

This article was downloaded by: [Universidad de Chile]

On: 16 May 2012, At: 13:56

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gpas20>

A realistic look at Latin American community policing programmes

Hugo Frühling^a

^a Centro de Estudios en Seguridad Ciudadana, University of Chile, Santiago, Chile

Available online: 20 Dec 2011

To cite this article: Hugo Frühling (2012): A realistic look at Latin American community policing programmes, *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy*, 22:1, 76-88

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2011.636816>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

A realistic look at Latin American community policing programmes

Hugo Frühling*

Centro de Estudios en Seguridad Ciudadana, University of Chile, Santiago, Chile

(Received 5 December 2010; final version received 1 March 2011)

Since the 1990s, every proclamation for police reform in Latin America leads to the launching of a community policing programme designed to improve police-community relations. Each of these programmes has a different name and format; some have lasted a long time, while others have been ephemeral. Community police as a proposal, strategy or philosophy for police activities is without a doubt quite popular. At various moments, police forces that are otherwise divergent in nature have all launched programmes to improve their community relations. Those agencies include The Guatemalan National Civil Police, the Panamanian National Police, the Nicaraguan Police, preventative police in various Mexican Municipalities, the Carabineros in Chile, various Argentine provincial police, the Colombian National Police, the Dominican Republic National Police, the Police of Buenos Aires Province, among many others. The fact that both politicians and police leadership constantly invoke the need to improve relations between police and the communities they serve is undoubtedly a positive step. There is recognition that the police owe something to citizens and that they should consider public demands and expectations. But beyond these aspects, we have to ask if the various practices carried out under the auspices of community policing express a similar understanding of the community policing model, the likelihood that this model might become established within the region and the necessary institutional adaptations to make that feasible.

Keywords: community policing; Latin America; evaluation; violent neighbourhoods

Since the 1990s, every proclamation for police reform in Latin America leads to the launching of a community policing programme designed to improve police-community relations. Each of these programmes has a different name and format; some have lasted a long time, while others have been ephemeral. Community police as a proposal, strategy or philosophy for police activities is without a doubt quite popular. At various moments, police forces that are otherwise divergent in nature have all launched programmes to improve their community relations. Those agencies include The Guatemalan National Civil Police, the Panamanian National Police, the Nicaraguan Police, preventative police in various Mexican Municipalities, the Carabineros in Chile, various Argentine provincial police, the Colombian National Police, the Dominican Republic National Police, the Police of Buenos Aires Province, among many others. The fact that both politicians and police leadership constantly invoke the need to improve relations between police and the

*Email: hfruhlin@iap.uchile.cl

communities they serve is undoubtedly a positive step. There is recognition that the police owe something to citizens and that they should consider public demands and expectations. But beyond these aspects, we have to ask if the various practices carried out under the auspices of community policing express a similar understanding of the community policing model, the likelihood that this model might become established within the region and the necessary institutional adaptations to make that feasible.

Many studies present a positive vision of community policing programmes (Chinchilla 2004), but there are also contradictory opinions that express skepticism regarding their long-term effectiveness and the seriousness with which they are conducted (Dammert 2007). This chapter begins by referencing the reasons for the emergence of the Community Police Model in the USA and its fundamental premises. It then explores the expressions of the so called Community Police in Latin America, evaluations of those experiences, and reflections regarding this model's future. Our conclusion is that it will be very difficult for the Community Policing model to spread throughout the region based on promises of organisational reform within the police and crime reduction, as proclaimed by its advocates. However, improving relations with the community as an objective of police activity in and of itself can produce very positive outcomes in terms of improving public service and increasing respect for the rights of citizens who interact with the police. This, in turn, should improve the public perception of the police.

Police change and innovation: the case of community police

During the final two decades of the twentieth century, a series of tactical, organisational and cultural innovations were disseminated within the police forces of the USA, Canada, Great Britain and other developed countries. Among them it is worth mentioning the community policing model; the application of conflict resolution strategies as a method for confronting patterns of criminal activity; the growing dependence on new administrative techniques, which are based on statistical analyses and organisational changes, such as the COMPSTAD case; and the use of geo-referencing instruments to determine crime 'hot spots' for dispatching police officers. These changes began in the US because of a perennial public confidence crisis in the capacity of the police to reduce crime rates and ease public fears (Weisburd and Braga 2006). Academicians interested in the topic of policing maintained that the lack of confidence was caused by public awareness of the seriously inadequate current 'standard' or professional policing in the US. These inadequacies resulted from the fact that regardless of the particular context of the crime being reported, the police response always followed a familiar pattern. The criticism focused primarily on the lack of impact on crime reduction produced by preventive patrols and reduced response times (Weisburd and Braga 2006). The perception that reactive policing – based primarily on the use of equipment and technology – was in crisis, led to a series of innovations. Among them, one of the most widely disseminated was community policing.

