



In December 2003, SAPS National Commissioner Jackie Selebi issued a Draft National Instruction on sector policing, the most far-reaching policy initiative in regard to grassroots policing in the last ten years. This monograph reports on the manner in which the sector policing instruction has been interpreted and implemented in the West Rand. Three police station precincts are studied – Roodepoort, Kagiso and Randfontein. The monograph examines the extent to which the central tenets of sector policing – community mobilisation and problem-oriented policing – have begun to take root at ground level.

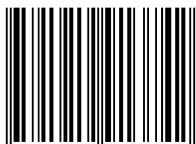


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This publication is funded by the Hanns Seidel Stiftung

Price: R20-00



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**SECTOR POLICING
ON THE WEST RAND**

THREE CASE STUDIES

JONNY STEINBERG

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ISBN: 1-919913-74-2

First published by the Institute for Security Studies,
P O Box 1787, Brooklyn Square 0075
Pretoria, South Africa

Cover picture: Henner Frankenfeld/PictureNET Africa
Design and layout: Image Design +27 11 469 3029
Printing: Cedilla +27 11 683 1302

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ISS MONOGRAPH SERIES • NO 110, DEC 2004

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
Assault GBH	Assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm
CBD	Central Business District
COP	Community policing
NCCS	National Crime Combating Strategy
NNP	New National Party
POP	Problem-oriented policing
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Plan
SAPS	South African Police Service
SCF	Sector Crime Forum

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2003 SAPS National Commissioner Jackie Selebi issued a Draft National Instruction on sector policing. This monograph examines how sector policing has been interpreted and implemented on the West Rand. Sectors in the three station precincts are studied – Randfontein, Roodepoort and Kagiso.

Sector policing – international and domestic context

Sector policing emerged in the early 1970s as one among a host of experiments to address a crisis in American policing. Police leaders and scholars had gone right back to basics and asked what it is that the police do to reduce crime. The endeavour to answer this question has produced a host of policing innovations in the last 30 years. These innovations can be divided into four categories: 1) hotspot or targeted patrolling, 2) controlling risk factors, 3) problem-oriented policing (POP), and 4) community policing (COP).

Sector policing is an eclectic composite. It includes COP and POP as its core, definitional components, but it usually includes targeted patrolling and risk factor identification as well.

COP is a form of policing that mobilises civilians into crime prevention projects. It has been successful when trained on specific problems.

POP borrows from the philosophy of public health interventions and applies it to policing. It ‘vaccinates’ an area against micro-crime patterns by identifying and managing their causes.

The form sector policing takes is shaped in no small part by the host policing culture that receives it. In recent years, South African policing has been characterised by a strong, active national centre, and uneven policing on the ground. The SAPS has come increasingly to rely on high density, high visibility paramilitary policing operations – precisely the sort of policing that a force with a strong centre and weak personnel can execute with accomplishment. Sector policing has been billed as a project to transcend these limitations – to restore grassroots policing.

Sector policing on the West Rand

The West Rand's interpretation of the Draft National Instruction has been ambitious and far-reaching. Station precincts' centralised capacities have been stripped and distributed into sub-precinct sectors. Either the decentralised organisation polices by solving sector-based problems, or policing simply does not work at all.

To the extent that police organisation and culture have successfully adapted to sector policing, three crucial factors are responsible:

- A large proportion of sector personnel are recently-recruited police officers. Sector policing is their first and only experience of policing. There are no old ways to be unlearned.
- Veteran middle-ranking police officers' first experience of sector policing has come in the form of a dramatic increase in resources and infrastructure, and a vastly improved managerial support system.
- Area management has grasped the concept of sector policing with enthusiasm, rather than having it thrust upon them.

The most rudimentary elements of sector policing have undoubtedly been implemented successfully. This is evidenced in:

- the accomplishment with which ordinary members have abandoned random patrolling for targeted patrolling and the identification of risk factors;
- the degree to which officers attempt to dissolve the blurred outlines of hotspots and transform them into specific crime patterns rooted in specific problems;
- the range of environmental, physical and social features ordinary members identify as crime-inducing, and their capacity to enter into partnerships with other state agencies and civilians.

Despite these successes, the study did identify several recurring problems:

- Some Sector Crime Forums (SCFs) are working poorly. In some cases, this is because the sector is too socially diverse. In other instances, the SCF is used to express and to deepen civilians' alienation from the SAPS.
- In regard to the policing of some institutions – illegal shebeens in particular – police culture is proving unable to absorb the philosophy of problem-oriented policing. (This problem is not ubiquitous, but it is fairly widespread.)
- As the same officers begin to patrol the same places, so the relationship between police and offenders becomes increasingly personalised. In some

(by no means all) instances, a process of mutual escalation ensues. Police resources are dragged into the management of a spiralling conflict.

- There is still work to be done in regard to intimate, sensitive encounters between officers and civilians – the policing of domestic violence complaints in particular. The nuances of police conduct can be crime-inducing or crime-alleviating. Research is required in this regard.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2003, the South African Police Service (SAPS) National Commissioner issued a Draft National Instruction on sector policing. At first glance, the changes to grassroots policing envisaged by the Instruction are organisationally modest. Several sector policing initiatives implemented in various parts of the world in the last three decades contemplated a wholesale restructuring of the police organisation; many foundered on the notorious difficulties that attend to ambitious institutional reform.

In contrast, the Draft National Instruction envisages only that one or two personnel be redeployed from patrol and response work to do community liaison and problem-solving work in geographically demarcated sectors.¹ The organisational expectations implicit in the National Instruction are thus prudent and cautious.

Yet, if the SAPS is cautious about what it expects to change institutionally, what, precisely, does it expect to change in regard to the ethos and goals of policing?

Here, the Draft National Instruction is abstract and imprecise, leaving much to the interpretation of those who will implement it. This is hardly surprising. The concept of sector policing is notoriously slippery; it has, over its short history, been animated by a host of different goals and ideas, some of which are mutually contradictory. Even within the SAPS itself, the concept is subject to a great deal of definitional indecision. Some emphasise its capacity to reduce crime through the formation of partnerships with civilian bodies; others say it will assist in the accurate demarcation of hotspots to be saturated with visible police. These are very different goals.

This monograph reports the findings of a study of sector policing in three station jurisdictions on Johannesburg's West Rand. The study has two primary aims: 1) To understand what sector policing has come to mean in practice on the West Rand, and 2) to distil best practice from the West Rand which can be learnt across the country.

Before moving to the West Rand study, there are two prior ports of call. The first is the short but eventful international history of sector policing. The second is the relevant South African context into which sector policing is being received.

CHAPTER 1 THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT – EXPERIMENTS IN POLICING SINCE THE 1970s

Back to basics – does policing reduce crime?

It appears that the idea of breaking police station jurisdictions into sectors and having dedicated sector-based teams do policing was first conceived in the United States in the early 1970s.² The timing is no coincidence. America was experiencing the steepest and most prolonged escalation of violent crime in its history. Between 1963 and 1973, the ratio of homicides to the general population more than doubled from 4.7 to 10.2 per 100,000.³ Long periods of escalating crime inevitably get police forces asking whether the way they police is working and whether new methods ought to be tried. The early 1970s was a time for soul searching. Sector policing was one among a slew of experiments.

The problem in early 1970s was particularly severe. For the previous two decades, police forces in large U.S. cities had generally experimented either with placing more emphasis on random patrols or on rapid response.⁴ Neither was working. This was evidenced not only by the fact that violent crime levels continued to rise, but in a number of research experiments. The most famous of these was conducted in Kansas City, Missouri in the early 1970s. The experiment spanned three sectors of the city. In the first, the number of random patrol cars was doubled. In the second, the number of patrol cars was left unchanged. In the third, patrols were removed entirely: police only entered the sector to respond to a call. Several months later, crime levels in all three sectors were much the same as they were before the control experiment. The numbers of police made no difference.⁵

This experiment and similar ones showed fairly conclusively that random patrols and rapid response do very little either to prevent crimes or to catch criminals; that what the police had been doing during the previous two decades was next to useless. Policing theorist Carl Klockars captured the mood of police scholarship at the time when he said: “It makes about as much sense to have police patrol routinely in cars to fight crimes as it does to have firemen patrol routinely in firetrucks to fight fires.”⁶

So, the policing experiments of the early 1970s emerged in a particular context: one in which police leaders and scholars had gone right back to basics and asked what it is that the police do to reduce crime. The endeavour to answer this question has produced a host of policing innovations in the last 30 years. These innovations can be divided into four categories: 1) hotspot or targeted patrolling; 2) controlling risk factors; 3) problem-oriented policing (POP); and 4) community policing (COP). All four innovations begin from the premise that random patrols and rapid response have a minimal effect on crime reduction. All attempt to deploy visible police more creatively and thoughtfully in order to prevent crime.

You will notice that sector policing makes no appearance on this list. Sector policing is, really, an eclectic composite of some of these innovations. Targeted patrolling and controlling risk factors are not core, definitional components of sector policing, but sector policing can, and usually does, incorporate them. POP and COP are core definitional components of sector policing; without them, the very idea of sector policing loses any meaningful definition.

Targeted patrolling and risk factor control are discussed first, followed by the two innovations at the heart of sector policing – COP and POP.

Hotspots or targeted patrols

Crime is never spread evenly across an entire city. Nor indeed is it ever spread evenly across a neighbourhood or even a single street. A large study conducted in the U.S. in the 1980s, for instance, found that all crime comes from less than three percent of addresses in a city; and even there, crimes are bunched around particular days of the week and times of day.⁷ This has led Lawrence Sherman to argue that giving each part of the city its “fair share” of policing “may be as useful as giving everybody his or her fair share of penicillin – regardless of whether the person is sick.”⁸

At the simplest level, the idea of hotspots or targeted patrols is to put visible police patrols where and when crime happens – according to geographic location, time of day and even time of year. Several experiments conducted in the 1980s show that targeted patrols can bring the crime rate down considerably. But they can also backfire and cause crime to increase. To work, they must be designed effectively and executed with intelligence and skill. First, there is the question of police numbers and of the duration of hotspot patrols: the police presence in the hotspot is most effective when it is sudden,

large and of limited duration – not shorter than five minutes, but no longer than ten minutes. An experiment conducted in Minneapolis in 1988-1989 found that “the longer police stayed, the longer the hotspot was crime-free after the police departed – but only up to a point. Five minutes of police presence was more effective than one minute, and ten minutes better than five. But much more than ten minutes of police presence produced diminishing returns.”⁹

Second, there is the question of what the police do for the five or ten minutes they are in the hotspot. Merely remaining in patrol cars or watching street life passively appears to be less effective than policing aggressively. As Sherman argues: “Arrests for minor public infractions by pedestrians and motorists, for example, shows a clear connection to robbery: the more police enforce traffic and disorderly conduct laws, the less robbery there is. High rates of enforcement in public places may convey a sense of control that generally deters street crime, especially among strangers.”¹⁰

Yet the line between policing aggressively and policing provocatively is a thin one. Crossing that line can have disastrous effects, pitting the police against entire sections of the population, and triggering widespread public disorder. Indeed, some have argued that targeted patrolling is a blunt instrument: it is simply not subtle enough to respect the line between aggressive and provocative policing. The collateral damage caused by the very successes of targeted policing, the argument goes, means that it is always short lived; it always provokes a backlash and is replaced by gentler but less effective forms of policing.¹¹

Controlling risk factors

Strictly speaking, this is about directing police to look out for things which have been identified as causing elevated risks of public harm. Three of the most obvious risk factors in regard to South African crime are guns, alcohol and ex-convicts. So, risk-controlling strategies may range from efforts to keep guns out of shebeens, to preventing parolees from habituating places where they are most likely to re-offend. Examples of risk-controlling strategies vary from the subtle and the finely-honed, to the blunt and diffuse.

An example of a classic risk-controlling initiative comes from Bogotá and Cali in Colombia and concerns the control of guns. Colombia is notorious for having the highest rate of firearm murders in the world. From 1983 to 1993,

the annual homicide rate in Colombia increased 366% from 24 to 88 per 100,000 of the population. More than 80% of these homicides involved firearms. In the mid-1990s, a thorough docket analysis conducted in the cities of Bogotá and Cali found that the majority of gun-related homicides in public spaces took place on public holidays, election days and on the weekends immediately following payday. Government banned the carrying of concealed weapons on those days, and the ban was policed with enthusiasm; patrol cops were instructed to stop dozens of young men on the assigned days and search them for firearms. Within a year, Bogotá's homicide rate had declined by 13% and Cali's by 14%; young men stopped carrying weapons on the days they were most likely to use them.¹² Here, the risk factors identified were guns, and the days of the year on which they were most used. The risk-controlling strategy took the form of a well-publicised amendment to the criminal law, and a city-wide reorientation of patrol tactics.

Yet risk-control strategies are vulnerable to the same danger that confronts hotspot policing; the risk factors must be policed aggressively, and the line between aggressive and provocative policing remains a thin one. How do you target those of Bogotá's young men who carry guns without targeting all of Bogotá's young men? There is a danger that policing will be reduced to a campaign of serial harassment against entire segments of society. Indeed, New York, which policed for risk factors aggressively throughout the 1990s, witnessed a backlash against provocative policing in the late 1990s; the trigger was the apparent wrongful shooting of a young black man, which led to days of civil unrest in parts of the city.

