

Explaining growth in the private security industry: the multifacet model

The existence of private security services is far from a new phenomenon. The fact that their existence is currently characterised by an enormous growth and an unstoppable evolution is a new tendency. Several authors have explained this march. The different explanation models and theses often focus on single elements and are often inspired on the Anglo-Saxon society. Several processes have influenced each other as well as the growth in private security by effecting the pendulum on the public-private continuum. In this article we have tried to put these elements together in a bigger framework of macro processes, linking them to one multifacet model for explaining growth in private security.

Introduction

Private forms of policing were the very first forms of protection and security, existing long before public government appropriated absolute power. For as long as we can think of, civilians or alignments of civilians took care of and protected the property of the rich and famous. The central state and its monopoly on violence, caused that private forms eclipsed, however, they never disappeared completely. Clearly, through history, forms of policing often slide over a continuum like a pendulum, sometimes causing a move to the right when private security industry dominates or a move to the left when public police dominates. So, the existence of private security services is far from a new phenomena (Shearing & Stenning, 1983a, p.493). The fact that their existence is currently characterised by an enormous growth and an unstoppable evolution is a new tendency. Consequently, private services have broken through state monopoly in security since the sixties, becoming a structural feature of current society (George & Button, 2000, p.3). Social control has changed towards a dispersal of functions, a deep penetration in more aspects of life and fading boundaries between different fields of security making (Hoogenboom & Morre, 1988a, p.430). However, the public police's monopoly on violence still stands, their monopoly on the security agency (veiligheidsvoorziening) is forever lost.

Several authors have explained this rise. Most models were designed in the eighties and nineties and focus on single elements. In addition, these models are often based on the Anglo-Saxon society. In this article we will try to show the growth of the private security sector in a more overall way, combining the different elements of those models and give an extended explanation for this growth from a country perspective.

1. The changing role of the government

The private security industry is claimed to be inherently connected to neoliberalism. Since the founding of Belgium as an independent state, plural entities in policing have existed (Van Outrive, Cartuyvels & Ponsaers, 1992, p.31-123) From a public perspective there was a National guard, an army and a municipal police. From a private perspective, there was the municipal guard at that time), 'schutterij. Later also came militia emerged at the initiative of the commoners (Witte, 1990, p.68-69), as non-commercial defenders of their own goods (Van Geet, 1981, p.199). Between the two World Wars a judicial police force was created to investigate complex criminal cases. The State also started to completely centralize police functions (Van Outrive et al., 1992, p. 31-123), causing private security initiatives to become overshadowed, yet they never disappeared completely (George & Button, 2000, p.22). The 'mixed economy of policing' started to wear off (George & Button, 2000, p.22).

Today, government organizes security differently. On the one hand, the tendency towards centralization remains. A multiple police force, consisting of a local and a federal part, still holds the legal monopoly on violence. The state also created a number of new functions,

currently seen as an important part of the security domain, such as urban stewards, park wardens, neighbourhood watch programs, etc. Breaking with the past, the state chose to do this next to the police instead of within the force, however, still remaining under central demand. These initiatives were taken because of the emerging interest for the security of the citizen and as a response to the issue of unemployment (Verwee, Van Altert, Verhage, Hoste & Enhus, 2005, p.13-14). Their tasks lie within the framework of crime prevention policies and local police duties, carrying out missions of surveillance and regulation in public spaces (Smeets, 2008, p.177-196; Hoogenboom, 2008, p.198). The state has broadened and deepened its impact on maintaining order and security in this way. In relation to explaining the growth of the private security industry, these, however, seem to be of subordinate relevance. We will therefore not discuss them any further.