Various activities were carried out in the US and several European countries under the auspices of community policing: They established regular meetings between the police and residents of a particular beat, they put into practice crime prevention programmes that involved residents (neighbourhood watch programmes), they augmented youth discussion programmes and police visits to schools, small

community guidance centres were built throughout urban areas, and they conducted constant surveys to determine the effect these measures had on the community's perspective of the police (Skogang 2006). Because there was so much diversity among the programmes and subtle variations in the way they were carried out, the intellectual mentors of community policing concluded that the model was not defined by any particular programmes but by its philosophy regarding police activity, as defined by the following basic elements: (1) Police activities are planned and carried out focusing on a small geographic area; (2) Strong relationships are established with the community to facilitate an ongoing consultation process with citizens and to ensure that citizens' perspectives are considered (Sherman 1995); (3) The police forces focus on solving concrete security issues affecting local residents, instead of simply reacting when a crime occurs. (4) The previous point requires police involvement in determining the conditions and circumstances that favour offences perturbing the daily life of residents and a course of action to overcome them.

The main researchers of this model sustain that community policing is not defined by specific activities or programmes – as the tactics and programmes may change according to particular circumstances – but by the fact that it implies an organisational change in police culture and the decision-making process affecting citizen safety. Priorities established for police activities are the result of a dialogue between residents and the police (Skogang 2006). This is complemented by greater delegation of authority to mid-level officers, particularly those officers responsible for an individual beats; thus they develop local solutions for local problems.

Researchers agree on the fact that even countries with highly professional police forces face serious challenges putting into practice all of the organisational and cultural aspects of community-focused aforementioned. Although solving a community's security problems requires community participation to identify and prioritise those problems (Rosenbaum 1998), it's not always easy to foster such participation. Most research shows that it is difficult to establish a solid relationship between the police and local residents in every instance, due in part to residents' fear of retaliation for collaborating with the police. Another aspect looks at how police make decisions when facing diversity in opinion within a given community. What decision-making method is appropriate and legitimate when there are diverse or even contradictory priorities and demands within a neighbourhood? This dilemma is greater in cities like those of Latin America, where a perceived lack of security in higher income neighbourhoods stems from their close proximity to socially precarious populations that may not even have legal title to their property. Further doubts exist regarding the truly innovative nature of community policing. Is it necessarily more proactive or less reactive? Do they make extensive use of solutions that involve various public agencies, or are their operations based on patrols, detentions and criminal investigation after the fact?

In the US, the enthusiasm for community policing is noticeably less today than in the past (Mastrofski 2006). This is partly explained by the priority given to terrorism in recent years, although some authors point out that community policing represents a good response to that threat (Clarke and Newman 2008). However, even critics recognise that in areas with community policing there were significant benefits to the police image and there seems to be a lower level of public fear. Thus, it makes sense that community policing is held up as an excellent alternative for countries where the police suffer from very low levels of public approval and unable to stem

growing crime rates. Community policing thus represents a very attractive model for politicians and police authorities. Precisely because of its popularity, though, many such programmes are purely cosmetic and there is no interest in promoting true police reform. In Latin America we see two types of community policing experiences: Genuine efforts that seek to transform the police force versus efforts that seek to merely project a better image of the police. The very first efforts to implement community policing programmes began in the 1990s.

Community policing in Latin America

The first attempts at community policing began in Brazil, initially in the state of Espiritu Santo and later in Rio de Janeiro, where in the mid-1990s a community police programme was launched in Copacabana (Muniz *et al.* 1997). These experiences were repeated in other countries and jurisdictions. As aforementioned, some programmes were ephemeral, initiated by one administration and discontinued by the next. Generally, they were pilot programmes that were not replicated in broader areas because of a lack of human resources in the police, or because decreasing levels of public safety gave rise to more repressive policies. Two of the most extensive community-type programmes to be carried out were in São Paulo, Brazil and Bogotá, Colombia. In both cases the police forces were among Latin America's most professional.