Sector policing

Sector policing, as indicated earlier, is a composite of two innovations in policing: COP and POP. Before defining these concepts, we would do well to heed the advice of American policing scholar David Bayley. "Wherever I go," Bayley writes, "I am enormously impressed with the strategic creativity of American police. But what they are doing is so diverse it is hard to describe. For example, Edward Maguire and his colleagues needed 31 separate categories to capture activities that are associated with community policing ... COP and POP have been wonderful philosophic sticks for encouraging the police to re-examine customary strategies, but they are awkward descriptive terms for what has been taking place."¹³

Sector policing is not a rigid model or a finite set of rules. It is an eclectic composite of open-ended ideas; the practices associated with it are diffuse and

myriad. The definition that follows tries to show just how wide an array of different practices the idea of sector policing sponsors.

Problem-oriented policing (POP)

This is perhaps the most innovative development in crime prevention in the last 30 years. Its underbelly, though, is that it requires radical departures from orthodox police methods and presents serious, some argue insurmountable, challenges to police organisation.

POP essentially takes the logic and methods of public health and epidemiology and applies them to policing.¹⁴ For instance, tuberculosis was largely eliminated in the developed world when public health analysts identified the social practices that stimulate its transmission and eliminated them through public campaigns and social work programmes. POP, to use a very straightforward example, virtually eliminated robberies of bus drivers in New York in the 1970s by introducing exact change fares and a barrier to cash availability.

In essence, POP consists of breaking crime patterns down to micro details, reducing each micro pattern to a particular problem or cluster of problems, and then managing or solving that problem. POP strategies range from the very simple to the complex. An example of a simple POP strategy: after carefully analysing a spate of robberies at 24/7 convenience stores in Gainesville, Florida in mid-1980s, police found that robbers only targeted 24/7s which employed a single cashier in the early hours of the morning. Police recommended that all-night stores employ at least two cashiers at all times; the recommendation was passed into law.¹⁵

POP gets considerably more complex than that. In the late 1980s, the Newton Street area of south-central Los Angeles experienced a sustained spate of street shootings. The effects on the neighbourhood were severe. Attendance at the local high school dropped to less than 50% as students were too afraid to walk to school. Adults barricaded themselves in their homes at night and confined themselves to rooms that did not face the street.

Police canvassed residents door-to-door and conducted targeted interviews among drug retailers in the area. They found that the violence stemmed from one identifiable source: a group of drug dealers in the neighbourhood to the south of Newton Street was trying to intimidate incumbent Newtown Street

dealers off their turf, primarily by spraying their market place with bullets shot randomly from passing cars. In consultation with several well-attended community forums, local government acted on this information by erecting metal gates at the ends of nine streets to create a network of cul-de-sacs, making the area difficult to drive through for outsiders. The shootings quickly abated and school attendance rates doubled; drug market rivals no longer risked coming into the neighbourhood to shoot in the absence of quick exit opportunities.¹⁶

In this example, the origins of POP in public health are clearly visible. Instead of treating the symptoms of Newtown Street's 'illness' – trying to catch people who shoot other people in the streets – the area was 'vaccinated' against drive-by shootings emanating from the neighbourhoods to the south.

Despite its elegance, POP is extremely difficult to implement. Among several problems it has encountered, the most severe is the radical transformation in policing practice that it requires. As Lawrence Sherman has pointed out:

There is no underlying theory, like the biochemistry of vaccines, that can guide police from one crime problem to the next. Each specific crime problem tests anew the ingenuity of anyone attempting to solve – or more modestly, to manage – that problem. History predicts that such trial-and-error efforts will fail more often than they succeed... That is just what has happened in many of the police agencies adopting P.O.P. since the early 1980s... Policing is an occupational culture driven by rapid responses to short-term problems, unaccustomed to judgments about success or failure. The new assignment of long-term problem solving has often caused occupational culture shock.¹⁷

Indeed, for POP to exist in more than just name, the police organisation itself, and not just individual beat officers, must significantly revise the way it thinks about and does its work. A beat officer can detect as many problems as he likes, but if his organisation does not give him the time and the institutional support to analyse problems and experiment with solutions, he will stop looking for them. Moreover, POP often entails work which flies in the face of traditional police performance indicators as such arrest rates and response times. Radical departures from police practice often trigger resistance, both from beat officers themselves and politically. Especially at times when the fear of crime is high, it takes a brave politician to abandon or modify traditional police performance criteria.

Community policing (COP)

A host of ideas, practices and goals inform COP, and it is difficult to pin it down to a single, pithy definition. One of these ideas is that a local police force that knows its constituency well will gather the sort of intelligence that will help it to prevent crimes. Another is that a police force that liaises with its constituency can draw civilian bodies into crime prevention initiatives. These ideas manifest themselves in several forms: formalised and regular police-community forums; goal-specific joint programmes with business associations and resident bodies; beat police taking more responsibility for following through on citizen requests for assistance as well as on complaints to crime.

In the SAPS's Draft National Instruction on sector policing, COP rests on two pillars. First, each sector manager is tasked with establishing a police-community Sector Crime Forum (SCF). Second, he or she is tasked with liaising with and mobilising community-based crime prevention initiatives such as neighbourhood watches.

Community policing has been shown to bring success, but usually in particular circumstances and in regard to the execution of particular goals. The Newton Street, Los Angeles example cited above is a case in point. The problem of drive-by shootings would never have been delineated as finely as it was without extensive police community-interaction. And the solution – the erection of metal street barriers – could not have been implemented without community cooperation.

There are a host of examples of creative community mobilisation. In a particularly innovative partnership in London in the 1980s, an open drug market on a high street was pushed off the streets. Drug retailers would spend their days seated at tables at the front of fast food restaurants. Buyers would signal to them from the street to commence a transaction. Police persuaded restaurant owners to move their smoking sections to the back of their premises, away from the front window. Since the vast majority of drug retailers smoked, they moved to the back of the restaurants. The drug trade did not cease: contact between sellers and buyers moved to cell phones instead of through restaurant windows. But the drug trade was taken off the street, which was the intention of the partnership.

Another innovative partnership evolved in Sea Point, Cape Town in 2004. Members of a Sea Point anti-crime forum dressed in bright orange bibs,

assembled at drug retail points late at night, and stared drug retailers in the face for hours on end. One of the ideas behind the initiative was to shelter the neighbourhood from the dangers of provocative policing. The cold stares of civilians, it was thought, would be as effective at inhibiting drug dealing as aggressive, targeted patrolling. This is a creative example of a common and rudimentary neighbourhood partnership: using civilians as security guards who watch hotspots, repeat offenders and repeat victims, often in radio contact with police patrols.

But these examples of COP worked because police-community liaison was honed to a particular problem and in the search for an elegant solution. When the goals of COP are ill-defined, problems will arise. Indeed, more often than not, COP has arisen at times and in places where police-citizen relations are poor. The thrust of its intervention has been to restore police legitimacy. The result has often been a conflation of goals. Restoring police legitimacy is not necessarily the same as getting the police to reduce crime. Time and again, these two goals have been conflated, not least in South Africa after 1994 with the establishment of Community Police Forums.

COP has also at times been offered as a general palliative to all problems. Yet sometimes, as James Wilson argues, the problem simply isn't one of communication between police and citizens. "There is genuine conflict," he argues, "between [for instance] youths, who want to be left alone, and the police, who regard the young (rightly) as the chief source of crime and disorder, and who seek various means, some proper and some improper, to control them – often on behalf of older [citizens] who want 'better police protection'".¹⁸

Community policing, then, is probably a necessary ingredient for best practice, but it is also often among the cocktail of ills found in worst practice. Much depends on the skill and intelligence with which it is implemented, the manner in which it is received by local police culture, and, above all, the uses to which it is put.

Policing in geographic sectors

This is obviously a prerequisite of any definition of sector policing. The police station jurisdiction is divided into several sectors, and a number of staff members are set aside to devote exclusive attention to each sector. The rationale of policing in sectors is instrumental: it is not an end in itself but a

tool for making COP and POP more effective. To have any meaning at all, a degree of *responsibility and decision-making*, and not just personnel, must also be devolved to the sector level. This devolution has taken a myriad of forms, driving sector policing in several directions. For instance, is sector policing practiced by all uniformed police, or is it assigned to a separate unit? Should sector police patrol in cars, on bicycles, work out of mobile officers or be based at the police station? What precisely do they do – are they responsible for responding to calls, or should they be exempt from responsive policing and given the space to research and analyse problems? Should the detective branch also be devolved into sectors? All of these options have been included at various times and places. The job of 'the sector police officer' has spun off in a hundred directions.

Problems with sector policing

The authors of the previous Institute for Security Studies monograph on sector policing argued that the concept had been abandoned in its countries of origin and that South Africa was thus "adopting an idea that has failed or fizzled out" elsewhere.¹⁹ The issue is not quite that simple. As the definition above shows, sector policing is 1) an eclectic composite of several ideas and 2) open to a wide array of different interpretations and practices. Declaring that 'it' has failed is to assume that 'it' is a monolithic model which either stands or falls.

Sector policing is not so much a monolithic concept as a cocktail of many of the ideas that have developed in the field of crime prevention in the last three decades. All of these ideas – policing in smaller units, COP, POP, community mobilisation – are extant in dozens of cities and towns across the northern hemisphere. In cities such as Chicago and Boston, models of policing, which while not formally called 'sector policing', have adopted all of its pillars and are alive and flourishing.²⁰ So, rather than talk of its demise, it would perhaps be more fruitful to talk of the problems it has encountered, and there have been many.

Political problems

The London Metropolitan Police adopted the idea of sector policing with great enthusiasm in the early 1990s only to abandon it in the mid-1990s. Whatever the problems with sector policing on the ground, it can be said with certainty that the concept ultimately whittled as a result of political initiatives taken in national government. As Dixon and Rauch point out, in 1996 then UK Prime

Minister John Major launched a Citizen's Charter initiative along with a "fresh wave of targets and performance standards":

These standards tended to emphasise performance against traditional 'hard' crime targets and were enforced with scarcely diminished rigour when the Labour Party came to power in 1997. While the long term problem-solving work of sector policing might eventually reduce demand for police services, statistical targets for the time taken to respond to emergency calls and the judicial disposal of criminal cases had to be met in the here and now. The inevitable result was that available resources became increasingly focused on dealing with the traditional priorities of crime fighting and incidence response.²¹

Indeed, all models of policing are prone to the vagaries of politics, perhaps more so than any other sphere of public policy. This is so for two reasons. First, the debate about which forms of policing – if any – reduce crime is undecidable. Some argue that we are no closer to knowing which models are more efficacious than we were when the famous Kansas City experiment was conducted in 1973. The result is that defining best practice will always be subject to heated debate.²² Fashions come and go and then come again. Second, political decisions in regard to policing practice tend to follow well-worn cycles. When the issue of police legitimacy, rather than crime levels, is prevalent in public discourse, 'softer' innovations like COP and POP win political space. When the public mood swings and the fear of crime predominates, the pressure to produce short-term results, in the form of increased arrest rates, quicker response times, high visibility saturation campaigns, and so forth, tends to drain COP and POP of political support. The result is that COP and POP programmes become radically redefined to accommodate hard, law and order policing, or they are abandoned completely, in both name and substance. In South Africa, where the governing party has placed great emphasis on traditional performance measures in recent years, this a point worth bearing in mind.

The pains of community involvement

In a famous article titled "The Asshole", John Van Maanen described police culture by way of officers' view of the public. He argued that police divided people into three categories: suspicious persons (believed to have committed crimes), assholes (people who incessantly challenge police legitimacy), and know-nothings (ordinary citizens).²³ Following this bleak and jaundiced

typology, sector forums are attended primarily by assholes, partly by know-nothings, and sometimes even by suspicious persons.

Beneath the frivolity of these terms lie some serious problems community involvement has encountered. Dozens of studies from around the globe have come across similar community forum failures and limitations, such as 1) ethnically diverse neighbourhoods are seldom evenly represented in community crime forums: the elderly, the white and the middle class predominate, 2) residents tend to bring quality of life matters rather than crime matters to forums, matters police officers believe are either beyond their jurisdiction or demeaning, 3) in diverse and socially divided jurisdictions, police are at times in danger of being co-opted by one social faction in its internecine conflicts against another. In this context, community involvement can do great damage to police legitimacy.

As James Q. Wilson has dryly commented, reflecting a common police complaint with COP: "police recognise that since the vast majority of citizens commit no serious crimes and know no serious criminals, they have little information to offer."²⁴

The point is that the goals of community involvement need to be carefully delineated and the terms of community engagement thoughtfully considered. Failure can, ironically, lead to estrangement between police and residents.

Undefined goals, police resistance, organisational failure

In his seminal article on POP, Herman Goldstein quoted from a newspaper article he had just read. "Complaints from passengers wishing to use the Bagnall to Greenfields bus service that the drivers were speeding past queues of up to 30 people with a smile and a wave of the hand have been met by a statement pointing out that 'it is impossible for the drivers to keep their timetable if they have to stop for passengers'."²⁵ Organisational change, Goldstein was saying, is always in danger of losing sight of its goals.

Sector policing initiatives are particularly prone to this syndrome. A host of potential goals are implicit in the concept. Choosing them can become a muddled affair, however. Police officers are told to abandon the way they have always done their work, to operate according to new performance criteria and under stricter managerial supervision, but without a crisp purpose. Sector policing initiatives can thus trigger passive resistance in the organisation. Police officers are demoralised; many find ways to skirt new

responsibilities and cling to old styles of policing; managers lose their authority.

Even when goals are clearly spelled out, there is a danger that the organisation simply doesn't have the capacity to help police officers to implement them. Many of ideas that animate sector policing are complex and making them work requires a great deal of managerial skill.

