UNIVERSITEIT
GENT

biblio.ugent.be

This item is the archived peer-reviewed author-version of:

Title "Safety: everybody's concern, everybody's duty"? Questioning the significance of 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' for people's perception of safety.

Author: Van den Herrewegen, Evelien

In: Cools, M., De Ruyver, B., Easton, M., Pauwels, L., Ponsaers, P., Vande Walle, G., Vander Beken, T., Vander Laenen, F., Vermeulen, G., Vynckier, G. (Eds.), *Governance of Security Research Papers (Vol 3). Safety, Societal Problems and Citizens' Perceptions. New Empirical Data, Theories and Analyses.* (pp. 85-108). Antwerpen: Maklu (ISBN 978-90-466-0327-7)

To refer to or to cite this work, please use the citation to the published version:

Van den Herrewegen, E. (2010). "Safety: everybody's concern, everybody's duty"? Questioning the significance of 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' for people's perception of safety. In M. Cools, B. De Ruyver, M. Easton, L. Pauwels, P. Ponsaers, G. Vande Walle, T. Vander Beken, F. Vander Laenen, G. Vermeulen, G. Vynckier (Eds.), *Governance of Security Research Papers (Vol 3). Safety, Societal Problems and Citizens' Perceptions. New Empirical Data, Theories and Analyses* (pp. 85-108). Antwerpen: Maklu.

"Safety: everybody's concern, everybody's duty"?

Questioning the significance of 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' for people's perception of safety.

Evelien Van den Herrewegen[1]

[Abstract]

The catchphrase "Safety: everybody's concern, everybody's duty" implies that in order to safe-guard the social order and safety we, the professionals as well as the public, need to unite and work together. In this sense, social connectedness and civic engagement are perceived as the prime sources to counter crime and people's perception of safety. In this paper, we will first clarify that the references to 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' in criminal policy discourse are the result of the development of 'perception of safety' as an autonomous subject for research and policy. Policymakers have come to see (in)security as a phenomenon that needs to be explained by taking into account crime and non-crime related factors. Next, we will describe the emergence of 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' as natural barriers against crime and other deviant behaviour and as prerequisites for people's perception of safety. In the third part, however, we will point out that both concepts are not necessarily positively interlinked with people's 'perception of safety'. Moreover we will indicate that activating civic engagement and stimulating social cohesion can even be detrimental to people's perception of safety. In the final part we will suggest that in order to understand people's perception of safety, we need to consider the process of identity formation and social categorization.

## 1	Introduction

"Safety: everybody's concern, everybody's duty"[2] is a catchphrase launched by the King Baudouin Foundation and is an appeal to policymakers and the public to tackle 'unsafety' in a local manner and in collaboration with citizens[3]. As such, the King Baudouin Foundation suggests that the active involvement of citizens is vital to the governance of safety. Active citizens are believed to behave in a more responsible manner, which in turn would result in feelings of safety. Active citizens are furthermore sensitive to the safety of others. The concept of active citizenship implies that individuals interact with one another so that mutual trust and feelings of social connectedness among citizens can emerge. 'Active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' are thus closely interwoven, and both concepts are believed to be essential to people's 'perception of safety'.

In this paper, we will question the assumption that 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' are prerequisites for people to feel safe. First, we will outline that the emergence of 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' in the governance of safety is the result of the current conceptualization of 'fear of crime'. Fear of crime is perceived as a product of concerns and doubts about one's position and identity in late modernity (part 1). Next, we will discuss current theories that suggest that these

---

[2] Veiligheid: een zaak van iedereen, een taak voor iedereen.
[3] http://www.kbs-frb.be/pressitem.aspx?id=177526&LangType=2067 [20/01/2009]

concerns and doubts can be countered by re-embedding people into the community. In this context, civic engagement and social integration are viewed as the new tools to improve people's wellbeing, which in turn would result in more positive perceptions of safety (part 2). However, we will question these alleged positive linkages between 'perception of safety', 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' and point out that the three concepts might even counteract (part 3). Finally, an alternative perspective is suggested that acknowledges the importance of 'identity' in understanding people's perception of safety. This perspective first and foremost recognizes that people's identity is not limited to their social integration and involvement in the local community. Consequently, research or policy initiatives that focus on 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' are perhaps not fully addressing the complexity of people's perception of safety.

2   Perception of safety: genealogy, aetiology and autonomization

2.1   Genealogy and aetiology of 'fear of crime'

Historically the interest for people's fears or perceptions concerning crime and unsafety is relatively new. In his book 'Inventing fear of crime' Murray Lee (2007) situates its origins in North-America in the 1960s . He systematically illustrates that 'fear of crime' was not a phenomenon waiting out there to be discovered, but that its emergence was a result of interactions between political willingness to act on behalf of the 'people' (especially the growing interest in victims) and developments in social scientific enquiries (especially the victim crime survey). Both developments initiated a feedback loop that helped to sustain and intensify the interest in fear of crime.

Since its 'discovery' in 1965, research on 'fear of crime' has been driven by the search for causation: 'what causes fear of crime?' and 'how can we control this fear of crime?' (Lee, 2007). There is, however, still no scientific consensus about the main features and causes of 'fear of crime'. This quest for the causes of 'fear of crime' is even hardened by a strange paradox that emerged from the very first victim surveys that contained questions measuring people's attitudes and opinions about safety such as: 'How safe do you feel walking in your neighbourhood at night?' In brief, the paradox states that people with the lowest risk of criminal victimization, exhibit the highest fear (e.g. women and elderly), whereas people with a higher risk of victimization have less fear (e.g. young men) (Vanderveen, 2006). This discrepancy between the objectively measured risk of victimization (e.g. calculated by means of crime statistics) and the subjectively measured fear of crime (by means of victim crime surveys) lead to a debate about the rationality of people's fear of crime and instigated the question whether 'fear of crime' was still a legitimate research object or an appropriate focus for policy initiatives. Nonetheless, despite this legitimization crisis, research and policy never ceased trying to understand and control this 'fear of crime', or more broadly 'perceptions of safety'. On the contrary, 'fear of crime' evolved as an important niche within the criminological domain[4], as well as in political circles.

In order to answer the 'fear of crime' paradox, researchers broadened their scope and included non-criminal factors to explain feelings of unsafety. The inclusion of non-criminal factors led to a plethora of variables that are believed to explain, in a direct or indirect manner, people's feelings and worries about crime. Researchers who synthesized forty years of etiological 'fear of crime' research, distinguish *four broad dimensions in the theoretical perspectives on fear of crime*: "vulnerability", "victimization experience", "the environment" and "psychological factors". We will briefly discuss these four dimensions, but for a more thorough review we refer to Hale (1996), Ditton & Farrall (2000) but also Vanderveen (2006) and Pleysier (2009).

---

[4] In his renowned review Chris Hale (1996) noted that over 200 reports dealt with the subject 'fear of crime'. In 2000 Ditton and Farrall did an online research and located 837 entries. In 2007 Lee dragged up 242.000 'fear of crime' entries using the Google search engine. Now, in 2009, googling the term "fear of crime" (with double quotation marks) discloses 480.000 hits and in Google Scholar "fear of crime" reveals 24.300 links. In this sense 'fear of crime' is measuring up with other prominent criminological phenomena such as "hooliganism" (18.400 hits), "money laundering" (41.700 hits), "organized crime" (64.900 hits), "violent crime" (94. 600 hits).

The first two dimensions, "vulnerability", "victimization experience", include variables discovered and analyzed in the early days of fear of crime research. In the first dimension, the thesis is that certain populations are physically (e.g women, elderly) and/or socially (e.g ethnic minorities, long term unemployement) more vulnerable to crime and fear of crime. The second dimension explores the direct or indirect victimization (e.g friends, relatives) and its consequences for people's fear of crime. In the third dimension the physical and/or social organization of one's neighbourhood is considered to be detrimental for people's perception of safety.