On the other hand, the role of the state also gradually changed, influenced by the neoliberal conception. More deregulation was brought into the security provision because of the complexity of and the differentiation within our current society (Kohnstamm, 1995, p.8-9). Since ‘Rolling back the state’, the legendary feature of ‘Thatcherism’ and ‘Reaganomics’ from the eighties, this process emerged more rapidly (Button, 2002, p.23-24; Grabosky, 2007, p.9-10). This tendency had nothing to do with security in the first place¹, however, it showed that, if government support could be drawn back in certain areas, why not in all (Ryan & Ward, 1989, p.53). Polycentrism was born (Pleysier, Vervaeke & Goethals, 2001, p.23). This idea also caught on in Belgium. The user pays model (Edwards, 2005) relates this to the bankruptcy of the welfare state which caused that the state is no longer able to provide all social services. The integrated security concern (Commissie Kleine Criminaliteit – Roethof, 1986)² backs up this idea, even in the case of security. Again under influence of neoliberalism, the prohibitive welfare state was left and actualize a democratic ‘active welfare state’ in which partnerships and civil responsibility are central features.

1.1. Marketization through partnerships

The national state shifts responsibility explicitly to private initiative, making security become a marketable good in a lucrative sector (Van Oustrive, Bas, Decorte, & Van Laethem, 1995, p.219). Private security industry takes over some tasks but there also appear to be more public private partnerships (PPS) and new ways of working together, such as contracting, outsourcing, etc., both important contributors to the rise of the private security industry³ (Van Hooland, 2003, p.56-57; Van Laethem, Decorte & Bas, 1995, p.6). Marketization sets in (Wood & Shearing, 2007, p.18; Hoogenboom, 2008, p.206; Van Swaaningen, 2004, p. 25). State is no longer seen as the ultimate provider of security but as a coordinator of a diversity of initiatives introduced by plural entities (Button, 2002, p.23-24; Grabosky, 2007, p.9-10; Tielenburg, 2006, p. 72-75). This tendency is also referred to as a shift from ‘government’ to ‘(nodal) governance’, or a multiplicity of government authorities and other providers who together try to establish several security outcomes using several means; a third party policing (Wood & Shearing, 2007, p.13-15). The deconcentrated security care – view raises that however space is created for the private security industry to develop from self-interest and on the condition a contribution is made to security care, control lies with the government (Cools, 2001, p.110). The private interest remains of subordinate importance (Mulkers, 2002, p.10-26).

1.2. Citizen’s responsibility

Because the state is and no longer can be the only provider of security, also citizens are called on to be more independent and creative, taking responsibility for their own well being and security (Grabosky, 2007, p.9-10). They are forced to create their own answers to social problems giving room to self-help initiatives in the form of individual action (e.g. buying an

alarm) and commercial activities (e.g. hiring a security company) (Cunningham et al., 1990, p.113). They become customers looking for a suitable product. In order to respond to existing problems and security demands, new private solutions will emerge. Post modernity/globalization thesis (Reiner, 1992) presents the declining importance of the central state in the last decennia, the crumbling of moral authority at the expense of increasing respect for diversity and the rise of globalization as well on economics as on politics, as a reason for changes in policing.

2. Democracy or not?

Other authors have brought to the attention that not liberalism but the rise of open and competitive interest groups in a democracy is the reason for growth. In contrast with authoritarian states, democracy allows individual, personal choices, also when it comes to maintaining security (Nalla & Newman, 1990, p.16). This tendency is clearly connected to the forced growing citizen's responsibility towards security.

3. Causing technological progress

Within the late capitalist society a strong technological development and progress occurred, caused by the economic progress (Wiles, 1999, p.148-149), having 3 major consequences.

3.1. Technological and financial complexity

The first one is a technological and financial complexity, making us more and more dependent on others and non-human systems, such as computers and creating a growing number of risk modalities. This vulnerability started a process of specific security demands.

3.1.1. A tendency towards specialization

Specialization tried to form the right answer. The restructuring and late modern change thesis (Johnston, 1996) puts the upper evolution in the centre of its explanation. Specialization, professionalization, fragmentation, flexibility and the rise of the service sector caused a break up between core business and additional tasks of a company. The necessity of specific knowledge, means and answers on specific problems caused a rising tendency to outsource services, especially those concerning security. The private security industry becomes very visible in that way (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.114-115). Not only is the private security industry most adapted to the security demands of companies, because of the emphasis on loss prevention, they have also invested in individual specific products and services on demand from an economic interesting point of view. For example, the march of digitalism and electronic services will enhance the improper and unlawful use of it. New initiatives for prevention and combat, besides criminal justice, will be necessary. The private security industry already developed a broad scale of guarding techniques and security measures (Maas-De Waal & Van Beem, 2006, p.333 – 342).