POP in particular is managerially ambitious. It is labour-intensive, plodding and prone to error; it requires subtlety and ingenuity; it also requires the entire police organisation to reorient itself. A police officer tasked with solving problems, but who isn't given the institutional support to do so, finds that he is asked to produce a form of policing at which he simply cannot succeed. In this regard, the history of POP is not a happy one. In a wide survey of POP, Ronald Clarke recently reported that despite its enthusiastic formal adoption across the US, "few projects consistent with Goldstein's original vision of problem-oriented policing have been reported," not because they haven't been tried, but because they have failed.²⁶

In South Africa, where the skill-base the SAPS inherited from apartheid is poor, the danger of asking too much of policing is a grave one.

CHAPTER 2 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT – POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Sector policing is an open-ended phenomenon, a loose composite capable of absorbing just about every idea in policing that has been thought of in the last 30 years. There is thus no single model: what it becomes is shaped in large part by local practice, knowledge, infrastructure and ideas. It follows that what is to become of sector policing in South Africa will be influenced in no small part by the existing police culture which is to host it. What is the state of policing in South Africa? What is the nature of the environment into which the idea of sector policing is being received? What follows is, of necessity, a brief and telescoped account of current policing practice in South Africa.²⁷

Working around weaknesses

During the first decade of democracy, policing in South Africa has been shaped in large part by the resources it inherited from the apartheid era. And the policing tools apartheid bequeathed to democracy – particularly its stock of human capital – were formed in the chaotic conditions of the final years of white minority rule.

In 1999, then police Commissioner George Fivaz complained that a quarter of his personnel were functionally illiterate. "We inherited a police force without the functional capacity to do their job," he told a reporter.²⁸ Fivaz may have been exaggerating a little, but not much. Look at the history of policing in the decade preceding 1994, and it is not difficult to see why.

In the mid-1980s, one of the apartheid government's responses to the urban insurrections that had engulfed much of the country was the mass recruitment of *kitskonstabels* – instant constables – trained in six weeks and given full police powers. Many were illiterate. Most were trained in the blunt rubric of repression. By 1994, they constituted ten percent of South African Police (SAP) personnel. Then there was the municipal police, slightly better trained than the *kitskonstabels*, but also used primarily to defend besieged black local authorities against political resistance. By 1989, they constituted 12% of SAP personnel. Finally, when the SAP was amalgamated with the several

homeland police forces in 1995, yet another slew of doubtfully trained police officers were absorbed into the force; their primary function had been to serve weak, authoritarian and unpopular regimes. In 1995, at the time of the amalgamation, the combined homeland personnel comprised more than 20% of SAPS force strength. The result is that South Africa's first democratic police agency inherited a contingent of police officers – nearly half of whom – had received nominal police training at best. They had skills and talents “similar to those of the common infantry”.²⁹

It took the SAPS about five years of experimentation to discover that the quality of policing can only be as good as the personnel at hand. But by 1999, the SAPS had become remarkably adept at working around its weaknesses and harnessing its strengths. This took two forms: first, a strong tendency to centralise resources and responsibility at head office, primarily to make up for the unevenness of police quality on the ground. In Mark Shaw's phrase, the SAPS developed “a strong ‘punching arm’ deployable from Pretoria to counter ... weak station-level policing”.³⁰ And second, the SAPS came increasingly to rely on high density, high visibility paramilitary policing operations – precisely the sort of policing that a force with a strong centre and weak personnel can execute with accomplishment.

This movement towards centralised, militaristic policing culminated in the announcement of the National Crime Combating Strategy (NCCS) in 2000, a nine-year plan to reduce crime and reform local-level policing across the country. The NCCS is divided into two phases. Phase one, which began in 2000 and was scheduled to end in 2004, was dubbed the ‘stabilisation phase’. It consisted, in essence, of a series of nationally coordinated, high-density policing campaigns in the 140-odd police station precincts identified as producing more than 50% of crime in South Africa. The goal was to stabilise crime statistics in the chosen areas. “To achieve this remarkable goal,” Ted Leggett comments caustically:

... the SAPS has resorted to traditional, albeit targeted, authoritarian policing. The police and military show up in force. They make themselves visible. They wake everyone up at 3am and search their sugar bowls, without specific probable cause... They seize lots of undocumented people and guns, as well as drugs and suspected stolen property... They throw up roadblocks and cordon and search operations to accomplish the same thing on streets and sidewalks...³¹

“This return to militaristic policing,” Leggett concludes, “should surprise no one... Given the masses of members who have little capacity for reflective police work, the herding of bodies into mass operations may be the optimal use of available resources.”

Overcoming weaknesses?

The second phase of the NCCS has been dubbed the ‘normalisation’ phase and is scheduled to run from 2004-2009. While the first phase can be characterised as an attempt to work around the weaknesses the SAPS inherited and to emphasise the one form of policing the organisation knows it can do well, phase two, at first glance at any rate, is a project to overcome inherited weaknesses and rebuild grassroots policing. The assumption is that phase one would have stabilised crime levels and thus created the breathing space in which station-level policing can be rebuilt. And at the heart of the plan for the restoration of station-level work is the idea of sector policing. This is where the Draft National Instruction on sector policing takes its place. It is the centrepiece of phase two, the substance of a five-year project to normalise policing in South Africa.

Defined in this way, sector policing carries the burden of a very ambitious project indeed. It is no less than a plan to replace ‘the herding of bodies into mass formations,’ in Leggett's phrase, with a form of policing the success of which rides on the quality of human capital at the grassroots: analytical problem-solving, the subtleties of crafting situation-sensitive crime prevention plans – this is the stuff of sector policing. It is a far cry from staffing a road block. Is phase two of the NCCS really as ambitious as that?

The SAPS has sent out conflicting signals. On the one hand, it undoubtedly understands that sector policing cannot succeed if it is to rely on existing human resources. The SAPS fought bitterly and, in the end, successfully, for the funds to hire and train 37,200 new police officers between 2002 and 2007. The quality of the new recruits appears to be good. All are high-school graduates. Their median age is 27; many thus have the working and life experience necessary for intelligent grassroots policing. It appears that the SAPS plans to transfer many of them directly from the academy into sector policing functions. The idea, in other words, is not just that greater numbers are needed, but that a new ethos of policing requires a better crop of personnel.

And yet, examining the Draft National Instruction itself, the SAPS commitment to an ambitious programme of reform becomes less clear. Here is how the Instruction envisages the implementation of sector policing:

- *The demarcation of geographic sectors within the local police station area.* The main criteria for deciding on sector size and boundaries should be the manageability of the sectors for the envisaged managers and the social character of each sector.
- *The appointment of a sector commander and at least one deputy in each sector.* Commanders are chosen for their excellent community work skills.

The sector commander, in turn, has the following tasks:

- compiling a sector profile to include details of prominent people and important groups in the sector area, population and other demographics, and crime trends;
- establishing a Sector Crime Forum, consisting of identified stakeholders to address policing and crime prevention needs in the sectors through the planning and execution of focussed and intelligence-driven operations;
- identifying the causes of crime and contributing factors to crime in his/her sector as well as the policing needs of the sector in respect of improved service delivery and improved community-police relations;
- participating in daily crime prevention meetings at station level to identify needs for specific crime prevention operations;
- developing community-police projects at sector level such as neighbourhood watches.

It is possible for a station to obey the letter of this Instruction without implementing substantive changes to policing practice. A station that interprets the Instruction leanly might, for instance, hive off the sector commander and his or her work into a discrete, parallel sphere, leaving the substance of everyday policing unchanged. “Focussed, intelligence-driven operations” could consist simply in the delineation of hotspots, and a nominal shift in where crime prevention units patrol. “Developing community-police projects” could become the work of a lone police officer, liaising with the leaders of community initiatives which exist anyway and whose work remains largely unchanged.

Alternatively, a creative and generous interpretation of the Instruction could aim to instil a new philosophy throughout the station-level organisation, replete with substantive changes in day-to-day policing and a new set of performance indicators. For instance, a station commander could divide the crime prevention unit into sectors, task them with examining crime trends for the purpose of detecting patterns, and liaising with sector commanders and

civilians to find creative solutions to the problems they have identified; dividing the detective branch into sectors, instructing them to break down the cases they investigate into patterns, taking this analysis to the sector commander, and so forth.

In other words, an entire spectrum of possibility is implicit in the Instruction, ranging from nominal to radical changes in policing.

Why was the Instruction written like this? One answer is that the SAPS leadership is being commendably cautious. As discussed above, the SAPS has, in recent years, become impressively adept at learning the art of the possible. It has identified the limits of its own organisation and styled its strategies around the recognition of these limits. A sector policing instruction that demands nothing less than the wholesale reform of the very substance of grassroots policing flies in the face of all the caution and prudence the SAPS has acquired. It runs the risk of demanding the impossible. In issuing a broad, abstract instruction, the SAPS's intention is perhaps to give pockets of skilled police officers around the country the space to innovate while sheltering weak pockets from the failure of ambitious change.

If this is the case, the line between phases one and two of the NCCS is not quite as bold as may appear. By 2010, quality of policing on the ground remains extremely uneven; Pretoria's ‘punching arm’ remains strong – the presence of a centralised, paramilitary capacity remains intact to substitute for poor policing on the ground. South Africa is left with an eclectic patchwork of policing practices, relying on blunt, high density policing in some places, and on local-level innovation in others.

There is another possible reason why the Instruction is written the way it is: its abstractness is a reflection of top-level disagreement about the future of policing in South Africa. Indeed, the author's off-the-record interviews with senior police managers suggest that the debate about the strategic direction of policing remains unresolved. Some senior managers believe that the high density operations of recent years mark the limits of existing police capacity, and that ambitious innovation during the next five years might damage the organisation. For these managers, sector policing should do no more than refine existing policing practices. Others argue that current policing practice is a transitional, pragmatic arrangement which has served well as a bridge between authoritarian and democratic policing; but it is a bridge that must be crossed and dismantled as soon as possible. For these managers, sector policing must herald a significant break from present practice.

In this scenario, the broadness of the National Instruction is a symptom of compromise and disagreement. What is to become of it will be determined in large part by the character and disposition of area managers, the talent they are able to mobilise, and the support they may or may not receive from Pretoria.

CHAPTER 3

WEST RAND SECTOR POLICING: VISION, IMPLEMENTATION, PHILOSOPHY

Three ingredients of success

The West Rand's project to introduce sector policing in its 11 constituent station precincts is at once very ambitious and painstakingly cautious. It is ambitious because the form of policing the West Rand Area management envisages extends well beyond the modest changes to current practice a narrow reading of the Draft National Instruction would suggest. In both, the detective³² and the uniformed branch stations are almost entirely stripped of centralised capacity. For instance, the station-level crime prevention unit – historically the core of visible policing capacity, which allows station managers to police hotspots in numbers – is disbanded. Instead, day-to-day visible policing capacity is permanently distributed into the sectors. In an ideal, fully resourced station, each sector is staffed by a sector manager and at least eight uniformed patrol officers. The latter are permanent and active sector officers: they are expected to attend every Sector Crime Forum (SCF) in their sector, to have a working knowledge of the crime patterns and risk factors in their sector, to participate in sector-specific problem-solving exercises at monthly meetings, to gather sector-based intelligence, and to establish crime prevention initiatives with citizen networks. Note that this is not a sector manager's job description: it is the job description of every uniformed officer, from inspectors to constables. Each sector is policed by at least one dedicated, 24-hour sector vehicle, staffed by these sector-dedicated personnel.

During the first months of sector policing on the West Rand, station-level management fought hard against the disbanding of their crime prevention units. They worried that stripping their stations' centralised capacity would render zones of their precincts unpoliceable. Area management was faced with a choice: it could either revise its plans and hold back a portion of personnel and capacity for the centre, or it could go the whole hog. It went for the latter. The motivation, according to a senior manager at Area Office was this:

Once you allow stations to keep their crime prevention units, you leave the back door open: you give stations the space to move backwards. There is a danger that managers will keep shifting the goalposts, keep leaning more on their crime prevention unit, and less on their sectors. True, crime prevention units make it easier to police hotspots, but they are no good at problem-solving. A large crime prevention unit follows orders. It does not take the initiative. So we had to close the back door and make sure that the organisation had no choice but to move forward.³³

It is in this regard that the Area's sector policing project is so ambitious. Sector policing has to work because every other capacity is stripped. Either the decentralised organisation polices by solving sector-based problems, or policing simply does not work at all. There is no alternative. Much rides, then, on the Area's capacity to institute significant changes in policing culture and practice throughout the organisation quickly and on the hoof.³⁴

Yet if the vision is ambitious, the implementation is cautious. The first sectors on the West Rand were launched in April 2003. At the time of writing, October 2004, the transition to sector policing is not quite complete. It has been a slow and incremental process. The first rule of implementation is that sector policing is impossible in the absence of a substantial increase in personnel and resources. The second is that since resource increases are to occur incrementally, so should the launch of sectors; no sector is to be launched without the guarantee that it has the infrastructure and staff to be sustainable over the long term.

Incoming resources were not distributed equally; they went to priority stations first. And within station boundaries, resources were prioritised to high-crime sectors. Thus, for instance, in April 2003, Randfontein divided its precinct into seven sectors but launched only two. The remaining five were launched at intervals over the following 18 months. Kagiso was divided into five sectors, but only three were launched immediately. Early in the process, Area management recognised that it was launching sectors too quickly, that some were unsustainable. It began to slow the process down. It will probably take until early 2005 for every demarcated sector on the West Rand to be operative.

In talking about the introduction of sector policing on the West Rand, then, one is talking not only of a new policing practice, but of an Area dramatically

better resourced than it was 18 months ago. Roodepoort, for instance, had a staff complement of 180 members in the year before its first sectors were launched. At the time of writing, shortly after the launch of its ninth sector, its police personnel number was 340. In Kagiso, the number rose from 134 to over 200 over a 19-month period. It should also be noted that most incoming personnel were recruited directly from police college into sector work.

