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#### Abstract

*Contesting crime and ensuring safety* have been on the national and local political agendas in many European countries for quite some time. Public attention shifted more and more to this topic the last years because of rising crimes rates, but also because people felt more unsafe, especially in larger cities. The evolution of local safety policy can be seen as a collective effort to stand up to new challenges in tackling crime and safety issues, restoring public confidence in the process. In our paper we present a framework for the comparative analysis of local safety policy. In this framework not only policy learning and policy transfer are important, but also the interplay between policy development and political and societal dynamics. We illustrate our approach by comparing the development of local safety policy in two cities: Antwerp (Belgium) and Rotterdam (The Netherlands).

Title: Cities, Citizens and Safety

Subtitle: Comparative analysis of public safety policy of Antwerp and Rotterdam

## 1 Introduction

Providing public safety is one of the core governmental tasks. Governments failing to adequately produce public safety are faced with loss of public confidence. Providing public safety has become a Herculean task for many a government. Crime and unsafety seem to be wicked problems, which are impossible to adequately cope with. Simultaneously, pressure from society on governments to perform better has grown and is hanging over their heads as an electoral sword of Damocles. Increasing safety has dominated the public agenda in many countries. Citizens seek safety and demand tough governmental action against crime. Interaction between societal demands and government's response is imperative.

In this paper we focus on new arrangements aimed at increasing the effectiveness and the quality of surfacing local public safety programs. In an effort to regain diminished public confidence and to restore lost connections between society and governments, a new paradigm comes to existence in the way crime and public safety are dealt with. We believe this development is not limited to The Netherlands.

These expectations have been a starting point for a comparative study on local public safety policy of cities in different countries in Western Europe. The aim of this research is to analyze the developments of these local policies and to gain insight in the factors that underlie success or failure of specific policies in order to give recommendations for good practices. We have conducted a comparative research in Rotterdam and Antwerp, both frontrunners in public safety policy in respectively The Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders). This explorative pilot study will be extended to other Western European cities.

In this paper we first outline the contours of the conceptual frame for our research, followed by presentation and analysis of our findings. Finally, in the conclusions we discuss the viability of our research frame.

## 2 Conceptual frame

### *From Government to Governance*

Government has traditionally been placed in the centre of societal developments and the perils threatening it. In response to this classical government paradigm a new steering paradigm emerged which is the so-called *governance paradigm*. The shift from government towards governance implies that government is not an entity but a conglomerate of actors, that government

is not the sole actor that attempts to influence societal developments, and that government interventions are interventions in policy networks, in which power, resource dependency, and strategic behaviour are vital elements (Bekkers c.s., 2007).

Central governments rely upon other actors, sectors and other governmental layers. Organizations are supposed to self-organize and self-regulate along with other organizations, sectors and levels of government, out of which new forms of coordinated or collective action may arise (Bekkers c.s., 2007). These shifts mark the end of the governmental monopoly on providing public services and the Genesis of an era of cooperation.

#### *Assessing changes in policy; the stratification of policy systems*

Paradigms are relatively difficult to change, and take a long time to come into existence. However, not all parts of a paradigm are equally resistant to change. Sabatier (1993) refers to policy systems as belief systems that consist of three layers; an abstract deep core, a near (policy) core and secondary aspects. The deep core consists of fundamental normative positions and values that define the personal philosophy that applies to all policy areas. The policy core, which is near the deep core, consists of basic strategies for achieving normative positions of the deep core. Converting the core is far from easy, but surfacing anomalies will aid that process. Secondary aspects comprise a multitude of instrumental decisions and information searches necessary to implement the policy core. Since these are specific to a certain policy area they are relatively easy to alter. The three layers are hierarchical, from more abstract to more specific, with a decreasing resistance to change.