The final dimension in the aetiology of 'fear of crime' is relatively new and is perceived as the new avenue for researchers to pursue. The assumption is that in order to account for 'fear of crime', a symbiosis of sociological and socio-psychological factors is needed. As such, the fourth dimension integrates the theses of the three other dimensions and adds the wide range of socio-psychological factors. (Jackson, 2004; Pleysier, 2009). In this dimension, 'fear of crime' is not solely considered as a direct emotional reaction to crime or other deviant behavior, but as a manifestation of a broader sense of non-well-being. As such, 'fear of crime' has an 'experiential' component that refers to everyday experiences with crime (victimization) and the lack of resources to cope with these experiences (vulnerability and social disorganization). Yet, additionally, there is also a 'expressive' component in which 'fear of crime' is a result of individual's attitudes and opinions about society as a whole.

In sum, the perpetual search for the causes of people's fear of crime and the acknowledgement that a focus on crime-related experiences is insufficient to account for or to control people's fear of crime, stimulated research and policy to approach 'fear of crime' as something which is not necessarily crime related. Particularly the fourth dimension in the aetiology of 'fear of crime' influenced this disentanglement process.

2.2   Autonomization of ' fear of crime'

The autonomization of 'fear of crime' is a process that is visible in the other dimensions of the aetiology of fear of crime, as people's divergent and seemingly irrational responses to crime were explained by taking into consideration non-crime related individual characteristics and/or environmental factors. However, it is precisely in the fourth dimension that 'fear of crime' totally disentangles itself from crime experience, and is considered to be an expression of people's attitude and concerns about society. In this sense, the term 'perception of safety' is preferred because it captures more accurately the idea that people's reaction to safety is the outcome of an interpretative process in which a variety of feelings, rationalizations, information resources, experiences, and so forth might come into play.

This autonomization process and the evolution of 'fear of crime' towards 'perception of safety' are important developments, rooted in very influential sociological theories that describe our society as 'reflexive modernity' (Beck, 1992), 'liquid modernity' (Bauman, 2000) or 'radicalized modernity' (Giddens, 1990). These sociological theories are not only relevant for the autonomization process but also for the incorporation of 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' as important concepts to understand and control 'perception of safety'.

2.2.1   Perception of safety as a late modern concept

Although their analyses stem from divergent backgrounds, sociologists such as Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens, criticize adherents of 'postmodernity' that presume the ending of the modernization process and the dawning of a new era. Contemporary modernity, they argue, rather involves a continuation or even a radicalization of the modernization process: as such "*we are witnessing not the end but the* beginning *of modernity – that is, of a modernity* beyond *its classical industrial design.*"(Beck, 1992: 10). In this sense, the term 'late modernity' is preferred as it neatly encapsulates the continuity of the modern ideas and projects. However, this continuing process of modernization not only liberates and creates opportunities but also produces new risks and uncertainties.: "*Continuity becomes the 'cause' of discontinuity. People are* set free *from the certainties and*

modes of living of the industrial epoch (…) The system of coordinates in which life and thinking are fastened in industrial modernity – the axes of gender, family and occupation, the belief in science and progress – begins to shake, and a new twilight of opportunities and hazards comes into existence." (Beck, 1992: 14-15).

This new found freedom of choice is not without risk because it also involves a rising awareness of the individual's responsibility for the consequences and the limits that these decisions entail. In the words of Bauman (2000: 37-38): *The yawning gap between the right of self-assertion and the capacity to control the social settings which render such self-assertion feasible or unrealistic seems to be the main contradiction of fluid modernity (…)".* In this sense, the gap between individual freedom combined with a heightened risk awareness and the lack of readymade answers or formulas to control these risks, can lead to a state of loss and uncertainty that triggers feelings of unease and anxiety. Therefore, late modernity is characterized by a prominent need for security and safety: "*The driving force in the class society can be summarized in the phrase:* I am hungry! *The movement set in motion by the risk society, on the other hand, is expressed in the statement:* I am afraid! *The* commonality of anxiety *takes the place of the* commonality of need.*"* (Beck, 1992:49).

While Beck still questions whether and how 'anxiety' and 'safety' can bind people, Bauman decisively argues that safety-issues are stimulating and directing collective action and policy. His thesis is that people's and the state's incapacity to control the future (uncertainty) and their lack of resources to deal with risks (insecurity) are channelled into concerns about the safety of one's body, family and property. However, this preoccupation with 'safety' is unlikely to ease people's mind because the roots of uncertainty and insecurity are left intact. (Bauman, 2000). Nonetheless, because of a lack of tools to tackle uncertainty and insecurity, people as well as policy makers seem to focus their attention on sources of fear that are identifiable and assignable. Not unexpectedly, the focus shifts to people who are unlike 'us': "*Strangers are unsafety incarnate and so they embody by proxy that insecurity which haunts your life. In a bizarre yet perverse way their presence is comforting, even reassuring: the diffuse and scattered fears, difficult to pinpoint and name, now have a tangible target to focus on, you know where the dangers reside and you need no longer take the blows of fate placidly."* (Bauman, 2001: 145).

Inspired by these new sociological insights, criminologists further analyzed in what sense this late-modernity has an impact on the control of crime and people's perception of safety. The best known criminological author is David Garland[5] who states in his widely appraised book 'Culture of Control' (2001) that contemporary citizens are caught up in a 'crime complex', i.e. *"high crime rates are regarded as a normal social fact and crime-avoidance becomes an organizing principle of everyday life. (...) A high level of 'crime consciousness' comes to be embedded in everyday social life and institutionalized in the media, in popular culture and in the built environment."* (Garland & Sparks, 2000: 16). As a consequence of this 'crime complex' many citizens exhibit high levels of fear and *"take on the identity of (actual or potential) crime victims and think and act accordingly"* (Garland, 2001: 164). According to Garland, this institutionalization also explains the fear of crime paradox: *"Our attitudes to crime – our fear and resentments, but also our common sense narratives and understandings – become settled cultural facts that are sustained and reproduced by cultural scripts and not by criminological research or official data."*(Garland, 2001: 164).

Also Hope & Sparks (2000) identify 'fear of crime' as a result of the disintegration of society: "*'Fear of crime' thus intersects with the larger consequences of modernity, and finds its lived social meaning among people's senses of change and decay, optimism and foreboding in the neighbourhoods, towns, cities and wider political communities in which they live and move. Sometimes the question of fear seems chronically enmeshed with the dynamics of de-traditionalisation and an accompanying sense of disruption of formerly settled moral and customary orders."* (Hope & Sparks, 2000: 5). As such 'fear of crime' is a dialectic between on the one hand, people's concern about risks and uncertainties in their local community and everyday life, and on the other hand, their worry about social and cultural transformations on the national and global level (Hope & Sparks, 2000; Loader, Girling, & Sparks, 1998; Pleysier, 2009; Sparks, Girling, & Loader, 2001).

---

[5] Although we also need to acknowledge the work of Jock Young (1999): 'The Exlcusive Society: Social exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity'.

Additionally some researchers connect with Bauman's thesis and conceive the '(fear of) crime' discourse not only as a way to express late modern uncertainty, but also as a way to cope with these anxieties. Unlike the late modern risks, crime and crime-related issues function as a relative familiar domain with identifiable victims and blameable culprits that are manageable and potentially controllable. As such, Hollway & Jefferson, conclude that crime *serve[s] unconsciously as a relatively reassuring site for displaced anxieties which otherwise would be too threatening to cope with.*"(Hollway & Jefferson, 1997: 264). According to this theory 'fear of crime' is a projection of a formless and ambiguous feeling of uneasiness and uncertainty about one's position and identity in society.

In sum, in sociology as well as in criminology, it is recognized that in order to understand and explain people's 'fear' and 'fear of crime' we need to go beyond the obvious safety related issues (e.g. terrorism, crime, paedophily, food-poisoning, toxic waste, …) and also take into account other anxieties that are triggered by threats to our certainty (e.g. financial and economical crisis) and security (e.g. breakdown of the welfare state). Empirically, this recent insight is operationalized with a diversity of latent constructs such as political impotence, anomy, alienation, intolerance, distrust, … (Jackson, 2004; Pleysier, 2009). By conceptualizing 'perception of safety' as the outcome of a process of loss or the lack of a stable identity, caused by late modern uncertainties, the way is paved for concepts such as 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' as the prime tools to re-embed and integrate people into society, and thus eliminate their insecurities.