3.1.2. A tendency towards professionalization

If the private security industry wants to succeed in her mission becoming a specialized answer to all security problems, also a professionalization must occur (Button, 2007a, p.51). First of all, this is effected by legal initiatives for minimum standards concerning recruitment and training in an attempt to improve quality. On the other hand also companies make exertions. The competence of the agents and the trust in the security services offered has to increase in order to convince clients, demanding higher quality standards (Van Steden, 2007, p.46-47;

Van Den Briel, 1995, p.13-14). In addition, through the globalization of economy and the rise of information technology, the market and competition between providers has extended. In this battle the multifaceted choice of consumers has become very important. In a society where self-identity is made by choices in the lifestyle market, companies need to be able to respond to individual, non standard demands and confined editions. The private security industry can become a professional business (Van Den Briel, 1995, p.13-14) if it is able to fulfil individual interest more appropriate through their customer responsive attitude, in comparison to public forces who have to comply with the public interest (Wiles, 1999, p.148-149). This focus on individual demand, however, doesn't assume that the private security industry is less accountable than public forces. Becoming a professional partner gives the private security industry also recognition which on their turn stimulates growth. The post modern society originates an increasing number of risk modalities (Button, 2002, p.98-99). The insurance business is faced with more claims which eventually will diminish their profits. This will incite them to rise their premiums and demand more guarantees before taking out an insurance policy. With these guarantees insurance companies often force customers to provide for security- and safety products and services, stimulating the growth of the private security industry (George & Button, 2000, p.33-34).

3.1.3. A tendency towards individualism and less social control

The technological and financial complexity also makes the society hard to oversee, as the social control model or the cooperation model puts forward. Post-war industrialization has led to a strong detachment in living and working and a rise of the possibilities in all of these domains. Civilian life has become a lot more individualistic, strongly diminishing social control (De Waard, 1996, p.228). The policy of retrenchment of the eighties caused an enormous pressure on companies who, in their opinion, dismissed unessential personnel (Jones & Newburn, 1999, p.240). This increasing formalization of social control thesis stresses that the demand stayed and citizens had inevitably directed their questions towards the public police. These are however no longer capable of meeting these objectives. What used to be done by ordinary citizens or by employees in the course of their job, e.g. the janitor, is now taken over by professional products and services, e.g. the private security guard (George & Button, 2000, p.25-27). It is clear that a formalization of informal control occurred. Individualization also causes a family dilution. This tendency will appear even more in the future as traditional families are being replaced more and more by other ways of living such as one-person households and double-income families. The demand for surveillance by private security agents will grow even more as a great number of houses remain uninhabited and without surveillance during the day. (Maas-De Waal & Van Beem, 2006, p.333 – 342).

3.2. An international and global perspective

Secondly, technological progress has also created a tendency towards internationalization and globalization (Button, 2002, p.21-23). People, goods and services are becoming more flexible and mobile. This causes that the state control is harder to administrate. The state is also losing part of its say in the benefit of the international and supranational entities (Wiles, 1999, p.141). In relation to the private security industry, internationalization has two prominent consequences. The number of international conflicts is rising because of the great risks that go with relocation since companies and citizens can't always rely on local resources. These 'foreigners' will be forced to take responsibility themselves (Grabosky, 2007, p.10) and put up their own processes of security control, starting to look more and more like small states (Button, 2002, p.21-23). The second consequence of internationalization is the growing amount of international crime, demanding an international answer. New kinds of crime arise,

current kinds of crime become more complex and scattered over several countries (Maas-De Waal & Van Beem, 2006, p.333 – 342). The international character of private security companies could be of help in battling these types of crime. However, in accordance with the international model (Cools, 2000b) public police is faced more and more with international police matters, evolving to an international police. Private police is taken over the local security requirements (Cools, 2000b, p.203-216). As public police still holds on to a large amount of basic police security, there seems no direct evidence to support this thesis, yet.

3.3. A general prosperity

Thirdly, technological progress is linked to a general prosperity that has resulted in two major tendencies.