#### *First-second and third order policy changes*

Sabatier's distinction in different layers in policy systems resembles Hall's (1993) distinction in first, second and third order changes in policy systems. First order changes are marginal and display an incremental nature: that is, instrument levels are set within existing policies and with existing instruments. These changes are frequent and hardly visible. Second order changes are adjustments of settings and instruments, within existing policies and are usually rather visible. First and second order changes cohere with normal policy making, that is, more or less incremental routinized decision making. In contrast, third order changes are exceptional, very influential, and disjunctive. They refer to shifting policy paradigms. Shifting policy paradigms correlate with ideas and standards with regards to instruments, goals and overall terms of a program, and the way of explaining the world. First and second order changes do not automatically lead to third order changes.

Sabatier and Hall both assume that anomalies will occur once a policy system ceases to be in sync with reality. At first, first order changes will be brought about in the shallow part of the policy system (or secondary aspects). When performance keeps falling back, the authority of the existing policy system comes into question and other policy systems come within reach. Serious

performance crises can eventually trigger paradigm changes. The paradigm shifts are likely to involve the accumulation of anomalies, experimentation with new forms of policy, and policy failures that initiate competition between alternative policy systems that offer better solutions (Hall, 1993).

Hall argues that policy change coheres with both learning and powering (sufficient political power to bring about significant policy changes, a new political coalition). In his view, long-term incremental policy development is alternated with short-term sudden periods in which strategic change of a paradigm takes place.

Sabatier focuses on policy subsystems and internal dynamics within a subsystem and perturbations in the broader political system and socioeconomic environment. The latter are necessary for changes in the core of a policy within the subsystem. With regard to the internal dynamics the so-called Advocacy Coalitions Frameworks of Sabatier are important, as vehicles for policy changes. Members of such a coalition seek improved understanding of the world in order to further the policy objects. In addition to this, system wide coalitions and changes in socioeconomic conditions in a fluctuating world are important. The Advocacy Coalition framework is based on the premise that policy oriented learning is important for policy change, but changes in the core aspects of the policy are the result of perturbations in the non-cognitive external factors, such as macroeconomic conditions with the rise of new governing coalitions. Policy change results from advocacy coalitions' attempts to translate the policy core and secondary aspects of their belief systems into policy programs.

*Policy dynamics; explaining the interaction between policy, society and politics*

Policy changes do not occur in a vacuum. Interaction between policy, politics and society determines to a large extent the rhythm and the appearance of policy shifts. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) attempt to explain these dynamics in their punctuated equilibrium theory, in which processes of agenda setting and issue (re)definition are key issues.

Empirically, policy systems are continually being created and destroyed. Periods of incremental change are often a prelude for accelerated changes. In periods of continuity, policy is entrusted to experts operating within closed networks, unnoticed by the public eye. Policy monopolies are important in periods of policy stability. Policy monopolies reflect a monopoly on a certain kind of 'understanding concerning the policy of interest, and an institutional arrangement that reinforces that understanding.' (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993: 6) Issues are defined within a technocratic, non-political framework, making debate unnecessary. Experts claim the monopoly on expertise with regards to a certain field of policy; the questions to be decided are complex technical matters with marginal social impact.

The destruction of the policy monopoly coincides with a change in intensities of interest, affecting people, political leaders, government agencies and private institutions. Contending images arise and policy monopolies can weaken or

even disintegrate, because other people become involved, with their own interests. In politics, political actors can highlight new or previously under-lighted dimensions of problems. When new attributes become significant, i.e. issues are redefined, more substantial change is possible.

Issue definitions are brought in by policy entrepreneurs seeking certain goals, who raise public attention by new issue definitions (framing) or by redefining old issues (reframing). Issue change tends to occur in periods of high general attention to policy. In these periods issues are subject of a broad debate outside the experts' networks, both in politics and society.

The degree of public indifference decreases when agendas are set. Issues tend to be low on the public and media agenda during periods of stability, but high in other periods. That is, in agenda setting partial equilibriums in politics can be disturbed (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). If an issue is out in the open because it receives ample attention, it also becomes a partisan issue between political parties and it is no longer left to experts in policy subsystems. The issues change from micro into macro politics. In periods of heightened attention new participants appear on the scene because of new policy proposals.