It was pointed out in Chapter One that a common problem encountered by COP and POP is the occupational culture shock experienced by police officers. Accustomed to a form of work characterised by rapid responses to immediate problems, officers are confronted by a paradigm that assigns to them the work of long-term problem-solvers. As is evident in the case studies below, grassroots resistance to sector policing from within police ranks is, in fact – 18 months after its launch – minimal. Ordinary members on the West Rand, perhaps more than managers, have taken extremely well to the introduction of sector policing. The most rudimentary tasks – if not some of the more complex tasks – of the new paradigm, are performed with accomplishment and enthusiasm.

If this is indeed the case, there are at least three factors that have made the smooth transition possible. The first is an Area management corps which has grasped the concept of sector policing with enthusiasm, rather than having it thrust upon them. The importance of this point cannot be emphasised too much. In most provinces and areas, sector policing is to emerge from a National Instruction. There is no guarantee that it will be received by a willing corps of police leaders. Ambivalent managers will, in senior superintendent Peche's phrase, "leave the back door open". Second, the transition has undoubtedly benefited from the fact that a large proportion of sector personnel are recently recruited police officers. Sector policing is their first and only experience of policing. There are no old ways to be unlearned. Finally, veteran middle-ranking police officers' first experience of sector policing has come in the form of a dramatic increase in resources and infrastructure, and a vastly improved managerial support system. In other words, sector policing has been coupled with unprecedented improvements in the conditions of their working lives and in their capacity to perform their work. The combination of these three ingredients appears to have been pivotal. Take one of them away, and the introduction of sector policing may well have been beset by a host of very serious problems.

How sectors are policed and sector police officers evaluated

Once a month, every station member is required to attend a meeting at which each sector delivers a monthly or quarterly presentation of its crime trends and its activities to a senior Area manager. Tracking the structure and substance of this presentation offers a convenient summary of how Area expects each sector to be policed.

Targeted patrolling and the policing of risk factors

The sector manager presents his or her monthly crimes stats and notes which crimes have increased and which have decreased. She then presents a map on which the sector's crimes are plotted. Crime increases are thus marked not only by type, but by geography, time of day, and day of the week. Hotspots are marked in red. Each is discussed individually – how it was policed last month, how it will be policed next month.

The first stage in this exercise is rudimentary and routine – it is about how to design targeted patrols and police risk factors. If the sector's primary problem is gun-related predatory crimes, the sector is expected to conduct serial stop-and-search procedures in the vicinity of the hotspot at the times of day and days of the week at which the crimes are concentrated. If the sector's problem is residential burglary, the area is mapped for hotspots, access routes and open fields. Vehicles and pedestrians are to be serially stopped and searched at appropriate times and places.

More nuanced patrolling strategies are also developed. The crimes associated with each shebeen in the sector are monitored. Shebeens that do not generate crime are left alone. Those that do are subject to a host of different policing strategies, depending on the nature of the problem. Area management acknowledges that raiding and closing a shebeen is a temporary measure that comes at the price of deteriorating community-police relations. Attempts are made to police risk factors more subtly. In regard to shebeens associated with common robbery and assault, the vicinity around the shebeen is patrolled intensively on weekend nights and drunk people arrested and put in the police cells for the night. The patrons of shebeens associated with gun-related crimes are harassed and badgered, their evening entertainment rendered unpleasant. Patrons in cars are stopped for breathalyzer tests. Shebeens are searched for weapons and drunken patrons arrested. Repeating this procedure every weekend night is designed to encourage armed patrons to drink elsewhere or leave their firearms at home.

However, as we shall see in the following chapter, the nuances of Area's understanding of policing shebeens are often lost in translation: what happens on the ground is sometimes far blunter and less thoughtful.

The evaluation of members' enthusiasm in performing targeted patrols is rudimentary but stern. The name of each member is paraded before the meeting, together with a list of the arrests he made and the goods he confiscated the previous month, on a Powerpoint presentation. If a sector's violent crime has increased, the rate of arrests for drunkenness is low, and the number of firearms it has confiscated is paltry, it is performing its most basic functions poorly and is told so. Alternatively, if a member has only arrested illegal immigrants, and cannot explain why targeting them is reducing identified crime patterns, he is told he has been wasting his time.

Each member is also evaluated for the number of informers he handles and the amount of money he has spent on information claims. The idea, of course, is that it takes information and intelligence to transform the blurred lines of a hotspot into the identification of specific perpetrators.

If it is clear that a particular crime problem is beyond the capacity of the sector team to police adequately, Area offers appropriate support. This may take the form of a team of plainclothes officers to police a pedestrian pathway prone to common robbery, extra numbers to saturate a gun-ridden zone of the sector, or the Area Commissioner conducting negotiations with the metro government to tackle problems of environmental design.

From targeted patrols to problem-identification

Once hotspots have been mapped, the sector manager presents a photograph of each hotspot. The idea is to understand each hotspot as a physical and social terrain, and thus to attach its crime patterns to specific problems. Members are encouraged to find environmental and situational causes of crimes in hotspots and to offer target-hardening solutions. They are also obliged to record how many civilians and civilian networks they have contacted in hotspots, how they have approached them, and what sort of crime prevention partnerships they have established with them.

Members must present a list of physical and social factors throughout their sector that might contribute to crime. These can range from broken street lights, to unnumbered houses, the emergence of a group of homeless children, the presence of street gambling, unlit open spaces, the presence of vacant

houses, the opening of a taxi rank, intermittent power failures, to the emergence of a kangaroo court in an informal settlement. Each factor is discussed individually and solutions are proposed. Members are also obliged to search for these factors by communicating with civilians. Members must list how many civilians they contacted during the previous month. They are also obliged to distribute their dedicated sector cell phone number, and to encourage residents to use it to lodge complaints and to give and receive information. Finally, the sectors are obliged to report on the composition of their SCFs, the problems raised there, and the solutions it has proposed.

The discussion above is telescoped. It is neither exhaustive, nor does it reflect all the nuances involved in the design of patrols and the identification of problems. Nor, for that matter, does it reflect the extent to which ideas generated at Area and station level are lost in translation as they get closer to the ground. Such matters are amplified in the three case studies below.

It should be noted that the case studies were conducted 18 months after the launch of sector policing on the West Rand. I thus did not witness teething problems, initial resistance or the inevitable fumbling of new projects and ideas. The three stations chosen are all regarded as relatively successful by Area management. The idea is to record best practice, and as diverse an array of social and physical contexts as possible were chosen.

CHAPTER 4 RANDFONTEIN (TOEKOMSRSUS)

Randfontein is an old mining town about 40km west of central Johannesburg. It is situated on the periphery of the West Rand policing area, with Krugersdorp to its north, Roodepoort to its northeast, and Soweto to its east. A district of farms and smallholdings lies to its west. It has an estimated population of 130,000. Like many Gauteng and Free State mining towns, the industry it serves is shrinking, and unemployment levels appear to have been rising steadily over the last two decades.

The station jurisdiction has been divided into seven sectors. The first comprises Randfontein's African township, Mohlakeng, which is home to about 50% of Randfontein's population. At the time of my visit, the station was in the process of dividing Mohlakeng into two sectors, each with its own sector manager and dedicated sector patrol van. Sector 2 is responsible for policing Randfontein's coloured township, Toekomsrus, as well as an adjacent informal settlement and a small residential section of the central town. The third sector covers Randfontein's Central Business District. Sectors 4 and 5 are middle class, largely white, suburban areas. The sixth sector is a smallholding district and the seventh a large farming district which extends westwards from the outskirts of Randfontein.

Toekomsrus

Randfontein's Sector 2 was chosen for this study. The bulk of the sector's jurisdiction consists of Toekomsrus, Randfontein's coloured township. Toekomsrus is composed largely of modest, freestanding formal houses. Its layout is typical of 1970s apartheid township-planning: concentric layers of crescent-shaped streets, the outermost layer, Diamant Street, forming a closed circle around the periphery of the township. There are four schools, a post office, a sports ground and a cemetery. It is a low-income, working class community with a high unemployment rate. Aside from Toekomsrus, the northeastern corner of the Sector 2 is home to an informal settlement known as the Dumping Ground. The settlement is quite literally built on a rubbish dump. Many of its 500 or so residents eke out a living sifting through the rubbish for edible food, building materials, and merchandise to sell. Station

management estimates that Sector 2 is home to about 30,000 people. The sector is policed by a fulltime sector manager, one 24-hour sector patrol van and seven sector-dedicated detectives.

The crime profile of Toekomsrus is typical of a small, low-income Gauteng community. With the exception of residential burglary and theft, the sector's priority crimes are all contact crimes and cluster around weekend evenings. In August 2004, for instance, the last month for which stats were available at the time of writing, Toekomsrus reported 19 cases of robbery and armed robbery, 16 of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm (assault GBH), 14 of assault, 22 of residential burglary, six theft out of a motor vehicle, 15 of other theft, and 14 of malicious damage to property. There was one murder and three attempted murders. Most (88%) of reported crimes occurred on weekend evenings. The majority of assault and malicious damage to property arose out of domestic violence complaints. Almost all contact crimes, whether committed in private homes or in public places, involved men under the influence of alcohol. The sector's crime patterns are discussed in more detail below under the section headings 'Identifying patterns and preventing crimes' and 'Saturday night patrol'.

The sector manager

Sector 2's manager has the dream profile of a grassroots community policing leader. He has lived in Toekomsrus since childhood and is a figure of some standing in his community. He recently served for eight years as chairman of the governing body at one of Toekomsrus's schools, is a leading figure in his church, and runs weekly Sunday school classes. From victim support groups, to religious bodies, to neighbourhood watches, there isn't a single organ of civil society in Toekomsrus with which he is not intimately familiar. The combination of his informal civic authority and the authority conferred on him by his uniform is quite extraordinary to witness. Walking down any Toekomsrus street with the sector manager is to observe the work of a man who is, *de facto*, part social worker, part counsellor, part policeman, part community elder. Problems – any and all problems imaginable – follow him like pins to a magnet. A few examples give a sense of the texture of his working life:

- On a routine visit to a primary school, a woman spots the sector manager in the parking lot, drags her ten-year-old son by the scruff of the neck to him, and explains that her son disappears every afternoon and comes home after nine 'o clock at night. The sector manager assumes his diffuse role of policeman/lay counsellor/community elder and quizzes the boy on

what he does in the evenings, where he goes, and why he does not communicate with his mother. He tells the boy that if he or his sector patrol finds him on the street after dusk they will pick him up and put him in the back of their van. "You see," the mother says to her son. "What you are doing is so serious the police are involved now!"

- A few seconds after leaving the school grounds, a woman on the pavement hails the sector manager's van and tells him she is having trouble with her husband. He makes an appointment to visit her that evening. Presumably he will be mediating a family conflict.
- His next stop is the Dumping Ground. As soon as he gets out of his van, about half a dozen residents of the informal settlement, all of whom know him by name, surround him and tell him that members of the street committee have established a kangaroo court and punish people by not allowing them to go to work for a week at a time. They also complain that the street committee is demanding R20 from residents in return for ANC and NNP membership cards. He arranges to hold a community meeting the following day.

Sector managing in this style means that the bulk of his work consists of micro-level problem-solving. Much of his role extends well beyond policing functions and substitutes for the work of other agencies. In the Dumping Ground, for instance, he has called in the Department of Social Development to do a census of children in the informal settlement to identify which kids are not going to school. He has attended a series of meetings with the local Council to negotiate a mutually acceptable relocation site. (The Council wanted to move the Dumping Ground community to an informal settlement in Mohlakeng, but residents refused. An alternative site has to be found.)

Spending time with the Toekomsrus sector manager during the daylight hours deceives you into believing that policing in Toekomsrus has returned to that nostalgic, idealised philosophy of the police officer said to have been practiced in nineteenth century Britain: his job was not to enforce the law as such but to ensure that "the individuals of the state, like members of a well-governed family, are bound to conform their general behaviour to the rules of propriety, good neighbourhood and good manners, and to be decent, industrious and effective in their respective stations."³⁵

The Sector Crime Forum

There is a world of difference, however, between a community that leans on its local police to solve *ad hoc* problems and a community that is prepared to

be mobilised as a partner in preventing crime. Nowhere is this disjuncture as visible as in the problems experienced in constituting a functional and productive Sector Crime Forum (SCF). The first forum, established in early 2004, collapsed in August of that year after the majority of its members stopped attending meetings. The sector manager hastily convened a second forum, consisting largely of a small batch of new people, which began its work in September, a month before the time of writing this monograph.

While the sector manager desperately wants the SCF to be mobilised into crime prevention projects, SCF members themselves appear to understand the forum largely as an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the manner in which they are policed. For instance, when this research was being conducted in Toekomsrus, the SCF was in the process of organising a march in protest against poor policing. The SCF was not entirely sure what, in particular, they were marching against. Each SCF member the researcher interviewed had his or her own personal reason, ranging from distress caused by a murder, to the presence of drug dealers at a school, to a spate of street robberies. At the SCF at which the proposed march was discussed, a ward councillor suggested that the march be convened, not against the police, but against crime. “Do you have a crime prevention plan?” the councillor asked. “What, precisely, are you mobilising the community to do? What exactly do you want from the police?” She was met with blank stares.

The irony is stark. The sector manager’s primary resource is a single patrol van; he desperately needs civilians to play a subsidiary role in policing. Yet the civilians he meets regard themselves as victims of under-resourced policing; their most voluble and energetic campaign is the persistent demand for an extra patrol van!