3.3.1. A rise in private property

Since the origin of the welfare state, a large amount of the population has known a rise in private property. Property has also become a way of showing your status and a goal in itself in a capitalist society. The general public will therefore be interested in products and services to secure their property and status more appropriately, all the more since informal social control strongly diminished, as was already indicated. Specialized companies have been able to sell their services and products to an even wider public (George & Button, 2000, p.25). Just as private property has risen, so did mass private property (further: MPP) (Button, 2003, p.227-229), at the expense of the public domain (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.46-51). These changing structural features of urban space have originated a new social order, also demanding a new kind of policing (Wakefield, 2003, p.224), pre-eminently creating more possibilities for the private security industry (Button, 2002, p.98-99).

According to the structural or pluralist theory (Shearing & Stenning, 1981) a rise in MPP is the main cause for the growth of the private security industry (George & Button, 2000, p.34). As the public police is restrained by ethical grounds to go on in privately owned places, the private security industry is more adapted to respond to private security demands, mainly giving account to private owners. Owners of MPP have also commonly preferred to affect a partnership with the private security industry because of the many advantages such as service on demand, guaranteed attendance and the focus on loss prevention. Loss prevention as the first and prime goal of the private security industry and their alliance with the house rules of their employers, is put forward by the economic theory (Shearing & Stenning, 1981) as a reason for their success. Consequently, the delinquency notion has moved from a traditional interpretation, coming from penal law, towards an economic filling-in. Crime is every act that can lead to a loss for the firm.

Because of the public accessibility of MPP often combined with an economic purpose, e.g. a shopping mall, the fiscal constraint theory - radical wing (Jones & Newburn, 1998) links this evolution to capitalism. Capitalism, and the late capitalist society, is all about buying and selling. A secure and clean environment is needed to purchase. Capitalism, however, also generates uncertainty and insecurity. This contradiction creates a 'self-generating demand for more security'. Uncertainty causes an urge to more security. An increasing focus on security gives greater feelings of insecurity and will create an even bigger demand for security. Change is big a 'location of trust' or 'security bubble' will be created in which citizens are prepared to turn away from the public demand towards civil rights and public order for the benefit of managing all possible risks (Wiles, 1999, p.151). Shops and companies will look for partners who are able to establish this atmosphere. Through architectural and interior adaptations and embellishments, a safe and secure feeling is created, the so called 'customer care'. In the process of preventive elimination of possible disruptions, the security agent is a

very important actor (Wakefield, 2003, p.225-226). Moreover, the more we count on others to supply security, the greater our feelings of insecurity will become and the more the urge to security will rise. Thus, the more private security we need (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.102-104).

3.3.2. A rise of crime and feelings of insecurity

The second consequence of the increase of general prosperity combined with the decline of social control, as discussed earlier, is the alleged rise of crime and feelings of insecurity. According to Garland and Sparks we live in a 'high crime culture'. Supposedly, not only crime has risen but also the possibility of becoming a victim has increased the last forty years (Boutellier, 2006, p.23). Putting these assumptions in an evolutionary perspective, the rise of crime seems to be inaccurate. The nature of crime however, did change (Boutellier, 2006, p.23; Cachet & Ponsaers, 2008, p.22). Terrorism, and specifically the drama of 9/11, has contributed a lot to the growth of the private security industry (Button, 2007a, p.52). Not only will the actual taking place of an attack cause an increasing advance to several security products and services, the perception of the possibility of becoming a victim also plays an important role (George & Button, 2000, p.32-33). An evolution and consolidation towards the current pole position of the private security industry, which normally would have taken years to establish, was realised in a couple of months. Hoogenboom speaks of a 'securitization' trend after 9/11 shifting the governance of security towards new security actors such as private security and intelligence services (Hoogenboom, 2008, p.198). Governments have shared, even diminished their central role in maintaining order, citizens have been prepared to throw privacy issues aside. More recent international conflicts, terrorism and extremism have caused a never fading awareness, however, the effect on the growth of the private security industry has worn off. The overall size of the sector stays more or less the same, for now, but shifts have been made in growing market segments. The terrorist attacks have given a feeling as if the private security industry is needed more than ever. This caused a large growth and development in aviation, such as on the issue of X-ray and DNA-applications at the expense of e.g. man guarding (Maas-De Waal & Van Beem, 2006, p.333 – 342). Just as a rise in crime can hardly be proven, also a rise in feelings of insecurity is hard to verify. Several tendencies seem to have an impact on the rise of these feelings (Garland, 2001, 307p.). Elderly people e.g. tend to have greater feelings of insecurity, demanding specific and adapted services concerning security. The consequence of the sharp rise in the ageing population will become more important in the future, leading towards an important and economic interesting niche in the private security industry (Maas-De Waal & Van Beem, 2006, p.333 – 342).