#### *Policy learning, policy transfer and the spread of policies*

Policy development requires collective learning – policy learning – although other factors are considered equally, if not more, important. Hall (1993: 269) defines policy learning as ‘a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information.’ However, policy learning can also arise from drawing lessons from elsewhere, other countries or other policy fields, in a quest for readymade solutions for wicked policy problems. Newmark (2002) describes drawing lessons as forms of policy transfer, in which conscious external knowledge of policies, programs, and ideas are applied in domestic policy development. Policy diffusion, contrary to policy transfer, denotes the spread of policies from one governmental entity to another where structural and modernizing factors account for policy adoption, for example organizational, geographical and internal determinant factors (Newmark, 2002).

#### *In short*

In our comparative analysis of the development of local public safety policy we focus upon:

- Shifts in policy content that may have occurred in time; do we see, as we expect, shifts from government to governance, a paradigmatic transition?
- The nature of these changes: first, second or third order changes;
- The role of policy learning, policy transfer and policy diffusion;
- Shifts in policy instruments in different cities that occur in time and similarities and differences in the deployment of policy instruments ;

- The interaction between policy development, politics and (local) society, in particular to the role of policy entrepreneurs and issue (re) definition in agenda setting;
- Convergence or divergence in public safety policies of Antwerp and Rotterdam.

### 3 Policy development in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

#### *National thinking about safety*

The orthodox approach focuses on the use of repressive means by police and justice systems. In 1985 the Ministry of Justice drew up a policy document called *Society and Crime*. This document is often considered a watershed in thinking about local safety. This document sketched the contours of an integrated approach of crime and safety, a key characteristic of Dutch safety policy. In subsequent years the national government facilitated local governments to develop their own local integrated public safety policy. The first policy documents contained a new vision on crime and safety. Later on, especially in the early nineties, the focus was more on implementation of public safety policy, and the national government designed strategies that were copied from the large cities in The Netherlands, which were the first cities to be confronted with an increase in and change of crime. Recent years show a significant shift in the national government's role, especially the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Kingdom relations: the national government adapted a steering role.

#### *Rotterdam*

Marks and Van Sluis (2007) have analyzed the shifts that have taken place in the evolution of safety policy in Rotterdam. The following periods can be distinguished:

*1980-1993* – Until 1993 the traditional repressive approach is dominant. In the eighties the first projects aimed at fighting vandalism are started.

*1994-1998* – In contrast to the preceding period, characterized as contingency oriented, this period has a more programmatic approach towards safety. Partners at municipal district level, i.e. municipal government, police and local justice department, formulated district safety plans based on the so-called RISC-model, which helped identify the safety problems that had to be tackled. Project managers at city level and in the municipal districts were appointed to implement the program. Ergo, a bottom-up approach combined with intensified administrative steering at city level.

*1999-2002* – The national government published the first integrated safety program in 1999 (BZK 1999). This and a widespread societal and political demand for policy change triggered Rotterdam's government to formulate its own integrated public safety program. In 2001 the mayor initiated a conference

to remould Rotterdam's safety policy and provide ample safety for all districts, within the framework of a five-year program. Based on a programmatic and integrated approach to public safety issues, significant and concrete results were imperative to restore public confidence.

Among the program's key elements is implementation and execution at the lowest performable level, i.e. in the sixty-two district levels. A special alderman for safety was appointed at city level. Together with the mayor, the chief public prosecutor and the chief of policy, he was part of the Steering Committee on Safety (SCS), responsible for directing this safety program. The SCS decentralized the direct governance over the implementation and execution of the five-year program to a new Safety Program Office (SPO). The SPO ensures that execution at the (municipal) district level matches city policy. The five-year program is a guideline for the SPO in the implementation of public safety policy and the formulation of district safety plans together with the municipal districts (AEF, 2002). District safety plans are analytical and practical guidelines for apt problem solving. These plans were checked at city level for their feasibility. Given that city level approval was a prerequisite for granting city funds, feasibility was pre-checked.