It appears, from my brief experience, that citizen passivity in Toekomsrus is, in part, symptomatic of the community’s political identity. They are a minority coloured community in a predominantly African and white province. Rightly or wrongly, many regard themselves as victims of discrimination. Many residents I met spoke bitterly of the RDP housing and community centre construction projects in progress in the African township of Mohlakeng across the road. Residents’ relation to the police is symptomatic of the alienation they feel towards state agencies in general.

What is crucial to point out here is that the sector manager’s status as a respected community member does not appear to ameliorate this alienation.

The following comments, made by SCF members, are emblematic. “We trust the sector manager, but we do not trust his superiors.” Or: “The sector manager is doing his best but his white boss won’t give him the resources to do his job.” Or: “The sector manager understands our problems, but his organisation does not.” In other words, community policing in Toekomsrus does not appear to have bridged the divide between residents and the policing bureaucracy. Instead, residents have dragged the sector manager to their side of the bridge! “The sector manager is one of us, not one of them”. He is a respected community member before he is a policeman. Residents simply co-opt their sector manager as a fellow victim. The divide between the community and the police remains, and the task of mobilising residents as crime prevention partners remains inadequate.

Given his status in the area, the current sector manager is better qualified to perform the tasks of community mobilisation than anyone. The problem, in other words, is structural rather than a failure of local leadership. It is buried deep in the political and cultural fabric of the community. Were an outsider, or indeed a less respected community member, appointed as sector manager, he or she would probably have been shunned by residents.

Having said that, there are several solvable problems that fuel residents’ sense of frustration. The sector manager has an office at the satellite station, but it has no furniture, so he is based in town. He does not have his own vehicle, and is often stranded in town for days on end. For residents, the fact that the SAPS cannot make provision for the sector manager to do his work is symptomatic of bureaucratic indifference to their plight.

Second, the SCF believes, rightly or wrongly, that the detective branch fails to inform complainants about their cases and that it treats witnesses indifferently. They believe that laying a criminal charge is thus a painful and alienating experience. This perception could be wrong, but is not helped by the fact that Toekomsrus detectives are based in town several kilometres away, and are thus largely inaccessible. Moving them into the sector they police, so that their offices are accessible to complainants and witnesses, might go a long way.

Identifying crime patterns and preventing crimes

If one of the rationales of sector policing is to have a police force with intimate knowledge of crime patterns, repeat offenders, repeat victims, and

the situational causes of specific crimes, it is undoubtedly working. Every police officer who works in the sector, from the manager, to the sector patrol officers, to detectives, has a rich, nuanced knowledge of the sector's flashpoints, perpetrators and victims. The issue, of course, is translating this knowledge into problem-solving. In some cases, problem-solving is creative and successful. Sometimes it is stymied by limited resources. In other cases, solutions are both very difficult and, arguably, beyond police capacity.

Street lighting and vacant fields

The sector was very quick to determine that street robberies and residential burglaries are clustered around unlit areas of the township. They also found a concentration of robberies on vacant pieces of land which residents use as a shortcut to town. In regard to the first problem, the sector manager is in more or less permanent negotiations with the infrastructure department of the local Council for more street lighting. Dark areas are slowly being lit and the manager is gratified to note that street robberies have retreated into the remaining spaces of the township that remain unlit.

In regard to vacant pieces of land, there is little the police can do with one patrol vehicle and in the absence of efficient community mobilisation. The manager identifies flashpoints and ensures that residents who use the areas in question are alerted. But what he would really like is to constitute sub-sector forums across Toekomsrus and use its members as security guards between 4pm and 7pm at flashpoints. The SCF seems a long way from being able to mobilise a capacity of this nature.

Illegal shebeens

Street robberies, as well as assault and assault GBH cases committed in public places are concentrated around weekend nights and in the vicinity of shebeens. The sector manager keeps a comprehensive list of Toekomsrus's illegal shebeens and compiles a weekly crime profile of each establishment and the areas surrounding it. At least twice a month, high-crime shebeens are raided, their stock of liquor confiscated, their customers searched for illegal firearms, and drunk patrons arrested.

The policing of shebeens is notoriously difficult. Some of its problems are intractable. The following comments are in no sense intended as a criticism of the manner in which Toekomsrus shebeens are policed; rather, they should be viewed as discussion on inherent difficulties and hard choices.

When asked whether they hold formal or informal discussions with illegal shebeen owners, Toekomsrus police officers said: "We do not negotiate with the owners of illegal businesses." Yet this is not strictly speaking true, for the very activity of periodic raids on high-crime shebeens is a form of tacit negotiation. The unspoken trade-off is this: 'We will leave your shebeen alone as long as it does not generate crime. As soon as crime levels around your shebeen rise, we will raid.' When this tacit negotiation works, illegal taverners begin to police their own environments; they deny admission to known offenders, phone the police when they are aware of the presence of weapons on their premises, refuse to serve excessively drunk patrons, and so forth. In Toekomsrus, this process of tacit negotiation does not appear to be particularly effective. The same shebeens crop up on the high-crime list month after month. Shebeens closed down on a Friday night resume normal business the following Friday night. Shebeeners seem to factor the occasional raid into their routine business costs. Raids, in other words, do not appear to constitute a lasting deterrent. The best that can be said is that they reduce crime levels in a particular place on the night they are conducted.

This is not in itself a bad thing, but the current strategy does come at a price. Successful shebeen owners are entrepreneurs in poor communities, wealthy in comparison to their neighbours, and thus community leaders of a sort. Targeting businesses which many community members consider not merely legitimate but respectable, damages community-police relations, tarnishes the reputation of the police, and can even serve as a stimulus to law-breaking. This does not mean that the SAPS should wash its hands of shebeens and refuse to police them. Rather it suggests that there are trade-offs, and that it is often difficult to ascertain whether the crimes prevented by shebeen raids are worth the damage they cause. There are no easy alternatives. Formal negotiations with illegal shebeen owners – over closing time, control of alcohol consumption, crime-monitoring, and so forth – bring a host of problems of their own.

There are no easy solutions, but there is a need for further research. The policing of shebeens is a country-wide problem, shared by stations in all nine provinces. A national research project which distils best and worst practice from across the country would be extremely fruitful.

Saturday night patrol

I joined a Toekomsrus sector patrol shift on a Saturday night, the township's peak crime time. During the course of the shift, the patrol responded to 11

complaints within the sector (as well as four outside the sector): five domestic violence, two residential burglary, two assault GBH, one disturbance of the peace, and one use of a vehicle without the owner's permission. In each and every case, the patrol officers not only knew each complainant and each suspect by name and face, but also his/her family background, criminal profile and personal biography. In two cases, the suspect was no longer at the scene of the complaint; in both cases, the patrol officers found the suspect within the hour. It is difficult to stress how remarkable this is. In my previous experience of shift work before the implementation of sector policing, it was unusual to find a patrol officer who knew any of his complainants. This intimate familiarity with perpetrators and victims has both costs and benefits, as illustrated below.

Hotspots – the “Cold War” syndrome

For the first few hours of the shift, I was puzzled that the patrol officers appeared to be avoiding the two Toekomsrus shebeens with the highest crime profiles. I discovered why when the patrol was dispatched to attend to a complaint at one of them; the mere presence of the van there was a provocation, and triggered the commission of a crime. The complainant was a father whose son had driven his bakkie to the shebeen without his permission. The patrol officers drove to the shebeen, identified the bakkie and its driver, and informed him that they would be escorting him to his father's house. Six young men jumped onto the back of the bakkie, and it drove down the street, the patrol vehicle following close behind.

A few hundred metres from the shebeen, the bakkie turned into a vacant field and came to a halt. The six men jumped off the back, and stood leaning against the bakkie, waiting for the two patrol officers to get out of their vehicle. The moment they did so, the six men formed a circle around them and closed in on the officers menacingly. One of the six men – call him Jakes – had been arrested by one of the officers at the scene – call him John – on a charge of residential burglary the previous year. As the six men closed in on the officers, Jakes began to shout at John. “John,” he said, “it's revenge time. I know where you live. I'm going to kill you. I know where your son goes to school. I'm going to kill him.”

The two officers drew their guns and cautiously made their way back to the vehicle. They called for backup. The six men surrounded the vehicle. Jakes put his head through the window and volleyed another death threat at John.

Within three minutes, two patrol vehicles were approaching the scene at high speed. At the sound of the sirens, the six men dispersed. There were now six police officers at the scene. They spent the next 30 minutes looking for Jakes but couldn't find him.

This story is emblematic of an unintended consequence of sector policing. Repeat offenders get to know sector patrol officers well – too well, it seems. Generalised hostility between offenders and the police is quickly personalised. And as the relationship between offenders and police gets more personal, it escalates. An individual patrol officer is targeted for victimisation; he needs to fight back and assert his authority to defend his personal integrity and his professional space; the perpetrator ups the ante, and so on. It is the classic ‘Cold War’ scenario of mutual escalation. A personal war of attrition between offenders and police cannot be good for policing; it generates, rather than prevents, crime.

Both the patrol officers on the Saturday night shift informed me that they do not frequent public places in Toekomsrus when off duty. They are quickly identified and threatened.

Domestic violence

In all five domestic violence complaints to which they responded, the patrol officers on the Saturday night shift adopted the same procedure. They briefly asked the complainant whether she wanted to lay charges or seek a protection order, and she refused. They then used the discretion available to them under the Domestic Violence Act to take the suspect in for ‘questioning’. Taking him in for ‘questioning’ was really just a means of getting him out the house for a few hours, in the hope that by the time he returned he would be calm and sober. The patrol officers were essentially covering their own backs; if they had left the suspect in the house, and he had committed a crime later in the evening, they would have been blamed for leaving the complainant exposed to danger. Their horizons were very narrow indeed. Their chief concern was to prevent the commission of a crime on their shift.

A harsh judgment of their actions would insist that this is a mechanical and blunt use of domestic violence legislation. A more realistic evaluation would point out that a single sector vehicle policing an area in which domestic violence complaints are laid in rapid succession throughout the night is overburdened.

Informal community 'delict'

The two cases of assault GBH to which the Saturday night patrol responded tell an interesting story. In both cases, although the suspect had left the scene of the complaint by the time the police arrived, the patrol officers not only found him within the hour, but knew enough about his criminal profile to urge the complainants, in the strongest terms, to lay charges. In both cases, the complainants refused to do so. The patrol officers were left feeling immensely frustrated. Since the advent of sector policing, they felt, they have come to know Toekomsrus well enough to have identified a handful of repeat offenders, people they know they should be getting off the streets and locking in jail. Yet they are prevented from doing so because complainants seldom lay charges. Instead, the patrol officers testify, complainants shun the formal justice process and replace it with what is perhaps best termed a system of informal 'delict'. The complainant's family informally 'sues' the perpetrator's family for damages. The range of crimes to which this system applies is inexhaustible. According to patrol officers, such cases range from assault, to rape, to house robbery, to car-jacking.

In this context, sector policing in Toekomsrus may well be playing an intriguing, unexpected, and, by police officers' lights, unacceptable function. Victims of crime are quick to call the police because they know that, since the advent of sector policing, the officers called to the scene are likely to find the suspect. And, should a case be opened, sector detectives are likely to conduct an adequate investigation. Police work thus stands in as a kind of surety, an underwriting of the private and informal justice process. The victim's family will 'sue' the offender's family in the knowledge that, should the offender's family fail to pay up, charges can be laid with every chance of a conviction. The formal justice process thus stands in the wings, ready to be instituted if a party reneges in the informal 'delict' system.

One possible consequence of sector policing, then, is that it will begin to strengthen pre-existing cultures of informal delict. For police officers, the irony is a bitter one. They feel they that their work is belittled and abused, that they are roped into strengthening a culture of informal justice of which they do not approve. At times, they feel they are used as little more than debt collectors. At others, they suspect they are manipulated into attending to an ostensible crime when they are in fact being drawn into a personal dispute, the terms of which are murky. And yet, while police officers' frustration is understandable, it is an open question whether their perspective is wholly correct. If sector policing is strengthening an informal system of dispute

resolution, it is possible that it is assisting that system in playing a deterrence function and in underwriting the non-violent resolution of conflicts.

Crime statistics

Since the advent of sector policing in Toekomsrus, the rate of recorded crime has been decreasing substantially. For instance, in August 2004 the sector's A category crimes were down 13% compared to the same month of the previous year. Yet whether these statistics reflect a decrease in actual crime is open to debate. It is just as likely that the decrease represents a change in recording practices.

A perusal of the stats illustrates that the decreases are accounted for by just two crimes – common assault (which decreased by 50% year-on-year) and assault GBH (which decreased 24% year-on-year). Beginning in mid-2004, the sector began to change its recording practices in regard to these crimes. Instead of recording a crime at the scene of the complaint, officers began to advise the complainant to see a doctor, to get the doctor to fill in a J88 form recording injuries sustained, and then to decide whether to lay a charge. Note that the motive in introducing this practice was not to bring the recorded crime rate down. It was a response to the repeated frustration of opening criminal cases only to see charges dropped 48 hours later. The rationale is that if a complainant still wishes to lay charges the morning after, there is a greater chance that he or she will be prepared to see the criminal justice process through to its completion. The decrease in recorded crime, in other words, may well be more a reflection of sector officers getting to know and anticipate the responses of complainants, than of a drop in crime.