The São Paulo community policing programme

The São Paulo programme officially began at the end of 1997 and was conducted by the Military Police Force, which has both prevention and public safety duties. This programme had three central goals: To transform the military police into an open organisation that consults and collaborates with the community; to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of police services, particularly to increase respect for citizen rights and the rule of law; and to improve public safety through crime reduction, greater order and increased security (De Mesquita Neto 2004). The police initially selected 41 zones within the region to implement the project. They deployed patrol, transit, railroad, forestry and female officers as well as firefighters. The post-commanders chose the neighbourhoods where they would initiate the project. Between December 1997 and July 2001, community policing programmes were begun in 199 of the 386 military police posts throughout the state.¹ That is, half of all posts implemented community policing (De Mesquita Neto 2004). From September 1997 to May 2000, 239 community police sub-commissaries were established and nearly 16,000 officers went through the specific community policing courses (Kahn 2000). Analysts who have studied the São Paulo example agree that the most notable characteristic of the programme is the operation of these small sub-commissaries.

Since 1998, the São Paulo community police programme relied on international technical cooperation as a means of perfecting the model. Experts from the US, Canada, France and Japan were invited to Brazil and military police personnel travelled to Canada and Japan. The operations of the Community Police sub-commissaries were restructured in order to transform them into the Japanese Koban model and a System of Community Information was established. The primary programmes carried out through the sub-commissaries under the Koban model

included assistance to crime victims; legal guidance; educational programmes about drugs and violence in schools; social assistance; help for mothers; and strengthening civil values among youth.

According to De Mesquita Neto (2004), to consolidate the São Paulo programme, its policies, strategies and procedures must be defined more clearly; low and mid-level personnel must be integrated into planning decisions; there must be greater coordination between the Military and Civil Police Forces; officers need practical training with effective tools and techniques for problem solving; and there must be a constant process for evaluation and supervision. Existing evaluations are based on surveys. For example, Kahn (2004) compares community perspectives regarding traditional forms of police activity to those of community police, revealing significant differences in São Paulo. Of those surveyed, 56.9% said the community police are acceptable, while only 10.5% gave the same answer for the traditional police forces. Only 0.6% considered the community police to be corrupt, while that number was 42.1% for traditional police forces. Only 0.6% considers community police to be violent, while 60.2% answered the same for traditional police. On the other hand, only 14.5% of people surveyed said that community police were more efficient than traditional police (Kahn 2004). However, there is no evaluation that allows us to assert the programme's real impact, if the programme resulted in improved quality of police services, or if there are innovative ways of providing those services that could not exist without the community policing programme.

Bogotá: the community police experience in Colombia

There are three fundamental factors that came together in the Colombian experience when developing the model: Police will and initiative; municipal priorities focused on public safety; and support from private industry. In order to implement the model, the Office of Community Police selected 1064 police officers to staff the new department. To be eligible, the officers must possess an impeccable C.V., a predisposition for community work, and a recommendation from their direct supervisor. In addition, the police invested more than two million dollars to support and train the selected officers as well as to modernise their technical resources. The training originally targeted 21 police officials selected to make up the Community Police Force. They travelled to Spain to familiarise themselves with the Neighbourhood Policing model in Barcelona. The mid-level commanders and patrol officers were trained at the University Javeriana in Bogotá to develop the skills they needed in order to facilitate a closer relationship with the community. The Spanish-trained officers who made up the community police force were charged with creating the Community Police Action Plan for Bogotá, which implemented the model around three fronts (Llorente 2004): Prevention, dissuasion and client service.

Regarding prevention, four areas of action were defined: Treating risk factors; community administration; inter-institutional management for problem solving and an educational component about coexistence. Dealing with risk factors implies the need to identify physical and social problems within communities. To this end, in 2001 a door to door census was conducted in the jurisdictions where the Community Police operate.

Community management focused on the strengths existing in the Local Safety Fronts and the Schools for Public Safety. The Local Safety Fronts were designed to

empower collaboration and self-protection among residents through neighbourhood alarm systems and telephone networks. Meanwhile, the Schools focused on educating leaders in penal matters, police functions and prevention measures for citizens. The second front of the Action Plan, dissuasion, includes two specific areas of action: Conflict mediation to promote conciliation measures among neighbours and dissuading offenders through permanent police patrols (Llorente 2004). The third front of the plan deals with client (community) services by means of procedures for accepting complaints and suggestions as part of the services offered at police stations.