2.2.2   *Subjective safety as a legitimate policy objective*

Not only in research, but also politically 'fear of crime' emerged as an autonomous policy object, i.e. a problem that needed to be addressed independent of crime fighting. This disentanglement process was already noticeable in the early years of fear of crime research.

Initially the main goal of crime surveys was to measure people's victimization in order to evade the dark number of official (police) figures. But the reasons to include questions measuring people's attitudes and feelings about crime were more politically tinted. In their report[6] "The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society" published in 1967 the American Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement already noticed that fear of strangers could have severe implications for the social order and trust in society.

> *"(…) the most dangerous aspect of fear of strangers is its implication that the moral and social order of society are of doubtful trustworthiness and stability. (...) The tendency of many people to think of crime in terms of increasing moral deterioration is an indication that they are losing their faith in their society. And so the costs of the fear of crime to the social order may ultimately be even greater than its psychological costs to individuals."* (*The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society. A Report by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice*, 1967: 51).

In a policy report of 1976 that introduced crime surveys in the Netherlands, it was argued that governments that neglected people's opinions, feelings and emotions about crime, might encourage people to take the law into their own hands (vigilantism) and as such endanger public safety and governmental authority (Vanderveen 2006). In short, from the early days of its 'discovery', 'fear of crime' was already conceived as more than just a signal that people were concerned or worried about crime. Fear of crime was perceived as a symptom of a disintegrating society in which people's trust in each other and in government was declining. Consequently, *"[t]he pervasive instrumental role that the (crime) statistics and crime surveys played, including the items on 'fear of crime' became clear; statistics are thought to enable politicians and policy makers to 'count & control' or to 'explain and tame'*. ((Vanderveen, 2006: 203).

---

[6] http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/42.pdf   [9-04-2009]

These days this reasoning is still very much present in criminal policy. It is generally acknowledged that reducing 'perception of unsafety' is as important as fighting crime and antisocial behavior. In resonance with the objectively measured risk of victimization and the subjectively measured perception of safety, a distinction is made between *objective and subjective forms of safety*. The former is caused by criminal acts that have to be tackled primarily by the official safety institutions (police and justice). Subjective safety, however, is conceived as more problematic and harder to control because it is perceived as caused by *"a declining of social ties, alienation, individualism and a lack of cultural identity."*[7] ("Federal Plan of Security and Detention", 2000: 20, author's translation). In this sense, policy is referring to recent criminological theories that consider 'perception of unsafety' as a manifestation of late modern uncertainty. Similar to the Presidential report of 1967, subjective safety is perceived as detrimental for trustiness in society but also as potentially dangerous for social cohesion and democracy as people no longer participate in community life and are more susceptible to populist and extreme-right parties and their tough approach on crime. Therefore, it is argued, in addition to fighting crime, policy needs to restore social trust by enhancing social connectedness and improving social integration. ("Federal Plan of Security and Detention", 2000: 15 and 21-22).

By introducing the term 'subjective safety' criminal policy recognizes that in order to improve people's perception of safety more is needed than preventing and fighting crime. In this way, 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' become important elements in the governance of people's perception of safety. In the next part, we will further describe how both concepts develop as two prime sources to enhance people's perception of safety.

3   Sources of perception of safety: Social cohesion and Active citizenship:

In the previous part we discussed the autonomization of 'perception of safety' and its conception as a product of concerns and doubts about one's position and identity in late modernity. In this second part, we describe the most prominent theories and strategies that advocate the importance of 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' as the prime sources to counter these late modern uncertainties, insecurities and unsafety.

3.1   Communitarianism: civic engagement as a prerequisite of social cohesion

According to Bauman (2000), communitarianism is an all-too-expectable reaction to the contemporary social processes that on the one hand are liberating individuals but on the other are deepening their need for security. In essence, communitarianism promises to defy this imbalance by re-embedding people into a community.

One of its most prominent advocates is the American sociologist Robert Putnam. In his book 'Bowling Alone' (2000) he claims that since the 1970s people's *social capital* is declining, i.e. people are less active in social networks and groups that share common norms and values and are marked by mutual trust and support. Because of this decline in social capital, people's social connectedness and civic engagement have been severely damaged. This collapse of social networks and the disintegration of civil society are detrimental for the individuals' integration and welfare as well as for society's economic position and prosperity. According to communitarians the crisis in social cohesion can be stopped by revitalizing social capital, i.e. restoring safe and secure communities by enhancing people's involvement in civil society.

In this sense active citizenship is conceived as a prerequisite of social cohesion. It is assumed that active citizens do not only preserve their rights and liberties ascribed to them as members of a particular state, but that a virtuous citizen is also concerned about the common good. An active citizen does not only obey and follow, or act critical and controlling, but is also actively involved in

---

[7] "…het wegvallen van de sociale band, de vereenzaming, ook het individualisme en het ontbreken van culturele identiteit spelen een rol.".

protecting, sustaining and constructing society.(Carton & Pauwels, 2005). As such, *"citizenship is about much more than the passive membership of a particular political entity. To be a citizen in the fullest sense, ..., you have to be active. It is about a willingness to get involved and make a contribution to both political debate and social action."* (Brannan, John, & Stoker, 2006: 994). The assumption, moreover, is that activating citizens and enhancing civic engagement are essential to face today's crisis's and problems: *"Generating civicness is perceived as a* panacea *for numerous previously intractable social, economic and political problems: social exclusion, community cohesion, crime, democratic deficit, political apathy and disillusionment, and unresponsive and underperforming public services."* (Brannan et al., 2006: 1005).

In his book Putnam argues that it is the government's responsibility to enhance this civic engagement by stimulating civilians to organize and to participate in voluntary associations. Putnam's theory therefore resonates on the policy level, particularly with policymakers who advocate the *third way approach* in which it is emphasized that dealing with social problems is no longer solely the task of public institutions and that private companies and individual citizens need to recognize and take up their responsibility. Therefore Putnam's theory coheres with a new 'governance' model in which *"state, private and non-governmental organisations and citizens themselves form partnerships to attack problems in new ways."*(Brannan et al., 2006: 994).

3.2 Social disorganization and Community Safety

The analysis of communitarianism also pervades criminology and criminal policy. It is assumed that without social cohesion *"a society (...) would be one which displayed social disorder and conflict, disparate moral values, extreme social inequality, low levels of social interaction between and within communities and low levels of place attachment."* (Forrest & Kearns, 2001: 2128).

In criminology, it is mainly the social disorganization theory that stipulates the importance of social cohesion in reducing crime and fear of crime. In brief, the theory states that disruptions in the social organization of a setting weakens the informal social control mechanisms and as a result deviant behaviour and incivility are not or minimally restrained, which leads to a rise in crime (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Ralph B. Taylor, 1996) and fear of crime (Hale, Pack, & Salked, 1994; Marlowitz, Bellair, Liska, & Liu, 2001; Ralph. B. Taylor & Covington, 1993). Recently, this theory broadened its conceptualization of social cohesion and stresses that research needs to consider the quantity as well as the quality or the 'collective efficacy' of social ties. The concept of 'collective efficacy' refers to a set of common norms and values that sustain informal social control mechanisms. A community with inadequate collective efficacy levels is characterized by a decline in social trust and a reluctance of its members to intervene on behalf of the common good (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).

By defining social cohesion as 'collective efficacy' and the willingness of people to intervene, social disorganization theory is, intentionally or unintentionally, affirming the concept of 'active citizenship', i.e. that good citizens act on behalf of the common good. As such it is assumed that civic engagement is essential for the social organization of a community and thus for its members' perception of safety: for, it is argued, people who care about their community and its members, act responsible and intervene if this community or one of its members is put into danger. Therefore, it makes sense to relate social disorganization theory with active citizenship, as the latter set in motion the mechanisms of informal social control that are deemed to reduce crime and people's perception of unsafety.