CHAPTER 5

ROODEPOORT (SECTOR 6 – CBD)

The social profile of the Roodepoort policing precinct is a classic exemplar of Johannesburg's urban sprawl. Situated more than 25km from central Johannesburg, it is really something of a mini-city. About 64km in size and home to more than 300,000 people, it consists of 32 residential suburbs, seven informal settlements and low cost housing projects, a central business district, a small manufacturing district and a strip of shopping malls along Ontdekkers Road. It contains, in others words, a cross-section of the social profile of Gauteng. Its single police station is thus responsible for managing the full gamut of the province's crime problems, ranging from the under-regulated character of economic life in informal settlements, to the street robberies and car thefts of the CBD, to the high volumes of residential burglaries in the suburbs.

Two years ago, the station was staffed by about 180 police personnel. On a typical day, two patrol vehicles and one response vehicle were responsible for visible policing in the entire precinct. Complainants in the precinct's informal settlements would often have to wait three or four hours for a police response. Vast zones of Roodepoort were policed only in name. The result is that the precinct has historically placed great reliance on blunt, paramilitary policing, drawing on police numbers from outside to perform back-to-back special operations, casting a net over large chunks of the precinct, conducting door-to-door searches, shebeen raids, and stopping and searching pedestrians.

Today, the Roodepoort precinct is staffed by about 340 personnel. It has divided its jurisdiction into nine sectors, each patrolled by a dedicated, 24-hour vehicle. In talking about the introduction of sector policing one is, before anything else, talking about the injection of sufficient resources to make ordinary policing possible at all.

Roodepoort Sector 6 – three sectors in one

Nonetheless, given Roodepoort's extraordinarily diverse social geography, it is arguable that the precinct remains underpoliced. Despite the fact that it has divided its jurisdiction into nine sectors – more than any of the other West

Rand police stations visited – some of the sectors are palpably far too diverse to operate as effective units of community policing.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Sector 6, the sector covered in this study. While formally dubbed the 'CBD sector' its members are in reality responsible for policing three discreet communities. The first is the CBD itself, which consists of a dense strip of retail, office and light manufacturing space, a taxi rank and a train station, ringed by a cluster of residential streets. To the east of the CBD lie the formerly white residential suburbs of Creswell Park and Georgia, and to the west, the miniscule coloured township of Davidsonville. Much of the social diversity of Roodepoort, then, is condensed into the 3km² of Sector 6.

To expect the residents of a poverty-stricken township – whose chief concerns are contact crimes committed on the streets and in their homes – to form a single SCF with suburban residents who are concerned mainly with house breaking and vehicle theft, is to stretch the idea of community policing beyond its limits. The result is that something has to give. In Sector 6, it is Davidsonville, which is represented in the SCF by a single pastor. Indeed, the SCF consists largely of businesspeople from the CBD and white, primarily middle-aged and elderly residents of Creswell Park. The issues that animate the SCF thus reflect its partial and limited composition: long grass in parkland areas, neglected gardening and landscaping on street islands, suspicious vehicles driving through the suburbs, a neighbourhood bar that generates too much late-night noise.

Given resource limitations, subdividing Sector 6 into smaller sectors may not be feasible. But there is nothing to prevent the sector from convening a second SCF, dedicated exclusively to the residents and the concerns of Davidsonville. In the absence of this, the danger is that Davidsonville will become the dark zone on the sector's map, an area the police occasionally patrol, but enter largely to respond to complaints, to raid its single illegal shebeen, and to police street gambling.

Policing Sector 6

Despite its diversity of people and geography, and the problems experienced in constituting a representative SCF, the sector's bewildering array of crime patterns are policed with extraordinary competence. Indeed, the policing of the sector is a signal lesson in the way rudimentary problem-analysis and problem-solving can fast become integrated into the routine activities of daily policing.

The CBD

In the CBD itself, one of the central crime problems is the theft of vehicles off the main streets. The sector's primary strategy in this regard has been the establishment of a network of car guards, recruited from the ranks of the unemployed. A bank has sponsored luminous bibs making registered guards highly visible. The sector manager interviews and screens new recruits, checks their fingerprints on a morpho-touch machine to ensure that they have no criminal record, and re-deploys them every week in line with the previous week's vehicle theft patterns. While their security guard function is important, their primary value is as a source of information. They are on the streets at least eight hours a day and are told to spend their time watching and listening. If they do their jobs well, it is unlikely that vehicle thieves scouting the area will go unnoticed. They are instructed to call the police on Sector 6's dedicated cell phone the moment a piece of information, or a suspicion, passes their way. The manager immediately dispatches a patrol car to the area to interview the guard. Visible policing thus becomes less random and is trained on the specific block, street corner and time where a crime is likely to be committed. A guard who allows more than a couple of vehicle thefts to happen on his watch is assumed to be shirking responsibility and risks losing his bib, and thus his income.

The CBD information network extends well beyond registered car guards. The security details at supermarkets, bank guards, indeed, anybody whose job it is to spend the bulk of his or her time watching and listening on the streets, is enlisted into providing information. It is a simple substitute to and guide for visible policing in a large sector with only one vehicle. And it works. In the first three-month period after the launch of the sector, reported vehicle theft decreased by 10%, and reported theft out of motor vehicles by 52%. By the end of the second three-month period after the launch of the sector, vehicle theft appeared to be down almost 50%.

A second crime common in the CBD is street robbery. The sector has both a taxi rank and a train station. The bulk of street robberies occur on the pedestrian routes taxi and train commuters use to and from the rank and the station. In regard to the policing of this crime, the sector is somewhat hamstrung by the nature and the limits of the resources at its disposal. Vehicle patrols neither prevent street robberies nor apprehend street robbers. A police vehicle can be seen from a mile off, and a street robber can be sure that it will be gone ten minutes later. Foot, bicycle and plain-clothes patrols are the only effective form of policing street robberies. The sector does not have the

resources to conduct these on a regular basis. Police officers from across the precinct are encouraged to work overtime and are occasionally enlisted into CBD foot patrols and stop-and-search operations. But this is a limited and sporadic capacity. In an attempt to overcome this resource limitation, the sector manager enlisted a CBD businessman to sponsor the purchase of two bicycles and a bicycle rack, which will be attached to the back of Sector 6's patrol car. For a couple of hours a day, Sector 6's patrol officers will leave their car and conduct bicycle patrols in the CBD. In the meantime, the lack of adequate resources shows: in the first three-month period after the launch of the sector, the rate of common robbery and robbery with aggravating circumstances remained almost unchanged.

Robberies committed with a firearm trigger a more meticulous response from the sector manager. In each case, the *modus operandi* is carefully recorded, witnesses are interviewed to provide profiles, people on the streets are quizzed about what they have seen and heard. Once the sector manager has profiled a determinate group of repeat offenders, their descriptions are relayed to appropriate civilians. For instance, the sector has a close relationship with the chairman of the local taxi association. In one instance in mid-2004, a group that had robbed several cell phone shops over a three-week period was identified as having hijacked a taxi. Their profiles were given to the local taxi association chairman, and the association itself identified the suspect within a matter of days.

The sector is also meticulous in monitoring crime-inducing places and people, and in enlisting social agencies and by-law enforcers in tackling potential problems. For instance, a large office block in the centre of the CBD, which had stood empty for several years, was occupied early in 2004 by a large group of homeless people. The health inspector was called in, the illegal residents moved to a shelter, and the building boarded. In 2003, the welfare department was called to deal with a group of children who lived on the streets of the CBD. Some of the children's parents were traced, and they were taken home. Others were moved to places of shelter.

Housebreaking in the suburbs

In the ring of residential streets around the CBD and in the suburban areas to the east, the biggest crime problem is residential burglary, committed primarily on weekday mornings. Here, one of the sector's primary strategies is simply to make itself as widely known and as visible as possible among residents, with the aim of enlisting resident support in the identification of

suspicious vehicles and people. The sector makes as much mileage as possible out of its efficient service. Response time to complaints is seldom longer than five minutes, usually closer to three. Crimes scenes are dealt with meticulously and complainants carefully interviewed. Each complainant is given a bright sticker or leaflet with the sector's dedicated 24-hour cell phone number on it, and urged not to hesitate to use it, whether for a complaint, a query, or to give information. The complainant is assured that if he or she uses the cell number, rather than dialling 10111, a five-minute response time is guaranteed. The stickers and pamphlets are produced en masse and distributed to every house in the suburbs. A questionnaire on sector policing is currently being prepared, which will also be distributed throughout the suburbs via the SCF. The idea is not simply to find ideas to improve sector policing, but to ensure that every resident knows the sector cell phone number, what it's for, and uses it.

In a sense, the sector is simply trading on the novelty of quality service. Eighteen months ago, it was not unusual for one response vehicle to cover the whole of Roodepoort, and a complainant from a suburb like Creswell Park would be lucky to get a police response to her complaint within half an hour. The experience of having a dedicated sector patrol which shows that it is serious about following up on the information it receives, and demonstrates the will to do what it can to prevent burglary, is a novelty the sector stretches to its limits to win goodwill among residents.

The sector also ensures that its patrol is as visible and as intrusive as possible to potential housebreakers. The suburbs are patrolled aggressively. Cars loaded with goods on the backseat are routinely stopped and searched, the occupants fingerprinted. Patrol officers do immediate licence checks on cars parked on the side of the road. The net is spread wide, but the idea is that potential housebreakers should know that if they enter the area, they stand a good chance of finding themselves in a face-to-face encounter with the patrol.

By-law and trade law enforcement

In contrast to the other two West Rand sectors studied, much of Roodepoort's Sector 6 is a formally white area. Its commercial and trade activity is thus located in the formal economy and is regulated by by-laws and trade law. The sector is vigilant in using these laws to monitor and restrict the criminal market place.

Four hotels and six legal taverns are located in the sector. Each is carefully monitored for the patterns of crime associated with it – street robberies,

fighting, disturbance of the peace, and so forth. The owners and clients of problem taverns and hotels are badgered. Closing times are rigorously enforced. Taverns are raided, inebriated patrons arrested for drunkenness and owners arrested for allowing their patrons to inebriate themselves. Stop-and-search operations are conducted outside tavern premises, and the traffic department is called in to do breathalyser tests on car drivers leaving taverns. Problem taverns, in other words, are neither pleasant to own nor to patronise. In one case, a persistently problematic tavern was closed down and after the sector police discovered that the tavern manager had not paid his rent for several months, and put pressure on his landlord to force payment.

Each hotel in the sector is also subject to sporadic cordon-and-search operations, in which the entire hotel premises, including every guestroom, is searched. These searches occasionally net people wanted on criminal charges and very occasionally an illegal firearm. Their value, though, is measured more in their deterrent effect than in the people and goods they net. The idea is to shine a light in every possible dark space in the sector which can be used as infrastructure for criminal activity.

Finally, all second hand traders in the area – pawn shops, second-hand car dealers, and so forth – are registered, and trade law is strictly enforced. Pawn dealers, for instance, are required to keep of a photocopied record of the I.D. book of every seller and the name and address of every buyer. Their records and registers are checked every month. Of course, most of the household goods, cell phones and cars stolen in Sector 6 are sold elsewhere, but enforcing trade law at least restricts the potential for the establishment of stolen goods markets in the sector itself.

Paramilitary and community policing juxtaposed

In the middle of the Roodepoort study, the officers patrolling Sector 6 were pulled out of their sector for several hours on a Saturday afternoon to help co-ordinate a massive cordon-and-search operation. The operation involved the search of each shack and a great number of residents at a large informal settlement in the suburb of Princess situated in Roodepoort's Sector 4. The operation mobilised air support, a mounted patrol, a fleet of armoured vehicles and several dozen police officers fitted with defensive armour and armed with shotguns and short-range weapons. To all intents and purposes, it was a large scale paramilitary operation. Events in the months leading up to the operation explain its rationale and are worth recording here.

During the first half of 2004, attempts were made by the Roodepoort police to establish a SCF in Princess. A group of residents that had historically controlled the informal settlement by force – demanding protection money from shebeens, and claiming to be the settlement’s political leadership – insinuated itself into the emerging SCF and attempted to take it over. Some time in July, a sector patrol vehicle entered the settlement in response to a complaint at a shebeen controlled by the settlement’s local mafia. When the responding officer attempted to make an arrest, he was attacked and injured. The following week, the shebeen in question was raided. The police conducting the raid had their vehicles pelted with stones and had to retreat from the settlement. This cycle continued in the weeks that followed. Police officers who entered the settlement were routinely attacked and were forced to withdraw.

This sequence of events suggests that there was a deliberate attempt to make the area unpoliceable. And it has worked. In August, the Roodepoort precinct took a decision not to respond to complaints in Princess. Complainants were instructed to meet police officers at designated points outside the perimeter of the settlement. Nor is it a coincidence that the attempt to render policing impossible was made directly after efforts to introduce sector policing in the informal settlement. The SAPS has been reduced to policing the area with the only means left to it. Month after month, a large quasi-military contingent invades the area and casts a giant fishing net over it, hoping to find guns, stolen goods and people with outstanding warrants against them. Every shack is searched. Scores of residents are subjected to electronic fingerprint tests. Shebeens are raided, their owners arrested and their stock destroyed. Both sides regroup in preparation for the next confrontation.

The SAPS has in essence resigned itself to the fact that normal policing will not be possible in Princess for the foreseeable future. It cannot leave the area entirely unpoliced, as it is a haven for people who commit crimes in the Roodepoort area. It must enter the settlement in force to look for guns and stolen goods. Yet the SAPS is also aware that wave after wave of paramilitary operations will neither drive the criminal formations that control the area out nor pave the way for sector policing. It is not so much an endgame as a stalemate, one for which there is little prospect of resolution. All in all, the story is one of a successful sabotage campaign against the introduction of sector policing.