In order to meet these three sets of objectives, the community police must have a significant presence within a particular area so that officers can attain a working understanding of community needs. This requires a greater police to resident ratio than exists in traditional police forces. In Bogotá, the community police model put in place consisted of a special police unit devoted to community surveillance. Data from Ruiz suggest that the growth rate for community police officers are much less than the overall growth in the number of Colombian police officers. Furthermore, community police represent only 8% of Bogotá's total force (Ruiz 2008). The lack of sufficient coverage by the community police officers was noted in the 2000 survey on Victimization and Safety of Bogotá, which revealed that only 13% of households and 16% of commercial establishments knew that community police served their neighbourhoods (Llorente 2004).

As in other Latin American countries, neighbourhood-police meetings rarely focused on defining priority problems for the residents and discussing the most appropriate solutions. Meetings are also infrequent, in part because of a lack of community police officers (Ruiz 2008) to cover the number of Fronts created. The programme also lost much of its initial impetus (Ruiz 2008) because Colombia's more extreme safety threats, such as from guerillas and drug-traffickers, consume police resources and energy and inhibit innovative initiatives like community policing. Furthermore, the vertical structure of the police department runs counter to independent activities carried out by officers who work on the street in direct contact with the community. Nevertheless, there is evidence that during the past-decade public support for the police has increased significantly. While such improvement is due to several factors, not just community policing, it is reasonable to believe that this programme has strengthened the police's prestige in general.

In 2010, the National Police launched a new Programme, 'The National Quadrant Community Surveillance Plan'. Based partially in the previous community policing programme, it organises police services in areas called quadrants. The community police as an independent unit within the police disappears, and all police officers are to act in accordance with community policing values and orientations. Thus, whenever possible, the Police are supposed to promote educational as well as interagency programmes aimed at dealing with risk factors and conflicts between citizens. The New Plan is being implemented in all major Colombian cities at the moment.

Community policing programmes in critical contexts

Community policing has also begun in particularly violent neighbourhoods by police departments notorious for corruption or abuse of power. There are a number of case

studies that illustrate such situations. The first of such programmes is the Special Areas Policing Group of Rio de Janeiro's Military Police Force (GPAAE, its Portuguese acronym), a second one is the more recent 'Pacifying Police Units', also of the Rio de Janeiro's Military Police Force (UPP, its Portuguese acronym), and the third is the Safe Neighbourhood Programme of the Dominican Republic's National Police in the Capotillo Neighbourhood.

GPAAE, which began in the Pavão-Pavaozinho/Cantagalo favelas from 2000 to 2002 and in the Cavalao favelas from 2002 to 2004, was a collaborative effort between the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro and the non-governmental organisation Viva Rio. As the authors explain, this programme continued operating in spite of extremely adverse circumstances (Albernaz *et al.* 2007). Its primary goals, deliberately limited in scope, were to simultaneously reduce the number of homicides and police abuse, and to noticeably reduce the visible presence of drug-trafficking gangs in the community. The programme designers knew that eradicating micro-trafficking would be very difficult and therefore focused on homicides. The programme also included the educational goal to transform the image youth held of the police and thus change their desire to emulate drug-traffickers. To achieve this end, extreme measures were put in place to control police abuse and to control or prevent public participation in social activities carried out by gang members and their leaders.

The project was able to establish order within the favelas by responding to unmet social needs caused by the lack of public services in these neighbourhoods. An evaluation of this experience suggests that the programme was very successful at reducing the presence of certain factors that impact security. The goal was not to eradicate drug-trafficking, nor was that achieved (da Silva and Cano 2007), but shootouts (and thus the homicide rate) were reduced. Analyses of project results coincide with many other studies of community policing in Latin America. Of course, no constant dialogue exists here between the police and the residents that can inform priorities for police activities and their strategies for resolving problems. This may be due to the military nature of police training or because of the lack of citizen autonomy from the Government. Regardless of the cause, in truth a police-resident dialogue between equals is impossible. This is even clearer in high crime neighbourhoods, whose residents are stigmatised and where a significant percentage of them may have been involved in criminal acts. Given the long history of conflict between the police and residents, on the other hand, it is very probable that residents wondered how long the GPAAE intervention would last before the police returned to their previous military tactics. Thus the analyses of this experience indicate that it was not a true expression of the community policing philosophy, but a combination of police control and social assistance (Albernaz *et al.* 2007). However, that does not nullify its value in terms of the important degree of order and security it offered to sectors that are habitually left without protection. So while this effort's results were limited, its activities were indeed innovative compared to the strictly repressive practices historically applied in both of these favelas.