The relationship between social cohesion, active citizenship and (perception of) safety is, however, more explicitly asserted by the concept of 'community safety'. Community safety is *"an approach which seeks to enable local communities or neighbourhoods to develop the protective capacity to reduce or eliminate the risks of crime and disorder (…) To be successful and sustainable, this capacity must include relationships of trust, mutuality and inter-dependence between community members and between those members and the local agencies of crime control."* (Prior, 2005: 360). As such, more so than other traditional crime prevention strategies, community safety is reliant for its effectiveness on processes of civil renewal (Prior, 2005). The prospect is that a civic attitude and conduct will encourage positive and discourage negative behaviour (Brannan et al., 2006). However, it is argued, that this civicness has to be renewed because

late modern processes are eroding the basic moral principles of citizenship and therefore the self-evident guidelines of good conduct. As such, the state is acting to stimulate civicness, willingly or unwillingly. (Boutellier, 2007).

Consequently, as public policy is defining contemporary crime and disorder in terms of "*the breakdown of informal control, moral decline and a collapse in social capital*" (Crawford, 2006: 958), a new 'community governance' model is fostered in which statutory, voluntary and commercial organizations are casted into novel community safety partnerships and security networks (Crawford, 2002; Hughes, 2002). The idea is that "*[t]he reinvigoration of 'community' (…) facilitates informal social control mechanisms which prevent crime . Strong communities can speak to us in moral voices, allowing the policing by communities rather than the policing of communities*" (Crawford, 2004: 513). The slogan 'Safety, Everybody's Duty" must be situated in this context and is an appeal to all of us, individual citizens included, to be 'partners against crime' (Crawford, 2004), which brings Crawford to the observation that "*[w]here once the public was told to 'leave it to the professionals', now they are enjoined to active participation in a 'self-policing society'*" (Crawford, 2004: 67).

According to Lee (2007), 'fear' in this context, is a greater asset than 'crime' as it is better equipped to responsibilise people to take preventive safety measures: "*The fearing subject is a responsibilised active citizen whose civic duty includes keeping one's self and one's belongings safe.*" (Lee, 2007: 141). Late modern citizens are inundated by messages to act responsible: however this 'governance-through-fear' is not only enhanced by official governmental functionaries, but is also advocated by non-governmental or non-profit organizations as well as by privately organized companies and institutions.

In sum, security is no longer perceived as the state's monopoly, but as a responsibility of every citizen: "*Security is a citizen's right and everyone's duty[8].*" ("Federal Plan of Security and Detention", 2000: 15-16, author's translation).

3.3   Local approach to a diffuse, relative and global phenomenon

In research and policy it has been argued that enhancing 'active citizenship' is beneficial to 'social cohesion' and as such both are valuable resources to improve people's perception of safety. So far, we have been reluctant to geographically locate these sources of perception of safety. Although the term 'community' might suggest a preference for a local approach, theoretically the concepts of 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' are not necessarily limited to a particular geographical setting. However, in research and in policy a local approach is emphasized. Moreover, it is argued that it is mainly disadvantaged urban areas that lack the resources to produce and sustain social cohesion. (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

This local approach is elicited by situating perception of safety as a late modern product with diverse causes and different shapes that change over time and according to location. Consequently, by defining perception of safety as a *diffuse and relative phenomenon*, it makes sense to assume that there are no universally applied methods to deal with perception of safety and so, it is argued, improving perception of safety "*requires a differentiated approach which is tailor-made for the local situation*" (Lasthuizen, van Eeuwijk, & Huberts, 2004: 218). In particular the neighbourhood approach is further solicited. Especially the social disorganization theory considers the social organization of people's residential setting as a primary source of safety as well as unsafety. It is argued that "*[t]o create and maintain a safe, manageable and predictable society, we shall have to start within the community, in the public's direct residential areas. The neighbourhood is the place where it all starts for the public and therefore it should be the starting point for actions that really matter.*" (Lasthuizen, van Eewijk, 2004: 218). By the same token, 'active citizenship' is rather seen as a bottom-up process and coherent with a local approach in which government stimulates citizens to participate in meetings and organise their own initiatives to improve the liveability and safety of their residential area (van Caem, 2008; van Ostaaijen & Tops,

<hr/>

[8] "Veiligheid is een recht van de burger en een plicht van iedereen".

2007). As such, civic engagement is not so much related to making global statements or participating in (trans)national organisations, but is rather perceived as an attitude that must be cultivated and manifested locally.

When perception of safety is described as a diffuse and relative phenomenon for which only custom-made and locally sensitive methods are adequate, it is not a surprise that in most European countries, crime and insecurity are increasingly defined as problems for local policy and local intervention (van der Vijver & Terpstra, 2004). Thus, although the fourth dimension of the aetiology of 'fear of crime' situates 'perception of safety' as a product of global forces, the (policy) response is geographically limited to the third dimension, i.e. the local environment, and more particularly the residential neighbourhood.

4   All for safety, safety for all?

The slogan "Safety: Everybody's concern, everybody's duty" assumes that safety is a common interest and promises that by uniting and working together we, i.e. government, private associations and individual citizens, can overcome the problems and dangers that are threatening our families and communities. In this sense, being (social cohesion) and acting (active citizenship) together seems a natural reaction to safe-guard social order and people's perception of safety. In this third part, however, we question the concepts of 'social cohesion' and 'active citizenship' as the prime sources to enhance 'perception of safety'. Is social cohesion beneficial and necessary to people's perception of safety? Is active citizenship required to enhance social cohesion and thus people's perception of safety?

4.1   Assumptions about social cohesion

The main assumption about social cohesion is that it functions as a natural barrier against crime and other deviant behaviour. Is this the case, however? It seems that there are some dubious assumptions about social cohesion and its relationship with safety.

4.1.1   *Social cohesion is in crisis*

The greatest misapprehension about social cohesion is that it is in dire straits. This apprehension is mainly based on a nostalgic notion about the past and the idea that people then were more connected and showed more solidarity with each other. However, is this longing for the 'days of yore' warranted and are we not nostalgic about a society that never existed? Social cohesion, it is argued, is not a predefined and stable concept but is very much context related, i.e. its form and content varies according to time and scale. As such, loyalty to and connection with a certain neighbourhood or group can be detrimental for solidarity on other levels such as the city or national level. Therefore, to claim that social cohesion is in crisis, depends upon what timeframe and/or spatial scale one is examining. (Blokland, 2005; Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

4.1.2   *Social cohesion is a local process*

Consequently, recognizing that social cohesion is relative to time and space, , implicates that its manifestation is not limited to a certain geographical space, such as a neighbourhood. Processes of globalization and individualization are extending people's social networks and interactions. As such, the residential area is but one of the many contexts where social cohesion emerges. However, this does not entail that the local is no longer important for socialization and social identity. By and large, identification with extra-local connections and groups is increasing, but to what extent 'location

matters' depends upon the individual's use of the neighbourhood (Blokland, 2005) and his/hers lifestyle and life phase (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

4.1.3   Social cohesion is positive

The third great misapprehension is that social cohesion is unambiguously a good thing. This assumption is first of all based on the misunderstanding that social cohesion can only be possessed by mainstream groups and organizations set up by obeying citizens and recognized by government. However, social cohesion can also be a characteristic of criminal organizations (cfr. Mafia) and non-conforming organizations that question the current *status quo*. These upstream organizations also have social networks based on trust, mutual support, shared values and informal control mechanisms, and as such they do not differ from mainstream forms of social cohesion, except for there disobedience to the current laws and authorities. (Mayer, 2003).

These non-conformists can raise anxiety, protest and conflict and can therefore be menacing for the social order and people's perception of safety. However, there are also some criminological examples of neighbourhoods where upstream forms of social cohesion are safeguarding people's safety. In these settings the presence of criminal gangs did not increase people's fear, as their activities were not directed to the residents. Moreover, by some, their presence was appreciated because they interfered when internal conflicts or outsiders tended to disturb the neighbourhood. As such, these gangs were perceived as upholders of peace in a neighbourhood where official forms of control were missing or mistrusted. (Crawford, 1999; I. Taylor, Evans, & Fraser, 1996; Triplett, Sun, & Gainey, 2005; Walklate, 1998a, 1998b, 2001).