4. Responding to current demands

It has been noted by Giddens that the post modern society is faced with a 'double-edged phenomenon'. On the one hand, people are enjoying the liberty and the growing number of opportunities to shape their lives. On the other hand, the postmodern society is bringing on a lot of insecurity and vulnerability (Wakefield, 2003, p.224). Old certainties are falling away, new threats are rising. A kind of existential insecurity has originated that combined with an urge to preserve their own prosperity, has become a 'moral panic' (Cools, 1997a, p.16), which again leads to an ever increasing demand for security. The start of a vicious circle (Button, 2002, p.26-27). The welfare state has moved towards a security state (Boutellier & Van Stokkom, 1995, p.100).

4.1. The police

Answering to security demands, people can traditionally address themselves to the public police. The organization, as well as the financing of the state police force have changed dramatically over the years. From the mid-20th century onwards, responsibility of police increased, creating a comprehensive monopoly. Police as a 'crime-fighting force' was pushed forward (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.7-8). The police hasn't been able to live up to the expectations (Cachet & Ponsaers, 2008, p.20-24) and because of a growing attention for and visibility of crime, the unrestrained belief in police integrity and effectiveness has eroded (Fijnaut, Peters & Walgrave, 1990, p.74), creating a very negative image (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.98-102). Citizens' expectations in the area of security are constantly rising. The legislator is continuing to promulgate new laws upon new laws, giving the police more to control and register. The concept of Community Oriented Policing has tried to stop the distance between public police and citizens (Wakefield, 2003, p.50-51), however, resulting in a widening of police function (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.7-8). All services, highly regarded by the public but with a minor impact on the level of crime, had to be taken on (George & Button, 2000, p.34). On the other hand, New Public Management has caused a narrowing of the function, introducing going about things in a business like fashion (Mares, 2007, p.28; Van Hooland, 2003, 402p). In this tendency a process from 'performance indicators' till 'audit structures' becomes overriding to determine the input-output relation (Wiles, 1999, p.145-146). The balance defines whether or not the police is doing a good job. Citizens have deepened the importance of this tendency, demanding measurable results (Cools, 2002, p.146) and asking 'value for money' (Mares, 2007, p.25). Police forces end up having more work than manageable and the state gradually saw that policing can no longer be a task of the public police alone (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.7-8). The search for security is too big, the answers are insufficient (Verbeiren & Cools, 2004, p.14-15). The Junior partner theory (Kakalik & Wildhorn, 1977) and the liberal democratic wing of the fiscal constraint theory (Jones & Newburn, 1998) add an economic decline and cuts to the explanation. A burden arose in state monopoly on prevention and repression. Police departments everywhere are obliged to set priorities. This originated a debate about the core functions of a police officer. What is expelled from core business becomes a market on its own, taken over by private security industry (Cappelle, 1991, p.16-17; Cunningham et al., 1990, p.236; Cools, 2000b, p.203-216). In this way it will confirm the solid position of the private security industry in security provision. The junior partner idea stresses that both domains (public-private) are additional. Public police remains exclusively responsible for repression. Private police can take over surveillance, prevention and advice (Hoogenboom, 1994, p.64). The inferior position of the private security industry is also introduced in the hydraulic model (Hoogenboom & Morre, 1988b). Constitutional state restrains public police competences more and more, leaving a lot of tasks unfeasible. As a consequence a growing need arises to services who do have the means and possibilities, are not restricted by legislation or who are not afraid to go illegal ways (dirty work argument) (Van Laethem, Decorte & Bas, 1995, p.7). Suggesting that private police only exists because of 'beneficiations' of public police, as do the upper models, is ignoring history. (Hoogenboom, 1988, p.89) There have been private initiatives since ancient times, much longer than modern state police ever existed. A big part of the growth of the private security industry also lays in non-police tasks, such as electronic surveillance and control of alarm systems. (Jones & Newburn, 1999, p.228) Suggesting complementary and a limitation of the function to prevention is also ignoring systems as 'private justice' and 'private investigation'. (Jones & Newburn, 1998, p.21 & 98-102; Hoogenboom, 1988, p.98) A junior partner suggests that private security industry is only concerned with minor cases. However routinely they deal with almost all employee theft even those involving hundreds of thousands of euro. Junior partnership also suggests that public police directs the operations of private security industry. Private security industry are in many