CHAPTER 6 KAGISO (SECTOR 4)

Kagiso is a West Rand township with a population of 190,000 people. The station precinct extends beyond the boundaries of the township itself and covers a population of 230,000. Included in the precinct’s jurisdiction is the industrial district of Chamdor, which is home to more than 100 factories, a large mine workers’ hostel and three informal settlements. To the southeast of Kagiso are the settlements of Rietvallei and Azaadville, which also fall within the Kagiso police precinct.

The station area is divided into five sectors. The first three were formed in April 2003, the fourth in August and the fifth in December of the same year. As in all West Rand police precincts, sectors were launched sequentially in line with incremental increases in personnel and infrastructure. In the months preceding the launch of the first three sectors, the station had a staff complement of 134. At time of writing, October 2004, it stands at more than 200. As in Roodepoort, 18 months ago the entire precinct was policed by two patrol vans and a single response vehicle. Today, each of the five sectors has its own dedicated patrol and response vehicle.

Sector demarcation is determined partly by social geography. Chamdor and its three informal settlements, for instance, comprise one sector. Rietvallei and Azaadville comprise another. In Kagiso proper, though, council ward boundaries are the primary determinant of sector boundaries. Ward councillors have intensive and formalised relationships with their constituents, and ward meetings are an established institution in Kagiso. They thus form natural units for SCFs. On average, each SCF has about six wards within its boundaries. The SCF consists mainly of ward representatives, and the wards themselves operate as *de facto* sub-SCF structures. In other words, there is an efficient, pre-existing civic infrastructure which community policing has tapped. The result is that the SCF problems experienced in Toekomsrus and in Roodepoort’s Sector 6 – under-representation in Roodepoort Sector 6, a constituency seemingly immune to mobilisation into crime prevention partnerships in Toekomsrus – do not exist in Kagiso. Sector policing inherited a community well practiced in conversing with state

agencies at grassroots level. As we shall see below, the result is that sector managers have a range of problem-solving capacities at their disposal not available in the other two sectors studied.

Kagiso Sector 4

Kagiso's Sector 4 is a large, densely populated section of Kagiso proper comprising six council wards and a population of at least 50,000. Kagiso Avenue, the township's longest thoroughfare, forms the sector's eastern boundary. Its southern boundary is Randfontein Road, a regional artery that runs across the width of the West Rand. A large swathe of mine property lies to the sector's north, and a stretch of empty veld to its west.

Despite its population density, the social composition, and thus the crime patterns, of Sector 4 are fairly diverse. Father Gerald and Riverside are relatively affluent districts. Most residents are employed and thus vacate the township during the daylight hours of the week, leaving their appliance-filled homes vulnerable to burglary. Batswana, Extension Eight and Extension Six are far poorer, and carry the burden of high unemployment levels and high volumes of liquor consumption. Contact crimes, ranging from street robberies to a steady stream of domestic violence complaints, are high.

Targeted patrols

Kagiso's Sector 4 was undoubtedly the most impressively policed of the West Rand policing sectors studied. There are several reasons for this, some regarding the nature of the sector's social geography and crime patterns, others regarding the eagerness with which police officers have taken to problem-solving, and to the more intimate relationship with civilians that sector policing has brought in its wake.

The first indication of the sector's level of competence is the character of its patrol patterns. The sector has entirely eliminated random patrolling. It is no exaggeration to say that each minute of every shift during the periods in which the patrol was not responding to a complaint was spent in carefully delineated hotspots, the tasks and activities of each member goal-oriented and planned. For instance, the most common crime committed on weekday mornings is residential burglary in the districts of Father Gerald and Riverview. Every week, the sector manager requests an updated burglary-plotting map from the SAPS' Crime Information and Analysis Centre, and marks the addresses, streets and blocks most prone to repeat victimisation. Morning patrols concentrate on

these identified hotspots, and they are policed aggressively. Idling cars are pulled over and searched. Pedestrians carrying bags are stopped and searched. Houses with inadequate security are noted and the sector manager allots a time in her diary to visit the owner. The addresses of houses that appear to be vacant are noted. Neighbours are questioned about whether anyone lives there. If the house has been repossessed by a bank, the bank is contacted and encouraged either to sell the property or to employ a security guard. Occasionally, the officers leave their vehicle and conduct foot patrols on vacant pieces of veld in the vicinity of hotspots. In the hotspots themselves, the officers open each municipal dustbin on the street to see whether it is being used as a temporary repository for stolen goods. The patrol repeats these procedures two or three times a morning.

Another example of a weekday morning crime: the sector manager is aware of three discrete spots in her sector used by vehicle thieves to deposit cars stolen from the CBD and suburbs of Krugersdorp. She is aware that stolen cars are never deposited there for longer than a couple of hours; the thieves leave the cars for a while in the event that they are fitted with trackers, and then come back to retrieve them. She is also aware that of the stolen cars found at these three points in the last year, more than 90% are Volkswagen Golfs and Polos. So, the three points are patrolled every couple of hours. All Golfs and Polos spotted in the sector have their licence plates radioed to the control room to check whether they are stolen. The sector's informer network is asked why only two models of stolen vehicles are brought into the sector. Are these vehicles feeding a single market? Are they stripped somewhere inside the sector or taken elsewhere?

A third morning activity: SCF members have informed the sector manager that a house in Sector 4 is being used as a brothel and drug retail centre. The house is visited in the mid-morning, while its occupants are still asleep. It is searched for drugs and firearms, two teenaged girls are asked for the names and addresses of their parents. The sector manager makes a note to check out the title deed and contact the owner.

A new crime trend had recently been identified in Sector 4 – a spate of armed house robberies, conducted between seven and ten in the evenings, around Extension Eight. The *modus operandi* in each case is much the same. The perpetrators enter the sector on foot, hold the home owner up at gunpoint at his or her front door, load the victim's car with household appliances, and make off in the direction of Kagiso Avenue. As with house burglary, the sector

manager requests a crime map from the Crime Information and Analysis Centre, and tries to identify hotspots. She then identifies routes between the hotspots and Kagiso Avenue, and patrols the requisite areas between 7 and 10 in the evenings. Groups of young men entering Sector 4 on foot are stopped and searched for firearms. Vehicles leaving the sector are stopped and searched for firearms and stolen goods.

Late at night and in the early hours of the morning, especially on weekends, the biggest crime problems on the sector's streets are assault, robbery and armed robbery. The policing strategy here is simple and blunt – it is about taking guns and drunken people off the streets. The blocks around shebeens are patrolled intensively. Pedestrians are stopped indiscriminately and searched for guns. (On a Friday night, for instance, the patrol searches up to 20 pedestrians in the space of an hour). Anybody on the streets who is demonstrably drunk is arrested and spends the night in the station's police cells.

Each problem shebeen in the sector is profiled and each is policed differently according to its character. For instance, the shebeen in the area most closely associated with gun-related crimes was watched and profiled. The sector manager noted that most patrons come from outside the sector and arrive in cars, not on foot. The manager believes that raiding the shebeen is not the most effective way of dealing with the problem; a raid will merely disrupt trade for a few days after which business will return to normal. Instead, she targets patrons, rather than the shebeen owners, in an attempt to make their visit to the shebeen as unpleasant and dangerous as possible. The traffic department has been contacted and has agreed to conduct a one-person operation outside the shebeen every weekend evening over a three-week period. The driver of every car leaving the shebeen will be stopped, forced to undergo a breathalyser test, and his car searched. Inside the shebeen itself, every patron will be searched for firearms and every inebriated patron arrested. The idea is to scare away the shebeen's clientele, particularly those who carry firearms.

From targeted patrols to problem-solving

While the targeted patrols described above are performed with admirable efficiency, they are seldom performed with enthusiasm, for two reasons. First, they are repetitive, routine and boring. Second, while they do net results, they nonetheless constitute a blunt and labour-intensive method of policing crimes. The Sector 4 patrol officers are acutely aware that there is a world of

difference between the broad-brushstroke activity of identifying and patrolling geographic hotspots, and the far more nuanced and difficult endeavour of identifying the situational causes of micro crime patterns. The sector manager thus constantly attempts to dissolve her hotspots into smaller patterns, each attached to a situational cause. She is sometimes successful, sometimes not. In regard to residential burglary in Father Gerald, for instance, the sector has been unable to get beyond the routine task of identifying repeat victims. But in other instances, the sector has managed to transcend the mere mapping of hotspots, identified simple problems and executed simple solutions. Here are two examples.

In mid-2004, a street on the western boundary of Sector 4 experienced a spate of house burglaries. Sector patrol officers interviewed every home owner on the street, all those who used the street during the day, and the sector's informers. They discovered that a single group was responsible for the spate of burglaries. Two men would spend several hours of each day concealed behind a wall at the end of the street and watch to see when residents left their houses. They would make a cell phone call, would be joined half an hour or so later by a red bakkie, break into an empty house and load the bakkie with stolen goods. Ownership of the bakkie was traced to a resident of Swanneville, a settlement adjacent to Sector 4. The owner was found and questioned. The residents of the street were called to a meeting, informed of the group's *modus operandi* and formed into a street watch. Every time a resident planned to leave her house empty for longer than a couple of hours, she would contact the street watch and her house would be scouted intermittently. The street watch was also instructed to phone sector officers on their dedicated cell phone whenever strangers were seen lingering in the vicinity of the street. Since these measures were taken, house burglaries on the street have ceased.

In another example, the sector identified a pedestrian passageway on which people were repeatedly robbed. Sector patrol officers surmised that the perpetrators were among three groups that regularly held dice games in the streets around the passageway. They periodically broke up groups of gamblers and arrested them on petty offences, but they knew that this was more of a cat-and-mouse game than a lasting solution. They believed that the best course of action would be to link specific gamblers to specific crimes. They profiled four or five gamblers, collected all the dockets of robberies committed in the passageway and re-interviewed all complainants. Through this process, charges were laid against four of the people they had profiled and all were convicted.

These examples of problem-solving are neither complex nor demand a great deal of intellectual labour. They are the product, more than anything else, of perseverance and hard work. In the context of a one-year-old policing sector, though, they are impressive. Points on the sector map previously marked in red as hotspots, to be patrolled repetitively and aggressively, have been replaced by the identification of specific problems with specific causes. The more a sector can substitute problem-solving for targeted patrolling, the better its work.

The sector's capacity to identify and solve problems is greatly assisted by the fact that its SCF is well attended, active, and voluble. More often than not, the SCF is adept at identifying environmental and situation causes of crimes to be attended to by state agencies other than the police. For instance, the SCF identified the fact that the maintenance of street lights in the sector was poor. The municipality's infrastructure department was invited to attend the following SCF meeting. A cell phone number was distributed to all residents in the sector to report street lights out of order. The municipality undertook to respond to every complaint within a week.

SCF members argued persistently during the course of 2004 that the recurring problem of rapes and robberies in alleyways and pedestrian paths would be best resolved by environmental design rather than police patrols. The SCF drew up draft plans for the creation of small, enclosed municipal parks in the areas around alleyways, thus closing off crime-prone thoroughfares. The municipality was slow to respond to the plans. The problem was taken to SAPS Area office, which undertook to enter into negotiations with Mogale City.

The SCF has also undertaken to keep a register of unoccupied houses in the sector and to earmark those that have been vandalised for immediate attention. The register is delivered to the appropriate ward councillor, who is responsible for tracking and contacting the relevant title deed holders.

Qualitative changes in the nature of complaints and routine police activities

One of the most significant changes to have occurred as a result of the introduction of sector policing is perhaps best observed during downtime – quiet times when violent and predatory crime complaints are few and sector police are conducting routine patrols. Take, for instance, a one-hour period early on a Wednesday morning. At 7:30am, a call comes over the radio that

a group of boys is vandalising a public phone on Kagiso Avenue. An old man is threatening to shoot them. The patrol van arrives on the scene two or three minutes later. In the event, no vandalism is taking place – just an ugly altercation. The youngsters are herded into the back of the van and driven to their primary school. The patrol officers phone their parents from the principal's office to tell them what their kids have been up to instead of going to school.

At 8:15, the patrol gets a call on its sector cell phone from the principal at a local high school. The patrol is at his office six or seven minutes later. He says there is a sweets vendor operating from a caravan on the public road behind the school whom he suspects is selling drugs to his students. The patrol officers stroll across the school grounds, walk around the back of the caravan, and take the vendor by surprise. They search him, the caravan and his merchandise and find no drugs. They get him to sign a written undertaking to move his caravan into his front yard, several blocks away, within 48 hours.

Half an hour later, the patrol comes across a teenaged boy crossing the road with a large prefab wall strung across his shoulders. They stop him, ask where he got the sheet, make him accompany them to the site where he found it. Their concern is not merely that he stole it, but that there might be a vacant property in their sector which they are not aware of.

Kagiso police may have received these kinds of complaints before the introduction of sector policing. But with a single response vehicle covering the entire township, it is unlikely that they had the time or the inclination to respond to them. In other words, the better the police service gets, and the closer to their clients police officers become, the more they will be called upon to police quality of life complaints, emerging crises, micro conflicts, and risk factors identified by civilians.

Kagiso Sector 4 patrol officers took to this sort of work both with enthusiasm and with a great deal of emotion. Officers were quick to sense that their formal policing tools were too blunt to deal adequately with complex interpersonal problems; they became lay-counsellors, instructors on civil law, financial advisors, and, at times, disciplinarians. In other words, they defined their role as police officers broadly, rather than narrowly. Their conduct reflected their belief that crime reduction and law enforcement are just the beginning, rather than the whole of their vocation. They viewed complaints as problems to be solved, whether or not the complaint involved the commission of a crime.