The positioning of social cohesion as something unquestionably good, is in fact a result of the communitarian analysis in which there is no reference to the notion of 'power'. In Putnam's analysis, social capital is perceived as something beneficial for the wellbeing of every member of society. However, the manifestation and preservation of a social network depends upon the power the group has in relation to other groups and individuals in society. (Bolt & Torrance, 2005). Furthermore, it is argued, other forms of capital, i.e. economical and cultural capital, are essential to the emergence and existence of social cohesion. (Portes, 1998). By not recognizing the power element, communtarians never considered or neglected the negative consequences of social cohesion. However, any form of social cohesion, mainstream or upstream, is not without risk. Forming a group is not only about defining who is part of the group, but is also about deciding who is outside the group. As such group formation and cohesion can be detrimental for those without a membership card and lacking alternative resources to attain and defend their interests: *"[Social cohesion] can be about discrimination and exclusion and about a majority imposing its will or value system on a minority."* (Forrest & Kearns, 2001: 2134). Some go as far as to state that social cohesion is inherently connected with social exclusion and they warn us about the dangers of desiring 'community': *"Community therefore contains another fundamental contradiction at its heart. Coveted for its secure sense of belonging and inclusiveness, even its most fragile ephemeral realization hinges upon vigorous exclusion and differentiation. To the extent we can experience it, we do so by expressing the insecurity of our own difference from others and their collective exclusion from our ranks."* (Carson, 2004: 8).

4.1.4   Social cohesion is essential for safety

The final misapprehension that we will discuss here, is the assumption that social cohesion is essential to social control and therefore a prerequisite to safety. By exposing social cohesion as not necessarily positive, we have already illustrated that social cohesion can be detrimental to social order and people's perception of safety as its manifestation can exhibit resentment, exclusion, protest, tension and even conflict between groups and individuals. But we do not only contest its positive consequences, but we also question its necessity to enhance people's perception of safety: is social

harmony an essential prerequisite for safety? In research there are ample counterexamples that doubt this assumption.

Research into social cohesion, is too much focused on problem neighbourhoods and as such there is but a partial view on the importance of social networks in a neighbourhood (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). In his research Baumgartner (1988) studied conflict resolution in American suburbs and concluded that social order was established by avoiding conflict and non-intervention. As such, social order was attained, not by familiarity and connection, but by precisely those factors that are assumed to be detrimental for conflict and violence: fragmentation, isolation, indifference and volatility. In well-off residential areas, it is argued, people seem to be more inclined to appeal on formal control mechanisms to resolve conflicts than on informal ones. (Crawford, 1999).

Another extreme example are the 'gated communities' where social interaction between residents is rather limited, but where private companies are paid to make sure that the neighbourhood is secure and safe. Conversely, there are also neighbourhoods where residents are very close and mutual supportive, but have to deal with a lot of crime and incivility. (Crawford, 1999; DeFillipis, 2001; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Foster, 1995).

In sum we can state that social cohesion conceptualized as individuals bonded together in a strong (local) social network, is not necessarily a prerequisite for more social order and safety.[9] Other factors are thus as, or even more, important to secure a local setting. In his study, Patrick Carr (2003) concluded that effective social control is possible without strong social networks, but that its functioning clearly depends upon the extent to which local individuals or organizations can appeal to political and institutional resources *outside* the neighbourhood. Research and policy tend to overlook the importance of *vertical relationships* in the exertion of social control (Crawford, 1999). However, the extra-local context, i.e. the social connections of residents with the city council, is important to understand a neighbourhood's capacity to deal with criminal and deviant behaviour. (Crawford, 2006)

Next to the strong and vertical relationships of a neighbourhood, the importance of *weak ties* must not be overlooked. Although these occasional and fluid connections are not as supportive as strong ties, they are less provisional and can be very useful if these connections give access to resources that are not provided for by one's own strong social network (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Henning & Lieberg, 1996)[10]. Moreover, some also value these weak ties because these small and sporadic encounters make the setting and the people in it more predictable and trustworthy (Blokland, 2005; Soenen, 2001). In this sense, the term 'social cohesion' is replaced by 'cognitive cohesion': "*Proximity politics should focus on getting to know each other – on becoming acquaintances, not necessarily best friends. (…) To increase the feeling of safety and 'livability' in neighbourhood requires that the quality of social relations meet certain minimum standards. To gain a sense of social safety, we don't have to be friends with each other, but we do need to get along.*" (Duyvendak, 2004: 33).

4.2   Assumptions about active citizenship

According to communitarianism and adherents of 'community safety', active citizenship is a prerequisite to attain a cohesive and thus safe society. In the following paragraphs we question these assumptions about active citizenship and its relation with social cohesion and safety.

---

[9] In this article I criticize the assumption that a community's social capital, i.e. the presence of a strong social network, is a prerequisite for social order and safety. The same argument applies for individuals' social capital and their (perception of) safety, i.e. belonging or having access to a social network is not necessarily beneficial for the individual as the network can restrict individuals' freedom or access to resources. Consequently, the relationship between individuals' social capital and their (perception of) safety is not unequivocal or straightforward positive. Cfr. Portes (1998) for a critical assessment about the functions of social capital at the individual and community level.

[10] Putnam (2000) himself has also acknowledged this by making a distinction between bonding and bridging ties.

4.2.1   Active citizenship: "Yes, We Can![11]"?

Active citizens are attributed a wide range of good qualities: good citizens are expected to be on guard for themselves as well as for others, to keep themselves informed, to automatically cooperate with the authorities and to feel responsible for the socially weak members of our society. These expectations, however, presume a lot of knowledge and skills that are not evenly distributed throughout society: not every citizen disposes of the necessary economical, social or cultural capital to exert their citizen's rights and duties, i.e. lack the money, relationships and assertiveness to mobilize, to formulate demands and get involved in top-down decisions. (Uitermark, 2007; Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2007).

Additionally, these high expectations are risky, as citizens are sometimes accorded responsibilities that belong in fact to official authorities. As such, there is always the risk of 'blaming the victim'. Idealising active citizenship might turn the citizen into the scapegoat when problems re-emerge or sustain. (Duyvendak, 2004).

Even if citizens are adequately skilled, is it reasonable to expect them to sort out solutions to problems that are perhaps not within their reach? It is not because citizens express problems, that the causes and solutions are citizen related. These problems are often caused by structural problems that cannot be solved by activating citizens. In this sense, an approach that is mainly citizen orientated, is focusing on symptom treatment or risk containment, but is rarely or never offering a long term solution. (Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008; Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans, 2007).

Finally, we question the willingness of citizens to invest in dealing with problems. A much heard frustration and disappointment among official authorities is that citizens are not interested and difficult to motivate. Often only a minority is willing to contribute time and effort to get involved. Most citizens, however, lack the time and vigor to participate in initiatives. Especially residents in problem neighbourhoods are predominantly preoccupied with their own survival and are therefore not interested or able to invest in improving their living conditions with others. (Van den Broeck, 2004).

4.2.2   Active citizenship is essential for social cohesion

Active citizenship is also assumed to induce positive consequences: the activation of citizens is expected to improve individual's social integration and enhance mutual contact between citizens. Accordingly, active citizenship is depicted as the driving force of social cohesion. However, there are some indications that active citizenship is not unambiguously positive for social cohesion and that its implementation can even (further) disrupt social life within the community.

In his research, Maarten Loopmans (2005) assessed two kind of tensions in activated citizens. On the one hand, activated citizens can have a stressful relationship with non-active citizens whose indifference and even adverseness, can be provoking and demoralizing. Consequently, the community (further) disintegrates and clashes are possible. On the other hand, activation can also lead to inner tensions. Activation often raises people's expectations and hopes. But, at the same time, it might also elevate their awareness and alertness to problems. This situation becomes a problem if negotiated solutions and successes tend to be overridden by failures that bring feelings of helplessness and desolation. Consequently activation is no longer considered to be a duty towards the community and on behalf of the common good, but as a way to express their despair and individual frustrations. As such, activation is self-centered and intensifies in-between differences rather than it is bringing people closer together.