cases the first to encounter a problem, they effectively direct the police by determining what will and will not be brought to their attention (Shearing & Stenning, 1983, p.502-503). Also the dirty work argument is not applicable. Since 1990 an extensive legislation is in order⁴ that determines in details what can or cannot be done by private security companies. The room they used to have to jump aside has definitely ended. In addition, the sector has lived a tendency towards professionalization. Their naturalization in the regular security chain has left them too much to loose.

The tendency towards decentralization and more civilian initiatives, more partnerships within the framework of the integrated security concern, as well as the creation of new functions by the state (Albanese, 1989, p.7- 8), obliging police to form networks and source out have made it necessary for police to replace their own organization in the universe of security provision. Clearing off these tasks, the public police has got more time and effort available. It looks as if the alleged work overload (Button, 2002, p.98-99) has more to do with the status of police monopoly today. The public-private divide model (Ponsaers, 2001) can be seen as a reaction on narrow-minded and traditional notions on policing, which ignore new forms of police and police policy. This global police model is putting forward fragmentation, redistribution of police work, disintegration, consumerism, privatization, insecurity, responsibility and 'a new blue line' as central features in explaining the growth of the private security industry (Ponsaers, 2001, p.1-42). Interaction between the public police force and the private security industry is supposedly on the increase, sometimes leading to hybrid forms of police forms or other forms of law enforcement; a mixture of police forces, regulating brigades, (non) governmental agencies. Some of them operate in the public sphere, others in the private sphere or in both (Ponsaers, 2001, p.34). The police complex (Hoogenboom, 1994) also recognizes a diversity of policing services but they all function in different realities and therefore have separated working processes. Private security industry is located in an commercial reality and operates a corporate economic order in dealing with crime, from employee crime towards computer crime. Public police operates towards common crimes strongly oriented on the underworld, for example the battle against organised crime. Between these two lay vertical and horizontal connections which point at a diversity of cooperation forms (Hoogenboom, 1994, p.428-431). In this new constellation, the state is trying to keep control, fearing to loose their monopoly on legal violence⁵. Other entities have formed layers around the centre tasks, taking over what is left out or is captivated easily. For example, forms of private research, such as of compliance officers, have already been receptive in court. The public police officers are no longer responsible for maintaining the order in football stadia. Private security agents can check parking tickets in cars. Personnel of security services of public transportation can hold pepper spray and cuffs. They can write reports and hold a person in a limited amount of cases.

4.2. The criminal justice system

The criminal justice system has also known its weaknesses. Peel speaks about the 'age of lawlessness'. Citizens have distrusted the system as disproportional legal elements, failing prosecution, slow-moving wheels of justice, the unwieldy character, a hierarchic policy, the decline of legitimacy, etc. have incited them to look for other, private forms of reacting to crime (Peel, 1971, p.29-30). The position of the victim was also neglected for years, most probably remaining an inherent feature of the system for as long as crimes are thought of a conflict between perpetrator and society over the defence of common goods (Shearing & Stenning, 1983a, p.8-9). Many efforts were made to come towards the civil critiques, yet, within the private security industry everything happens for and by the victim, which gives

them the leading part of the story. For many people, this recognition is decisive in their choice.

