must be possible to 'take the time', to relax, for example by sharing a pie and brewing some coffee. Another important element is to have the process monitored by a person who is able to act as a 'compass', that is, someone who – in the context of our project – keeps the discussion on the subject of relations between the police and the community. In order to assist these interventions, a certain knowledge of the realities of patrolling can be of benefit (in the action research phase, the observations obviously greatly facilitated this understanding). But it is also advantageous for this person to be sufficiently outside the police institution so as to be able to question the practices discussed 'more naively'. 'Knowledge' of the city and urban interactions also clearly reinforced a certain credibility among the police officers when there were questions of exchanges between the police and the community. Although one could possibly imagine that the moderator could be a normal citizen, the outsider position also has some drawbacks. We even think that it would have been impossible to achieve a sufficient degree of trust and especially the necessary understanding of the situations discussed without accompanying the officers on patrol. These observations, including the initial observations not limited just to the patrols, enabled us to moderate the meeting and propose specific patrol responses for discussion. The profile of the moderator ideally must also include the ability to analyse and summarise positions, as well as formulate proposals and analyses that can be sent on to the middle management and the directors.

Under these conditions, intervention-inspired meetings can be a precious tool, serving both the objectives as to the goals of police action, associated for example to the guarantee for procedural justice, and to the ways the police exercise this procedural justice, for their part associated with the guarantee of an organisational justice.

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