---

[11] Slogan used by President Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential elections.

This focus on active citizenship is especially tart when it is directed towards alleged socially marginal groups such as immigrants and youngsters in high crime areas. In a judicial formal way these groups are considered to be citizens because legally they are members of society and as such they have rights and obligations. However, in reality these groups have always been considered as non-integrated, mainly because they are structurally deprived, but since the mid-90s their underprivileged status is also or predominantly explained from a cultural perspective (Schinkel, 2007). These groups are outside of mainstream society because they are culturally different and therefore classified as passive citizens that need to be initialized in good citizenship, i.e. one that is fully in line with the dominant culture. In this sense, this kind of activation is not aimed at emancipation and inclusion, quite the contrary: these initiatives are suppressing identity and individuality (Schinkel, 2007) and are more likely intended to discipline and to civilize (Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008). Consequently, whatever its principles and good intentions, implementing activation initiatives can be detrimental to a community's social connectedness as it is a very delicate and difficult task to realize active citizenship of socially marginalized groups without exposing and possibly stigmatizing their otherness.

4.2.3 Active citizenship is essential for safety

In the final paragraph, we examine the assumption that activating citizens is a required tactic in governing safety. However, some researchers, who examined the implementation of 'community safety' strategies, paint another picture. They question the extent to which the 'community safety' governance model is effectively improving people's involvement and their perception of safety. Moreover, some researchers warn for the negative effects that stimulating activation has on people's perception of safety.

In the second part of this paper, we suggested that government is fostering a multi-agency approach to handle crime and unsafety. This 'community safety' governance model often produces a plethora of projects and approaches that is very confusing for the targeted citizen groups. As such, Van den Broeck concludes that *"[t]he policy network for the local governance of crime becomes a jumble, a Babylon confusion of tongues, which fails to bridge the (communication) gap between citizens and government and which does not produce any lasting results."* (Van den Broeck, 2004: 132). Furthermore, activated citizens are often very disappointed about their degree of involvement and complain that the public hearings are in fact reduced to meetings for announcing top-down decisions or that their attendance and commitment is misused as a pretext to justify and impose some unwished decisions. In addition, activation is not a guarantee for a more democratic decision process as some activated citizens experienced that politically influential citizens had more impact on policymakers. In sum: *"Mere decentralization does not eliminate or 'magic away' the existing 'autocratic', top-down management and leadership styles in the municipal apparatus."* (Van den Broeck, 2004: 132).

Additionally, it is argued, that partnerships are not necessarily more successful in handling crime and unsafety. A partnership entails that responsibility is devolved and dispersed, but as such no partner is ultimately accountable: *"the problem of many hands where so many people contribute that no one contribution can be identified; and if no person can be held accountable after the event, then no one needs to behave responsibly beforehand. As authority is 'shared' it becomes difficult to disentangle and become almost intangible."* (Crawford, 2004: 77). Some researchers even argue that the success of safety initiatives depends on the dedication of merely a handful of motivated people: *"Despite all the talk about partnership crime prevention policies are shaped and determined by quite literally one handful of individuals."* (Foster, 2002: 172). Certain key figures, such as a motivated police officer, an enthusiastic community worker or an engaged citizen, are often more effective than a partnership comprised of diverse powerful organizations. The importance of a number of motivated and well-placed persons is wonderfully illustrated in Ben Rovers' research. Rovers (2007a, 2007b) states that criminal policy is too much focused on improving the environment and/or citizen's knowledge and skills (emancipation, sensitization, informing). A project's success, however, is also influenced by the way the parties concerned (citizens, but as well as initiators and partners) are committed to the project and the extent

they can transport this belief to others. Thus, according to Rovers, this *belief effect*, exerted by official parties and individuals, is crucial in the successful implementation of any project aimed at activation in order to improve perception of safety.

Some researchers question the beneficial effects of community safety interventions all together. They argue that such interventions will not bring people together and potentially even harm their perception of safety. David Prior (2005) convincingly states that: "*…whilst a core aim of community safety intervention is an increase in the level of trust within a community, the outcome may often be an increase of suspicion.*" (Prior, 2005: 360). As such, in stead of increasing people's trust in each other, safety interventions are increasing distrust and therefore sentiments of unsafety. For example, the main goal of CCTV is to control and monitor behaviour, but its installment is also believed to enhance the perception of safety among residents and other legitimate users of the setting. However, intentionally or unintentionally, CCTV also raises suspicion and distrust as every uncanny conduct or any stranger is to be regarded as a potential hazard. In this sense, "*the objective of increased trust and confidence in everyday life is pursued through the principle of the active and routine suspicion – the presumed distrust – of others.*" (Prior, 2005: 361). Another example are social prevention strategies that (re)activate (potential) offenders in order to (re)integrate them into society. These strategies presume that certain social groups threaten the social order and need to be reinitiated, whether by persuasion or coercion, into the dominant attitudes, values, lifestyles and behaviours. These programmes, however, are more likely "*to reproduce and possibly exacerbate the inherent dynamics of social exclusion that exist within communities*" (Prior, 2005: 365) and therefore will confirm people's suspicion and their perception of unsafety. Prior concludes that safety is not a neutral concept because 'community safety' strategies unavoidable propagate certain ideas and norms about safety and order, and consequently define, condemn and eliminate deviant lifestyles and behaviours. Therefore, it is not unsurprising that these community safety strategies do not succeed in enhancing trust and social cohesion.

4.3   Conclusion

In this third part we outlined that active citizenship and social cohesion are not necessarily positively interlinked and are not necessarily a prerequisite for more perception of safety. Moreover we also indicated that civicness and cohesiveness are possibly harmful for people's perception of safety. The reason for these ambivalent relationships is that both concepts, intentionally or not, bring into view differences and contrasts. Consequently, they may affirm and enhance superficial tensions and suspicions between citizens and as such decrease mutual trust and people's sense of connectedness and safety.

Yet, this is not a call to totally discard the input of citizens in safety prevention strategies. However, we do argue that policymakers should be careful to use 'active citizenship' and 'social cohesion' to increase people's perception of safety. Stimulating civicness and/or cohesiveness can be in itself valuable goals, but they are no guarantees for more safety. 'Safety' is in itself not a neutral concept as its interpretation varies according to time, setting and parties evolved. Because safety can be construed in various ways, negotiating a consensus is impossible and even undesirable, as consensus implicates smoothing of differences on behalf of one particular interpretation. But, as we have shown in this part, ignoring or neglecting these differences in opinion and lifestyle is in fact not necessarily beneficial for the social cohesion of a community, nor for the active involvement of certain citizen groups and as such "All for safety" does not equal "Safety for all". Therefore, some argue that we should accept these differences and assert a *conflict model* in which different perspectives and attitudes towards safety are taken into account. (Goris, 2001). In this sense, it is also essential to recognize that people have different forms of perception of safety. In the final part we set out the main contours of an alternative stance in comprehending perception of safety.

5 An alternative stance: identity and perception of safety

In the first part 'perception of safety' was described as a late modern phenomenon, i.e. a product of macro-sociological processes that causes doubts and concerns about one's identity and position in society. In the new dimension of the aetiology of 'fear of crime', perception of safety is therefore considered as a result of a combination of sociological (gender, age, ethnicity, …) and socio-psychological features (political impotence, alienation, intolerance, distrust, …). In this sense, the assumption is that people who feel afraid combine certain *identity features* that make him/her more insecure and uncertain, i.e. a high perception of unsafety is more likely to be found with someone who is e.g. physical vulnerable, unskilled, unemployed, resident of a high crime and who tends to be intolerant, a-political, alienated and xenophobic. According to this analysis, it seems sensible to focus on problem neighbourhoods and draw up strategies aimed at informing, sensitizing and enhancing civic involvement and social interaction.