5. Research initiatives

Academic attention for business and private security industry has been marginal for a long time. Society is the central subject of social science and because activities of large companies, also considering security, influence current society for a great deal, science can no longer ignore these new topics. (Cools, 2002, p.147) In an indirect manner science also influenced growth of private security industry. Research showing advantages of certain services and products can have a positive effect on their saleability. CCTV and the positive rendering for example made it a hype beyond proportion and by many seen as a universal panacea in the combat of crime. (George & Button, 2000, p.35) In this research the alleged effectiveness of the security agent is a new, but important element. Logically a positive perspective would lead to an increasing trust in and demand for their services. Research did show that the quality of private security industry is highly rated. (De Waard, 1999, p.162) Whether a place is indeed safer under control of a private security guard is not yet proven. Scientific knowledge considering this topic is an unprocessed area.

Studies from the sector itself describe the feelings of security as a consequence of the attendance of private security agents. They put forward that about 50 percent of all Belgians feels sufficiently safe and 29 percent a lot safer because of attendance of private security industry. Close to 75 percent thinks private security industry is necessary in a highly or sufficient manner. Near 67 percent thinks a private security agent offers high or sufficient guarantee in order to secure citizens. And about 60 percent is an advocate of enlarging authority. (APEG-BVBO, 2008, p.12-21) Because of the dependence on the sector as the initiator of the research and because of the minor information on methodology, precaution is necessary towards the results.

6. Concluding thoughts

Explaining why private security industry grew as intensively as it did, has been a difficult exercise. The result is a complex model which cannot be brought back to one element. All of the aspects previously debated have a certain influence of which it is hard to determine which one is the strongest. The evolution must be seen as a combination of factors, occurring simultaneously and linked together in many ways. That is why we refer to it as the multifacet model for explaining growth in the private security industry. The sum is more than the separated parts together. The tendencies above still seem to be rather general. But private security industry is a social, economic and political phenomenon. General tendencies in the broad society, macro-processes, will influence their evolution just as it will influence a lot of other phenomena.

The growth of macro social processes in the private security industry is mainly the story of two leading actors and their mutual relations. Their changing positions can therefore be seen as going about from one side to the other like a pendulum. The right side represents the private security industry, the left the public police forces. Before the foundation of Belgium as an independent state, all security provision was done by private entities. Either they were protecting their own goods or they formed a group to work towards a common goal. The pendulum was completely on the right side. With the founding of the state Belgium government started to centralise all security related issues and created its own 'suppliers'. The pendulum almost made an entire swing to the left. It stayed that way for a long time. However, private security never disappeared completely, in number and impact it was only a

small part. Since the sixties private security started to grow and became a structural feature of security provision. The pendulum gradually moved more and more to the middle. Since public police still holds the monopoly on the use of violence and the core tasks in security provision, private security industry has not (yet) reached the middle. This would assume that both actors had an equal share in the security provision and are equal partners, which is still not the case. This article is part of a larger PhD-research called “Learning to guard. A research on the training and training centres of the private security industry in Belgium”. The research aims to focus on the relation between actors of government and private sector in the organization and construction of the training of private security guards. By linking the bottlenecks of the training to the constellation of power and decision making parties, we hope to give an insight in the way training is used as a power tool and discover if there are any downsides to this (wrongfully) appropriated method.