Whether this sort of work leads to a reduction in crime, or just a style of policing too invasive of privacy, is a point that has been debated since the inception of criminology and is unlikely ever to be resolved. But there can be little doubt that it is new in a context like Kagiso. In the history of South African township policing, the simplest, most rudimentary function of police work has never been adequately present: the guaranteed presence of a force vested with the authority to provide solutions to emerging crises – all and any crises. As simple and mundane as this function is, it is also more or less new in townships like Kagiso. Its contribution to wellbeing can never be adequately measured, but its existence is surely invaluable.

CONCLUSION

Sector policing, it was noted in Chapter One, emerged in the early 1970s as one among a host of experiments to address a crisis in American policing. Police leaders and scholars had gone right back to basics and asked what it is that the police do to reduce crime. COP, POP, risk factor identification and targeted patrols were four answers. There is a fifth answer. It is, simply, that the primary functions police perform have very little to do with preventing crime or enforcing law, and never will.

This position has been eloquently stated by the sociologist Egon Bittner. He argues that the vocation of the police is neither to prevent crimes nor to apprehend those who have committed them. Rather, their vocation is to intervene in and provide provisional solutions to emergencies – any emergencies whatsoever, whether or not they involve lawbreaking. Whether it is to pull a drowning person out of the water, to prevent someone from jumping off the roof of a building, to save people in a burning structure, or, indeed, to respond to a robbery in progress, the role of the police is to respond immediately to any situation “as long as it could be said that it involved *something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-now!*”³⁶

Indeed, Bittner argues, to the extent that the police use their powers of law enforcement, such as making an arrest, they only do so tactically and instrumentally, to carry out their true vocation, which is “to handle the situation”:

While it does happen occasionally that patrolmen arrest some person merely because they have probable cause to believe that he has committed crimes, this is not the way all but a small fraction of arrests come about. In the typical case the formal charge *justifies* the arrest a patrolman makes but is *not* the *reason* for it. The actual reason is located in a domain of considerations ... referred as the need to ‘handle the situation,’ and invoking the law is merely a device whereby this is sometimes accomplished.³⁷

One need not agree with Bittner's conclusions to take his argument seriously. The introduction of sector policing on the West Rand has undoubtedly mobilised police officers into devoting far more time, energy and thought to crime prevention work than they ever have in the past. Some of this work has undoubtedly been successful, whether in the form of taking guns off the streets, mobilising civilians to guard public places, or hardening a target via environmental redesign. Yet the introduction of sector policing also appears to have triggered a subtle and incremental shift in the relationship between police officers and civilians. As sector police get to know, and get to be known in their sectors, so they begin to receive, and spend far more time responding to a wider array of complaints.

Restated in Bittner's language, police are asked to respond to a larger, more varied, and more intimate range of emerging crises, whether these entail law-breaking or not. Moreover, police officers increasingly find themselves called to manage the same crises involving the same people. As the relationship between police officers and civilians grows more intimate, so officers are called upon to exercise a host of skills and competences, many of which entail qualities such as emotional self-restraint, and reflection on their own prejudices.

It is difficult to teach officers these qualities in their monthly sector presentations. These presentations are primarily about how to be better at crime reduction, not how to manage a more intimate relationship with civilians in crisis. Indeed, as Bittner argues, a police officer's craft is very difficult to teach at all:

While lawyers, physicians, teachers, social workers, and clergymen also deal with critical problems, they have bodies of technical knowledge or elaborate schemes of norms to guide them in their respective tasks. But in police work there exists little more than an inchoate lore, and most of what a policeman needs to know to do his work he has to learn on his own. Thus, what ultimately gets done depends primarily on the individual officer's perspicacity, judiciousness and initiative.³⁸

Primarily, but not entirely. It is possible to detect patterns, trends, and discrete categories of crisis to which West Rand officers are increasingly called upon to respond. And as patterns emerge, it is possible to think about which sort of police responses make problems better, and which make them worse. This

study involved spending only ten 12-hour shifts on the West Rand, and so the following list is not exhaustive. Nor has its representivity been properly tested. Yet what can be said with some certainty is that while none of the problems identified below are new, the introduction of sector policing has changed many police officers' experience of them. The following discussion does not propose hard and fast solutions; it merely points to areas in regard to which further thought may be advisable.

Informal 'delict'

It was pointed out in Chapter Four that an informal system of restorative justice exists in many West Rand communities (and, indeed, in many communities across South Africa). As sector policing brings a surer and more predictable police response to complaints, so it is likely that civilians will increasingly use the justice process as a form of surety – as a means to underwrite systems of private and informal delict. The justice process is kept in the wings, to be triggered in the event that the offending party reneges. Police officers resent this syndrome immensely. They regard it as a corruption and abuse of their work.

But in the absence of a sudden and unlikely transformation of local cultures, this syndrome is to remain, and sector officers will have to manage it. What to do with it? It has both benign and malignant possibilities. At its worst, it drags officers into the tardy role of unwilling and unwitting debt collectors. It forces officers to respond to complaints which have been fabricated for the purposes of blackmail and extortion. Yet, at its best, police officers will assist in underwriting informal systems of non-violent conflict resolution.

How does a police force ensure that the latter possibility predominates rather than the former? Are officers merely to rely upon instinct, accumulated experience, and familiarity with particular complainants? Or is there a place for policy and legislative intervention? For instance, should there be crimes for which a charge, once laid, cannot be withdrawn by the complainant? Alternatively, should the police informally put pressure on complainants to delay the laying of charges, as is happening in regard to some crime categories in Randfontein?

Illegal shebeens

The SAPS must police illegal shebeens because alcohol consumption is associated with violent crime. But the costs of policing shebeens – in the form

of escalating conflict between civilians and police – are large, the benefits usually of brief duration. At Area level, much thought has gone into how to police shebeens for specific risk factors, instead of relying solely on a monotonous cycle of raids which may induce as much crime as it prevents. It is not clear, though, that the subtlety of this thinking has always reached ground level. Some police officers regard shebeens as enemy territory to be policed with indiscriminate hostility. Others regard illegal shebeens as legitimate and necessary community institutions, and resent having to police them at all. Neither attitude is good for the policing of shebeens, or for the relationship between police and civilians. The policing of shebeens, it seems, is still shaped too much by the prejudices and predilections of police officers, and too little by measured, analytical thinking. In other words, precisely because the shebeen question is so difficult, the paradigm of problem-oriented policing has yet to permeate police culture in this specific arena.

Mutual escalation

As the same officers begin to patrol the same places, weekend after weekend, so the relationship between police and offenders becomes increasingly personalised. For those who do not want a police presence in their neighbourhood, knowing officers individually becomes a powerful tool. Police officers can be repeatedly provoked until they break the law, or sufficiently intimidated to desist from patrolling certain areas. In one instance in Toekomsrus, it appeared that this relationship of personalised, mutual hostility rendered the very presence of the police a provocation, and led to the escalation of tension, the commission of crimes, and the diversion of police resources from other areas.

It is difficult to offer solutions to this problem. It is, perhaps, an inevitable by-product of sector policing. The police must inevitably respond by targeting provocative individuals for action, but this is precisely what provocative individuals want. Police resources are diverted into continuing, low-intensity conflicts. The meaning of POP is cynically inverted. Rather than solving crime problems, police are coaxed and teased into becoming a protagonist in an escalating crime problem.

Domestic violence

The policing of domestic violence is governed by legislation. The Domestic Violence Act spells out in some detail what officers should do at the scene of a complaint, and provides them with an appropriate ambit in which to

exercise their powers of discretion. Nonetheless, within the ambit of law, a variety of different *modus operandi* remain open to police officers. The manner in which this discretionary space is filled is often shaped by the officer's character, values and beliefs. The degree of contempt with which an officer treats an offender in front of his family; whether, and with how much urgency, an officer persuades a complainant to lay charges, or, alternatively, to seek a protection order; to what degree the presence of children in the house changes the officer's behaviour and demeanour; the extent to which an officer is concerned only with whether a crime will be committed on his shift, rather than the long term consequences of his actions.

Research in other parts of the world shows that all of these aspects of an officer's demeanour at the scene of a complaint either exacerbate or ameliorate domestic violence.³⁹ The research is context-specific and its findings cannot simply be transferred from one environment to another. In South Africa, research on police conduct in private homes is scant, and police management is thus not in a position to write policy in this regard.

Now is probably a good time to begin that research. On the West Rand, the introduction of sector policing will probably have two effects. First, the same officers get called to the same addresses again and again. Second, as the police response to domestic violence becomes quicker, more efficient and more predictable, the volume of complaints should rise. In fairness to both police officers and civilians, much more should be known about the long term consequences of an increased police presence in conflict-ridden homes.

NOTES

- 1 Indeed, where professional personnel are in short supply, the Draft National Instruction allows for the recruitment of police reservists into sector policing functions.
- 2 Seven sector policing experiments were conducted in U.S. cities between 1972 and 1973. See, inter alia, Alfred I. Shwartz and Summer N. Clarren, *Evaluation of Cincinnati's Community Sector Team Policing Program: A Progress Report After One Year*, Working Paper 3005-18, Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1975; Lawrence W. Sherman, Catherine H. Milton and Thomas V. Kelly, *Team Policing: Seven Case Studies*, Washington D.C.: The Police Foundation, 1973.
- 3 FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1963-1973.
- 4 See, for instance, Albert J. Reiss, *The Police and the Public*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.
- 5 See George Kelling, Tony Pate, Duane Dieckman and Charles Brown, *The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment*, Washington D.C.: The Police Foundation, 1974.
- 6 Carl Klockars (ed), *Thinking about Police*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.
- 7 Lawrence Sherman, Patrick Gartin and Michael Buerger, Hot Spots of Predatory Crime: Routine Activities and the Criminology of Place, *Criminology* 27, 1989, 27-55.
- 8 Lawrence Sherman, The Police, in James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (eds), *Crime*, San Francisco: ICS Press, 1995, 331-332.
- 9 Sherman, The Police, op cit, 333.
- 10 Sherman, The Police, op cit, 337. For the classic statement of the thesis that policing misdemeanour crimes reduces the level of serious crimes see James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, Broken Windows: The Police and Neighbourhood Safety, *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1982, 28-39.
- 11 John E. Eck and Edward R. Maquire, Have Changes in Policing Reduced Violent Crime? An Assessment of the Evidence, in Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman (eds), *The Crime Drop in America*, Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 207-265.
- 12 Andres Villaveces, Peter Cummings, Victoria Espitia, Thomas Koepsell, Barbara McKnight and Arthur Kellerman, Effect of a Ban on Carrying Firearms on Homicide Rates in Two Colombian Cities, *JAMA*, 1 March 2000, 1205-1209.
- 13 David H. Bayley, *Policing in America: Assessment and Prospects*, Washington D.C.: The Police Foundation, 1998, 3-4.
- 14 The classic and original statement of the idea of POP is Herman Goldstein, Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach, *Crime and Delinquency* 25, 1979, 236-258.
- 15 Jerry V. Wilson, *Convenience Store Robberies: The Gainesville, Fla. 2-Clerk Law*, Washington D.C.: Crime Control Research Corporation, 1990.
- 16 Malcolm K. Sparrow, Mark H. Moore and David M. Kennedy, *Beyond 911: A New Era for Policing*, New York: Basic Books, 1990.
- 17 Sherman, The Police, op cit, 344.
- 18 James Q. Wilson, *Thinking About Crime* revised edition, Vintage: New York, 1985, 109.
- 19 Bill Dixon and Janine Rauch, *Sector Policing: Origins and Prospects*, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2004, 57.
- 20 See, for instance, *Community Policing in Chicago, Year Seven: An Interim Report*, Chicago: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2000; George Kelling and Anne Marie Rocheleau, *Boston's Comprehensive Communities Program: A Case Study, 2004*, Washington D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 2004.
- 21 Dixon and Rauch, *Sector Policing*, op cit 46.
- 22 For a taste of the difficulties entailed in determining which, if any, policing models have been responsible for reducing crime, see Eck and Maquire, op cit.
- 23 John Van Maanen, The Asshole, in *Justice Quarterly* 1(1), 1978, 75-90.
- 24 James Q. Wilson, op cit 69.
- 25 Goldstein, op cit, 236.
- 26 Ronald V. Clarke, *Problem Oriented Policing: Case Studies*, Washington D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 2002, 2.
- 27 For a thorough account of policing in South Africa since 1994, see Mark Shaw, *Crime and Policing in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Under Fire*, Cape Town: David Philip, 2002.
- 28 Fivaz reveals illiteracy level in the police force, *Daily Dispatch*, 27 September 1999.
- 29 See Ted Leggett, The State of Crime and Policing, in S. Buhlungu, J. Daniel, J. Lutchman and R. Southall (eds) *The State of the Nation: South Africa 2004/2005*, HSRC: Pretoria, forthcoming, 156-159.
- 30 Shaw, op cit, 76.
- 31 Leggett, op cit, 165.
- 32 The restructuring of the detective branch on the West Rand is not examined in this monograph. It deserves its own comprehensive study.
- 33 Interview with Senior Superintendent Peche, 26 October 2004.
- 34 Indeed, the West Rand appears to have learned the lessons of the earliest team-based sector policing projects in the United States in the early 1970s. There, sector-based teams were detached from the main body of the station-level organisation; in many cases, they simply constituted an extra limb which soon withered and died.
- 35 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 4, Oxford: Clarendon, undated.
- 36 Egon Bittner, *Aspects of Police Work*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990, 249.
- 37 Ibid, 245.
- 38 Ibid, 261-2.
- 39 See, in particular, Lawrence Sherman and Douglas Smith, Legal and Informal Control of Domestic Violence, in *American Sociological Review* 57, 1992, 680-690.