In sum, based on late modern theories it is assumed that perception of unsafety is caused by *a loss or lack of a stable identity.* However, researchers do not seem to agree which identity features are more influential than others. Consequently, 'perception of safety' is still a *black box*: after 40 years we seem to have a fairly complete overview of *what* kind of factors trigger perceptions of unsafety and *what* kind of consequences these perceptions elicit or aggravate, but we do not seem to fully comprehend *why* these factors are sometimes exceedingly important and then again seem to be totally irrelevant. As such, 'perception of safety' is more than ever considered to be a *diffuse and relative phenomenon*, i.e. a multilayered phenomenon with diverse causes and different shapes that changes over time and according to location. If we are not careful, the spectre of illegitimacy re-emerges, i.e. the conception of 'perception of safety' as indefinable, intangible and thus uncontrollable. However, we argue, that its diffuse and relative nature, is not a to be considered as a final result but as a starting point of research. In this final part we shortly suggest an alternative perspective to understand and research 'perception of safety'.

First of all, we acknowledge that perception of safety is a complex phenomenon, but this does not entail that it is not researchable or uncontrollable. Perception of safety is indeed an unstable and dynamic entity (Lupton, 2000) because it is based on personal experiences and individual biography. In this sense people might differ in identifying and selecting situations as unsafe. Safety is a social phenomenon that is constructed through social and cultural processes. Thus people's experiences become meaningful through their social-cultural framework of meaning. Consequently, what people define as unsafe may differ, but just as important are the definitions of unsafety which are shared among individuals. These shared understandings of unsafety are rooted in social and cultural processes. The goal of research is then to examine these social-cultural frameworks that people share in constructing their perception of safety.

Secondly, in line with late modern theories we acknowledge the importance of identity in the construction of perception of safety, i.e. we agree that different aspects of social identity work together in different ways to impact on the nature of 'perception of safety' (Pain, 2001); or that the individuals' unique biographies impact on their identification with fear of crime discourses (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997)). However, we do not agree with the way identity is commonly researched. Generally identity is considered as a result of (a combination of) individual features, i.e. it is examined by measuring individual characteristics such as gender, race, age, class or by appraising their place of birth or residence and their membership to certain associations. People's identity, however, is not an individual feature formed in a vacuum, but constructed in relation to others: to understand people's identity we need to research how they are assessing their own position and that of others, i.e. people are defining their identity by continually categorizing others and determining to what category they belong to (Tulloch, 2000).

Consequently, the process of identity formation and social categorization is important to understand people's perception of safety. More concretely we need to research the social categories people draw upon when they are assessing an unsafe situation and how they position themselves and others as potential victims or assaulters. In this sense, perception of unsafety is not a result of a lack or

unstable identity, but on the contrary: in describing unsafe situations people are highly aware of their identity and they act accordingly. For example, most older people perceive themselves as (getting more) vulnerable and tend to avoid risky situations such as taking the bus or going out late at night. Moreover, they perceive younger people as acting dangerous and reckless. Consequently, their perception of safety is very much guided by their self-categorization as 'old' and 'vulnerable' and the categorization of young people as threatening. Conversely, young people, especially men, like to perceive themselves as capable of defending themselves and being in control. They tend to perceive gangs of young people, especially those of other subcultures, as threatening. (Tulloch, 2000).

In this alternative stance we acknowledge the dynamic and relative nature of perception of safety. However, we do not consider this as a result of macro-sociological processes that are undermining people's identity. On the contrary, people tend to assess unsafe situations in accordance to their identity and that of others. Identification with neighbourhoods and/or communities might still be essential to some people, but in a cosmopolitan world people tend to have more (important) identities than being a resident of a neighbourhood or being a member of an association. Maybe people complain about unsafe situations in their neighbourhood, but are these situations considered as unsafe because they are menacing the personal living conditions and/or diminishing involvement in society? Or are the perceived unsafe conditions rather fuelled by other identities: for instance parents who worry about their children's safety or such as young women who intuitively act more careful when they are wandering in any street late at night. Therefore, policies that are directed to stimulate social cohesion and civic engagement in local settings might not fully address the problem because their envisioning the wrong identities, stimulating identities that enhance perceptions of unsafety and neglecting the identities that do matter to people. Perception of safety is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, policy makers need to analyze exactly what it means for people to feel unsafe before implementing community safety measures.

6   Bibliography

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community. Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Malden (USA): Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd. .

Baumgartner, M. P. (1988). *The Moral Order of a Suburb*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Blokland, T. (2005). *Goeie buren houden zich op d'r eigen. Buurt, gemeenschap en sociale relaties in de stad*. Den Haag: Dr. Gradus Hendriks-stichting.

Bolt, G., & Torrance, M., I. (2005). *Stedelijke herstructurering en sociale cohesie*. Utrecht: DGW/NETHUR.

Boutellier, H. (2007). *Nodale orde. Veiligheid en burgerschap in een netwerksamenleving. Inaugurele rede bij de aanvaarding van de Frans Denkers leerstoel Veiligheid & burgerschap aan de Vrije Universiteit vanwege de gemeente Amsterdam en het politiekorps Amsterdam-Amstelland*. Amsterdam: Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Brannan, T., John, P., & Stoker, G. (2006). Active Citizenship and Effective Public Services and Programmes: How Can We Know What Really Works? *Urban Studies, 43*(5/6), 993.

Carr, P., J. (2003). The New Parochialism: The Implications of the Beltway Case for Arguments Concerning Informal Social Control. *American Journal of Sociology, 108*(6), 1249-1291.

Carson, W. G. (2004). Is Communalism Dead? Reflections on the Present and Future Practice of Crime Prevention: Part One. *Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology, 37*(1), 1-21.

Carton, A., & Pauwels, G. (2005). Burgerschap in Vlaanderen anno 2004. De perceptie van de rol van de burger en de overheid in de weegschaal gelegd, *Vlaanderen gepeild 2005*. Brussel: Administratie Planning en Statistiek. Departement Algemene Zaken en Financiën. Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.

Crawford, A. (1999). Questioning Appeals to Community within Crime Prevention and Control. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 7*, 509-530.

Crawford, A. (2002). The Governance of Crime and Insecurity in an Anxious Age: the Trans-European and the Local. In A. Crawford (Ed.), *Crime and Insecurity. The Governance of Safety in Europe* (pp. 27-51). Devon: Willian Publishing.

Crawford, A. (2004). The Governance of Urban Safety and the Politics of Insecurity. In K. van der Vijver & J. Terpstra (Eds.), *Urban Safety: Problems, Governance and Strategies* (pp. 65-85). Enschede: Institute for Social Safety Studies. University of Twente.

Crawford, A. (2006). 'Fixing Broken Promises?': Neighbourhood Wardens and Social Capital. *Urban Studies, 43*(5/6), 957-976.

DeFillipis, J. (2001). The Myth of Social Capital in Community Development. *Housing Policy Debate, 12*(4), 781-806.

Ditton, J., & Farrall, S. (2000). *The fear on crime*. Dartmouth: Ashgate.

Duyvendak, J. W. (2004). Neighbourhoods, Cohesion and Social Safety. In K. van der Vijver & J. Terpstra (Eds.), *Urban Safety: Problems, Governance and Strategies (pp. 107-132).* (pp. 27-35). Enschede: Institute for Social Safety Studies. University of Twente.

Federal Plan of Security and Detention. (2000). Brussels: Department of Justice.

Forrest, R., & Kearns, A. (2001). Social Cohesion, Social Capital and the Neighbourhood. *Urban Studies, 38*(12), 2125-2143.

Foster, J. (1995). Informal Social Control and Community Crime Prevention. *British Journal of Criminology, 35*(4), 563-583.

Foster, J. (2002). 'People Pieces'; the Neglected but Essential Elements of Community Crime Prevention. In G. Hughes & A. Edwards (Eds.), *Crime Control and Community: The New Politics of Public Safety* (pp. 167-196). Devon: Willian Publishing.

Garland, D. (2001). *The Culture of Control. Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Garland, D., & Sparks, R. (2000). Criminology, Social Theory and the Challenge of our Times. *British Journal of Criminology, 40*, 189-204.

Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goris, P. (2001). Community Crime Prevention and the 'Partnership Approach': a Safe Community for Everyone? *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 9*, 447-457.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *The American Journal of Sociology, 78*(6), 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory, 1*, 201-233.