In this way, the research goes back to the prime focus of the Research Unit Social Analysis of Security (SVA). The Unit emphasizes that security is not an equal item in our society: the unequal division of power, income, social and cultural capital is also reflected in the field of security. The pure presence of an unequal division of power is the core aspect of the main research question. How is power divided and how is it used to influence the making of training. More general this inequality as a crucial characteristic is also related to private security itself and its outcome. In theory that shouldn't be a problem since inequality doesn't have to be reprehensible. But it obstructs the social dimension of security, often referred to as ‘death of the social’ (O'Mally & Palmer, 1996, p.148). Those groups of society that suffer most under crime are often also the least powerful and poor. Since they are not able to pay security, they will be obliged to live in poorly secured areas. In this way, the ‘gated communities’ of the rich push out all crime and possible risk factors (Shearing & Kempa, 2000, p.208; Mandel, 2001, p.135), creating a ‘community’ based on fear of crime and closing off society through a paranoid solidarity (Piret, 2005, p.39). Again power isn't far off. Concerning private security power is directly linked to property. The private security industry can be seen as a series of services offered to defend interests of classes in society who possess or control valuable property (Hoogenboom, 1988, p.88). Underneath the change of type of property (public-private) lies a policy of social separation (polarization) and exclusion. The difference between the ‘haves and have-nots’ is distinguished by the powers attached to being an owner, such as setting the rules and forcing them to be observed, having the facility to enter a property or not, etc. This dichotomy has even been enhanced because of the importance of property in the late capitalist society and the increasing economic degeneration. The private security industry signed up in this dichotomy, justifying their work on the owner's powers and with the purpose of securing purchasing from every act that can jeopardise threat of profit and social order (Maas-De Waal & Van Beem, 2006, p.333 – 342). In this way only the interests of people with an strong economic position will be defended. And however private security can be seen as an important way to improve social security, coordination and cooperation are crucial to avoid existing inequalities to be deepened and intensified (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2006, p.20). In addition, the tendency towards privatization is more than just a matter of being able to pay for it. Primarily it's a sociological and psychological concept (South, 1994, p.230-231) that renders the kind of society towards we evolve. Also the symbolic and practical implications of private security need to be taken into account (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2006, p.20).

Because private security is a structural characteristic of current society and as the multifacet model shows it to be a great success, it is important towards the future not only to focus on ways to avoid the inequality in security and therefore avoid private security. Some issues can't be solved and don't need to be solved. Often the debate about private security is oversimplified and deterministic as if it were an unavoidable stumbling block in a successful

strategy for more security. One could derive that society is better off without it. This view is misleading and inappropriate in current reality and will become even more so in the future, since private security is here to stay. The sad part of the story is that this negative conception of private security holds back society in fully enjoying the benefits of private security alone and also in cooperation with public police. Ignoring private security also holds the risk of ending up with a private policing system originated without discussion and critical views. Baring in mind the thought on (public) police posted by Paul Ponsaers, "*I am not afraid of a strong police, I am afraid of a weak democracy*" (Hoogenboom, 2009, p.4), it can easily be transposed to the private security industry. There are downsides to private security (Mandel, 2001, p.146) and the growing equality is, in my opinion, one of the most crucial and also the hardest to solve or at least made controllable. But despite these downsides, security can become a consumption good, meaning that it is saleable for its efficiency and effectiveness. We have to see the sector as it is, with its downsides but also have eye for the most appropriate way to downside them while we keep focussing on the benefits (Stenning, 2000, p.346-347). Nevertheless it can never be dumped on the market. Protection is necessary and a few accepted risks will have to be build in. The pursuit towards security has to be accompanied by other aims (Boutellier, 2006, 33-34). The 'social' is in this matter vital. Seeing the private security industry as a valuable partner in security provision and making an effort to look past the downsides, even trying to solve or downsize most of them, will have its implications for the policing system of the future. Private security in this way will not remain a necessary evil, but a well-considered option. It is clear that there is no guarantee that the settled characteristic of Western democracy (Ryan & Ward, 1989, 64) will continue to exist in the future. This means that one of the most desirable and advisable social constructions we know, the police system in which the public police is the most decisive actor, could and even has to change. Any system (public, private or other) will have to show its added value time in time. Services in security provision don't necessarily have to be given by one (leading) entity and there is no reason why we should stick by the dichotomy public-private. If the current system shows shortcomings, society should have the guts to let go of what we know so far in order to reach new solutions in a new security framework, in a new police system.

Notes

¹ Because of problems in the stock exchange business a number of public goods, controlled by and property of the state, were put on the private market.

² The concern is more a policy concept developed by the Committee Small Crime, also called Committee Roethof.

³ These partnerships can manifest in different forms. Boon sees it as an 'symbiotic relationship' characterized by cooperation and information exchange. O'TOOLE thinks of it as a 'police industrial complex', MARX as a 'quasi-public or quasi-private organisation' and HOOGENBOOM as 'grey policing'.

⁴ The law of April 10th, 1990 on surveillance companies, security companies and internal surveillance services, the law of July 19th, 1991 to regulate the profession of private detective.

⁵ As they already did in security provision.

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