*2002-2006 – Liveable Rotterdam*, a political party founded in 2001 by late Pim Fortyun, set fighting crime and ensuring safety high on the political agenda. Following 2002's election, Liveable Rotterdam became the largest party in the city council. Meanwhile, public safety gained significance on many a party program. The new city executive board, in which Liveable Rotterdam participated, fine-tuned, intensified and extended the Rotterdam integrated public safety program (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2002), characterized by the variety of policy instruments deployed; a mix of area-oriented and individual-oriented measures, aimed at for example criminal drug addicts. Records were made of each person, including their history, and offered a conditional way out. Prison sentence followed if they relapsed into their old behaviour. In the area-oriented approach interdisciplinary intervention teams are deployed to check up on illegal habitation and other offences. Supervision on streets has been introduced in some areas. Also the city mariner is introduced; a high ranking civil servant with authority to command municipal departments in problematic districts. He serves as a kind of crisis manager to resolve acute problems on so-called hot spots: areas experiencing serious problems.

The biannual Safety Index (between 1 and 10) shows how safe or unsafe a district and the city as a whole has become and classifies them into 5 categories and is used to evaluate the five year plan at city and district level.

Another hallmark of Rotterdam's approach is the application of performance steering and results-based agreements. Municipal districts for example must meet certain concrete targets, although they have significant freedom in implementing their own safety program. The format for these plans is obligatory for each municipal district, however. Contract management, transparency and measurable targets provide stimuli for a better performance.

*2006-2009* – In 2006 a new municipal executive board has been formed without Liveable Rotterdam and with the Social-Democratic Party. The five-year safety program is incrementally adjusted and improved. New elements are

the fight against terrorist threats, radicalism and extremism. SPO's position was strengthened by its transformation into a new municipal Directorate for Safety.

#### **4 Policy development in Antwerp, Belgium**

##### *Flanders*

A closer look at the development of national policy with regard to local safety in Flanders shows a similar, but delayed pattern. In Flanders, the first initiatives of the federal governments coincide with initiatives in the leading cities of Mechelen and Antwerp. The first draft of a national policy frame for an integrated local approach of crime and safety is published years later than in The Netherlands. In 2004 the Flemish government publishes a federal document on integrated safety (Kadernota IV, 2004). Concrete national priorities are set for the first time. These priorities have to be worked out in integrated local safety programs, which only get funded when they match the federal priorities. At the federal level, integrated safety policy and the federal policy plan for the police are adjusted. Projects targeting specific local problems receive funding through for instance the federal Large City Policy. In Flanders steering of local safety at the national level has been intensified. There has been policy development at the national level into the direction of a more integrated approach.

##### *Antwerp*

Compared to Rotterdam, Antwerp -frontrunner in Flanders- lagged behind in formulating local safety policy. In a 2004 policy document (Stadsplan Veilig, 2004) the former safety policy is reviewed, leading to the conclusion that local safety policy was aimed at an integrated approach at all levels, but was too ambitious in tackling too many problems simultaneously. Coordinating and directing all these projects adequately failed in the absence of a shared vision by relevant actors.

Since 2003 a new direction has been chosen. A new vision was formulated, indicating concrete priorities and spearheads. Steering became the main challenge for local government, that is, to point the direction, to indicate the targets and to facilitate proper implementation. Each actor has his own tasks and responsibilities and is accountable for proper performance of his tasks. The city opted for a dual track: an area-oriented approach and a persons-oriented approach. In problem areas (hot spots) neighbourhood directors were appointed to coordinate activities of other agencies involved in improving liveability in the area. Minor second offenders, drug addicts, and problem families were targeted with the so-called hotshots approach.

This new direction was supported through the establishment of a new administrative unit, the Unit of Integrated Safety, under the command of the



newly created aldermanship for safety. This unit was an important vehicle for the implementation of citywide programs like the hotspots and hotshots approach.