Hale, C. (1996). Fear of Crime: a Review of the Literature. *International Review of Victimology, 4*, 79-150.

Hale, C., Pack, P., & Salked, J. (1994). The Structural Determinants of Fear of Crime: an Analysis Using Census and Crime Survey Data from England and Wales. *International Review of Victimology, 3*, 211-233.

Henning, C., & Lieberg, M. (1996). Strong Ties or Weak Ties? Neighbourhood Networks in a New Perspective. *Scandinavian Housing & Planning Research, 13*, 3-26.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (1997). The Risk Society in an Age of Anxiety: Situating Fear of Crime. *British Journal of Sociology, 48*(2), 255-266.

Hope, T., & Sparks, R. (2000). *Crime, risk and insecurity : law and order in everyday life and political discourse* London: Routledge.

Hughes, G. (2002). Plotting the Rise of Community Safety: Critical Reflections on Research, Theory and Politics. In G. Hughes & A. Edwards (Eds.), *Crime Control and Community: The New Politics of Public Safety* (pp. 20-45). Devon: Willian Publishing.

Jackson, J. (2004). Experience and Expression. Social and Cultural Significance in the Fear of Crime. *British Journal of Criminology, 44*, 946.

Lasthuizen, K., van Eeuwijk, B., & Huberts, L. (2004). Feelings of Insecurity in Communities: What does really matter? Results of Survey Research in the Netherlands. In K. van der Vijver & J. Terpstra (Eds.), *Urban Safety: Problems, Governance and Strategies* (pp. 205-220). Enschede: Institute for Social Safety Studies. University of Twente.

Lee, M. (2007). *Inventing Fear of Crime. Criminology and the Politics of Anxiety*. Devon: Willan Publishing.

Loader, I., Girling, E., & Sparks, R. (1998). Narratives of Decline. Youth, Dis/order and Community in an English 'Middletown'. *Britisch Journal of Criminology, 39*(3), 388-403.

Loopmans, M. (2005). From Residents to Neighbours: The Making of Active Citizens in Antwerp, Belgium. In J. W. Duyvendak, T. Knijn & M. Kremer (Eds.), *Policy, People, and the New Professional. De-professionalisation and Re-professionalisation in Care and Welfare* (pp. 109-121). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Marlowitz, F., Bellair, P., Liska, A., & Liu, J. (2001). Extending Social Disorganization Theory: Modeling the Relationships Between Cohesion, Disorder and Fear. *Criminology, 39*, 293-317.

Mayer, M. (2003). The Onward Sweep of Social Capital: Causes and Consequences for Understanding Cities, Communities and Urban Movements. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 27*(1), 110-132.

Pain, R. (2001). Gender, Race, Age and Fear in the City. *Urban Studies, 38*(5), 899 - 913.

Pleysier, S. (2009). *'Angst voor criminaliteit' onderzocht. De brede schemerzone tussen alledaagse realiteit en irrationeel fantoom*. Proefschrift tot het verkrijgen van de graad van doctor in de Criminologische Wetenschappen.(promotor: prof.dr. G. Vervaeke; co-promotor: prof.dr. J. Goethals): Afdeling Strafrecht, Strafvordering en Criminologie - Faculteit Rechtsgeleerdheid - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

Portes, A. (1998). Social Capital: its Origins and Apllications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24*(1), 1-24.

Prior, D. (2005). Civil Renewal and Community Safety: Virtuous Policy Spiral or Dynamic of Exclusion? *Social POlicy & Society, 4*(4), 357.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rovers, B. (2007a). 'Ze deugen nergens voor': Het Belief effect in justitiële interventies. Lectorale Rede (9 november 2007)

Rovers, B. (2007b). Preventie van jeugdcriminaliteit en de placeborespons: toepassing van het belief-effect in het veiligheidsveld, *Marktdag van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor de Kriminologie (NVK)*. Leiden.

Sampson, R. J., & Groves, B. (1989). Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*(774-802).

Sampson, R. J., Morenoff, J. D., & Gannon-Rowley, T. (2002). Assessing "Neighborhood effects": Social Processes and New Directions in Research. *Annual Review of Sociology, 28*(1), 443-478.

Sampson, R. J., & Raudenbush, W. (1999). Systematic Social Observation of Public Spaces. A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighbourhoods. *American Journal of Sociology, 105*, 603-651.

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy. *Science, 277*.

Schinkel, W. (2007). Tegen 'actief burgerschap'. *Justitiële Verkenningen, 33*(8), 70-90.

Soenen, R. (2001). *Diversiteit in verbondenheid. Paper in het kader van de Task Force Leven in de stad: thema 'sociale cohesie en etnische diversiteit'* Witboek Stedenbeleid.

Sparks, R., Girling, E., & Loader, I. (2001). Fear and Everyday Urban Lives. *Urban Studies, 38*(5), 885-898.

Taylor, I., Evans, K., & Fraser, P. (1996). *A Tale of Two Cities*. Routledge: London.

Taylor, R. B. (1996). Neighborhood Responses to Disorder and Local Attachments: The Systemic Model of Attachment, Social Disorganization, and Neighborhood Use Value. *Sociological Forum, 11*(1), 41-74.

Taylor, R. B., & Covington, J. (1993). Community Structural Change and Fear of Crime. *Social Problems, 40*, 374-395.

The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society. A Report by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. (1967). Washington DC: United States Goverment Printing Office.

Triplett, R., A., Sun, I., Y., & Gainey, R., R. (2005). Social Disorganization and the Ability and Willingness to Enact Control: A Preliminary Test. *Western Criminology Review, 6*(1), 89-103.

Uitermark, J. (2007). Temper de transformatiedrift met bewonersparticipatie. *Stadscahiers, 1*(1), 36-42.

Uitermark, J., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2007). Gemengde ervaringen van actieve bewoners in Rotterdam. In C. Bouw, J. W. Duyvendak & L. Veldboer (Eds.), *De mix factor*. Amsterdam: Boom.

Uitermark, J., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2008). Civilizing the City: Populism and Revanchist Urbanism in Rotterdam. *Urban Studies, 45*.

Uitermark, J., Duyvendak, J. W., & Kleinhans, R. (2007). Gentrificiation as a Governmental Strategy: Social Control and Social Cohesion in Hoogvliet, Rotterdam. *Environment and Planning, 39*(125-141).

van Caem, B. (2008). *Verborgen kracht. Burgerparticipatie op het vlak van veiligheid*. Amsterdam: Dynamics of Governance - Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen -Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Van den Broeck, T. (2004). "Words Like Daggers" ... A Community's Perspective on Social Safety Policy in Urban Areas. In K. van der Vijver & J. Terpstra (Eds.), *Urban Safety: Problems, Governance and Strategies* (pp. 107-132). Enschede: Institute for Social Safety Studies. University of Twente.

van der Vijver, K., & Terpstra, J. (2004). *Urban Safety: Problems, Governance and Strategies*. Enschede: Institute for Social Safety Studies. University of Twente.

van Ostaaijen, J., & Tops, P. (2007). Active Citizens and Local Safety. How the Active Citizens Matrix Can Help Local Government to Support Citizens in Their Efforts to Improve Safety. In P. Delwit, J.-B. Pilet, H. Reynaert & K. Steyvers (Eds.), *Towards DIY-Politics. Participatory and Direct Democracy at the Local Level in Europe* (pp. 321-359). Brugge: Vanden Broele.

Vanderveen, G. (2006). *Interpreting Fear, Crime, Risk and Unsafety*. Dissertatie (mr. N.J.H. Huls & dr. H. Elfers.) Den Haag: Boom Juridische uitgevers.

Walklate, S. (1998a). Crime and Community: Fear or Trust? *The British Journal of Sociology, 49*(4), 550-569.

Walklate, S. (1998b). Excavating the Fear of Crime: Fear, Anxiety or Trust? *Theoretical Criminology, 2*(4), 403-418.

Walklate, S. (2001). Fearful Communities? *Urban Studies, 38*(5), 929 - 939.

Young, J. (1999). *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.