In November 2008, the government of Rio de Janeiro inaugurated a new community policing programme in some of the most dangerous favelas of the city. This consisted of the establishment of 'Pacifying Police Units' (UPPs) which are a special force within the military police in charge of policing the favelas, taking control of their streets and developing community policing programmes in them.

These police units are comprised of fresh recruits who are just coming out of the police academy, as a way of ensuring that they are not corrupt. Before they are deployed in the favelas they receive specialised training with emphasis on community relations. Once these police units achieve a measure of success in clearing out drug traffickers from the favelas they are policing, they stay in the favelas. The pacification process is usually followed by social programmes aimed at improving social conditions within the favelas.

This new programme has been hailed as a major success in Brazil (Núcleo Disque Denuncia 2010). However, some analysts point out that the first phase of the intervention in the favelas, which usually involves militarised units of the police and of the armed forces, is considered by some residents to be too repressive. Another problem deals with the capacity of the programme to deal with all the favelas in the city (WOLA 2011), as the UPPs operate only in a few of them. The impact of these community policing programmes in the long run is hard to predict, though. Desmond Arias asserts that violence within the slums can be explained by the existing alliance between political leaders, community leaders within the slums and the kingpins of criminal gangs (Arias 2006). Such alliances would thus beg the question as to whether or not programmes such as GPAE or the 'Pacifying Police Units' are viable in the long-term.

The Dominican Republic case represents a more global effort at police reform to transform a police force characterised by high degrees of abuse and corruption as well as severe problems in training, professional development, democratic values, a lack of equipment, and scarce coverage in outlying geographic areas. Police reform in that country is part of the Democratic Security Plan, which became public policy in 2005 and focused on two major goals: To rebuild public confidence in the police by developing a perspective of closer community ties within the police force and promoting shared responsibility among the citizens for defining security policies (Bobeá 2011). This plan has several action areas, among the most important were prevention efforts, institutional reform, and new social programmes to address risk factors at the local level.

Of the changes made to the police, one that stands out is development of rapid intervention. One such intervention took place in the Capotillo neighbourhood because it suffers from high rates of homicide and narcotic resale and because the community had a tradition of cooperative work and organising. The Capotillo Plan, which replaced massive citizen arrests with selective and legally legitimate detentions, required significant participation by government and public institutions such as the Police, the Secretary of Education and the Attorney General's Office. The police focus groups and interviews carried out as part of the plan indicate that strong negative attitudes predominate within the police corps toward community participants, whose lack of confidence in the police is just as strong. Though the programme is in its initial incubation period, Bobeá argues that to expand and sustain long-run the positive results from Capotillo, substantial and permanent changes toward more democratic policing must occur in the police department, which require political support.

Experiences over the last decade demonstrate how difficult this can be, especially amid high crime rates that lead to increased discussion of heavy-handed tactics that limit community-focused programmes (Ungar 2009). Though there is no impact evaluation to demonstrate with precision the impact of this intervention, the

Capotillo programme is a qualitative improvement in police work with generally positive results. What is less clear, however, are how much the dialogue between the police and the community defines priorities for police activities and the use of conflict resolution strategies as an integral part of police tactics. The investments of the public and police resources necessary for the Capotillo Project make it difficult to replicate at a national level. Considering all these aspects, we must think about these examples of building police-community relationships from an evaluative perspective by considering the degree to which these efforts represent a global and sustainable in the long run change in police activities and public safety policy.