## 5 Analysis

### *Paradigm changes*

In both Rotterdam and Antwerp, or rather The Netherlands and Flanders, we see a gradual but paradigmatic change from a traditional approach of safety to a more modern approach. This is a third order change because it touches upon the hard core of existing policy systems. In this new paradigm, fighting crime and providing safety requires a broad approach in which repression and prevention are integrated and the police are considered a last resort. Providing safety has increasingly become co-production in partnerships between public and private actors and between agencies and citizens. Also a belief exists that to produce public safety the commitment of citizens and organization is indispensable (see Newburn, 2003).

### *National and local developments*

The interaction between policy development at national level and local level has been rather complex in both The Netherlands and in Flanders. Occasionally local policy development took the lead, while at other times it lagged behind national policy development. New policies have often been developed in big cities, often the first to be confronted with emerging safety problems.

Altogether, in both The Netherlands and Flanders we see a shift from safety government to safety governance. At the national level we observe a change from unconditional (financial) facilitating local governments in dealing with societal perils such as crime and safety, towards obligatory contracts. That is, top-down steering has been intensified. In this respect, both countries converge. However, in The Netherlands this strategy is accompanied by a facilitating strategy, which includes providing know-how and supporting research to local governments. Also public and private police together with other agencies and citizens tackle crime and safety in loosely coupled networks and alliances. Network steering is an important part of this approach. Networks are created to solve problems like disturbances of the peace, troubles around pubs or juvenile delinquency. In these networks, a prime role is reserved for the local government. The local government's role changes into a more indirect, facilitating or directing one, sometimes referred to as governance-at-a distance (Terpstra and Kouwenhoven, 2004).

The transition into this new paradigm took place during the last decade of the previous century as a kind of *silent revolution*, that is, out of the public eye, as a product of discussions in rather closed networks of professionals and policy makers. Policy learning played an important role. This development took place

in both The Netherlands and Flanders, but the Dutch development preceded the Flemish one. In this respect policy transfer has occurred. Antwerp copied existing policies from Rotterdam, but allowed for alterations, and was inspired by other examples like the UK (see Newmark, 2002).

#### *Incremental policy learning and policy acceleration*

The way local safety policy has evolved in the two cities is by no means linear or incremental. After the introduction of an integrated approach the policy development in Rotterdam has been of a rather incremental nature, based on learning from past experience. However, around the turn of the century there has been a short period of rapid policy change, induced by the appearance of policy entrepreneurs who changed the political agenda. Liveable Rotterdam's redefinition of safety generated much support for a sharpened focus on concretely applicable and measurable results and for more accountability of city magistrates. Due to the electoral success of Liveable Rotterdam at the municipal elections of 2002, resulting in a shift in the political power relations, a window of opportunity for significant change emerged. Noteworthy is the role played by Rotterdam's mayor as a policy entrepreneur. Taking advantage of the momentum in which safety spearheaded the public agenda, he introduced a more long-term programmatic approach to local safety. Besides his political leadership, and the support of the chief public prosecutor and the chief of police, the managerial leadership of the SPO was an important factor underlying the turn local safety policy took.

Contrary to the public's perception, the change in the Rotterdam safety policy was less drastic and could be better classified as a second order change. That is, during this period the focus shifted towards implementation and results: the policy was strengthened. As the *Rekenkamer Rotterdam* (2005) puts it: there has been a lot of continuation in Rotterdam. Even though during this period rhetoric and symbolism played a significant role, the real paradigmatic change took place the decade before.

#### *Policy entrepreneurs: Political leadership and managerial power*

Antwerp's mayor revealed himself as a dedicated policy entrepreneur and played a crucial role in the shift of safety policy. In Antwerp the political agenda on safety has been dominated by the *Vlaams Belang* (a nationalistic party). But through his charisma the mayor of Antwerp has been an important factor in bringing *Vlaams Belang's* electoral march forward to a virtual standstill by redefining the public safety issue and taking over the lead in agenda-setting. Safety policies did change but without *Vlaams Belang* being represented in the city council, due to the *Cordon Sanitaire*. However, their points of view were integrated in the political programs of other parties, bolstering sufficient political support for the change in public safety policies. Mayor Patrick Jansen's ambition is to keep people together, which is in line with the approach of the mayor of Amsterdam. He considers this more important than a good performance based on hard figures. The safety policy in

Antwerp has been implemented by the Unit of Integrated Safety, under the command of the alderman for safety, and since the position's termination, under the mayor's command. This unit became the central axis in the implementation of safety policy, like the SPO has been in Rotterdam. Again, in Antwerp, the change in safety policy was buoyed by a combination of (charismatic) political leadership, managerial power at the administrative level and (political and social) momentum.

In Antwerp the change in policy has been initiated because of the disappointing result with the former integrated approach that proved to be over-ambitious and ineffective, in combination with too little steering by the local government (Bruggeman, 2006). Also the rise of public safety on the political agenda was a stimulus. Citizens demanded a better performance and stronger steering of local government. More specific and concrete targets were set, based on a selection of spearheads in policy. The new policy has fewer pretensions and is more pragmatic with regard to results and revenues, aimed at strengthening the local government's steering role, effectively heralding the end of the era in which safety policy was too unconditional and dominated by private initiatives.

#### *Intensified steering capacity of local government*

In both cities we see an urge for strengthening the steering role of local government. However, in Rotterdam this development was paralleled with an urge to executive safety policy as a business with a sharp focus on results, based on result based agreements, monitored by the Safety Index. In Antwerp this businesslike approach is rejected, because of fear of perverse effects (see De Bruijn, 2001).

Both cities implemented a similar mix of policy instruments, consisting of preventive and repressive means, a combination of area-oriented and persons-oriented approaches and a mix of central and decentralized policy instruments. Both cities aim at cohesion in the instruments they use. But in Antwerp the repressive and zero-tolerance oriented approach, typical for Rotterdam, is rejected. An important difference between the two cities is the deployment of the city mariner, who has no equivalent in Antwerp, where only neighbourhood directors are active.

## **6 Conclusions**

The evolution of local safety policy can be seen as a collective effort to stand up to new challenges in tackling crime and safety issues, restoring public confidence in the process. By means of our research frame we can interpret the development of local safety policy as a rational enterprise, a learning process, in which the actors involved learn from mistakes in the past and from experience. In this perspective policy learning, policy transfer and the drawing of lessons locally and nationally but also across borders, are important.

Nonetheless, our research frame sheds lights on other dimensions of policy development and policy change as well. It helps us recognize the phenomenon of policy change and to differentiate various types of changes, some of which are paradigmatic, touching upon core elements of policy systems. This type of change is rather exceptional. Paradigmatic changes cohere with macro developments like the changing role of government over time, long-term changes in citizens' preferences and rising expectations about the level of societal safety and governmental options. Also the rise and changed nature of crime plays an important role. On the other hand, seemingly paradigmatic changes can effectively demonstrate a second order nature, touching merely upon the instruments being deployed.

Political dynamics, agenda-setting processes, and the appearance of policy entrepreneurs who define or redefine safety issues add to the unpredictability and unsteadiness of policy processes and cause sudden accelerations. The importance of political leadership in combination with managerial stamina in the local administration has been demonstrated.

As an outcome, safety policy can take different directions and subsequently converge or diverge. In the cases we have studied, we see differences as well as similarities. On the whole, convergence seems to have the upper hand. This is not a priori the case, but the possible convergence of divergence has to be empirically established.

Finally, our case studies illustrate the necessity of studying the dynamics of policy development in relation to its societal and political context. A similar statement can be made about studying success or failure of policies. A question still to be answered is whether our research frame enables us to adequately assess success or failure of local safety policies.

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