Revising the building of police-community relationship in Latin America

As a starting point it is worth pointing out that in Latin America there are no examples of community policing as defined by Skogang (2006) at the beginning of this chapter. If we limit our discussion to Skogang's terms, Latin American countries lack the cultural changes in their police institutions that are promoted in more developed countries, the decentralisation of authority that is normally recommended, and effective collaboration between the police and the communities they serve. The relationships between the police and the community in the programmes described tend to be episodic and so far these programmes have not led to major cultural change within the police forces. The literature does not support the premise that these programmes are capable of affecting or modifying behaviours within the whole of the police. Except for the most recent case of 'The National Quadrant Community Surveillance Plan' of the Colombian National Police, they are mostly pilot programmes, and a significant portion of the police do not participate in them (Frühling 2004a, 2004b). In addition, evaluations do not provide sufficient information for us to understand if community police activities truly represent anything more than the operation of very specific unit within the police. In essence, we know little still about what relation exists between the so called community police in Bogotá and São Paulo and detectives or other police units, such as drug enforcement or preventive surveillance patrols. In addition, our own observations also seem to confirm that there are serious obstacles to achieve effective decentralisation of the police in Latin America.

In summary, the police activities to which we have referred are programmes attempting to build relationships with the community and are still not an effective expression of a community policing philosophy within the police forces, a philosophy that transcends traditional police tactics. This certainly puts into question the hopes of many people who defend the community policing model and who think it could substantially change police practices. However, this does not nullify the importance of the programmes we have been discussing, especially considering the fact that some authors doubt such changes have occurred in practice even within US police departments. Police forces in the US have professional training, report to local authorities and have a long civil tradition, all of which helps them meet the requirements of community policing (Mastrofski 2006).

In terms of the changes in public safety these programmes produce, the evidence is not entirely clear. While the GPAE, UPPs and Capotillo projects reduced homicide, this result could be due to the type of patrols employed and

a concentration of police resources in those areas. Nothing indicates that communication with local residents played a significant role. This is not a critique of community programmes, but we must more clearly define the components of police activities that produced changes in these contexts. This will allow us to define which changes were produced by the community relations programme and which might be the product of other policing strategies. It is obvious that relationships with residents can favourably impact police-community collaborations and the community's perception of the police, but these represent two different impacts. Furthermore, the programmes put into practice in Latin America that are designed to build community-police relationships have faced difficulties, in turn reducing their impact on institutional change within police institutions. Following we list some of the limitations faced by these programmes.

Some of these programmes have insufficient personnel to cover public relations, carry out patrols on foot and conduct meetings with neighbourhood residents. Sometimes personnel have not been assigned to cover the project's needs (Chinchilla 2004). Only about 8% of the Bogotá Police Department officers were assigned to community policing. Even if that number of officers existed for a particular pilot project, it is very probable that they would not be available to replicate the experience at a national level. A second aspect conspiring against programmes that build community-police relationships is the difficulty of guaranteeing officer permanency in the neighbourhoods to which they are assigned. This is due to the demand for police in other areas, requests from officers to be transferred, and internal policies governing professional advances and transfers; all of which lead to the constant movement of personnel. In addition, there is a policy of transferring officers to prevent them from developing friendships or complicity with groups of residents within a given neighbourhood. This situation ends up undermining efforts to strengthen public relations.

A third aspect that affects these programmes to build community-police relationships has to do with police training. Effective leadership is fundamental to success of these programmes. But it's also essential that lower ranking police identify with the programmes. Experience tells us that this is a problem in Latin America. In the case of a particular programme in Belo Horizonte, the subordinate military police officers who patrol the streets have minimal knowledge of the community policing programme compared to their superior officers. A survey showed large differences between the levels of training received by higher officers and subordinate personnel in terms of their awareness of the community policing programme underway (Beato 2004).

In combination, the reality of community policing programmes researched shows us that in the Latin American experience, citizen participation does not define the priorities of police activity and that citizens have minimal preparation to interact with the police and to initiate actions designed to solve the public safety problems they face. Because of this, training people who participate in local neighbourhood committees is absolutely necessary if we expect citizen participation to be anything more than a process of complaining about police inaction, but to become effective advocacy for designing measures that solve existing security problems (Beato 2004).

Community police in Latin America: looking into the future

As we have already expressed, either for ideological reasons or due to a lack of sufficient and adequately trained human resources, it seems difficult to believe that Latin America is capable of replicating some of the more advanced experiences in community policing. For this reason, the programmes described here are examples of improving community-police relations more than of a true community policing philosophy in and of itself. Therefore, it is necessary to demystify some exaggerated claims regarding the programmes implemented in order to prevent them from being presented as examples of police innovation, when indeed some of them are not. However, the effort to establish a relationship with the communities served opens opportunities for more lasting changes. Exploring these changes requires us to ask new questions when diagnosing the programmes presented herein. The analysis we conduct on this topic as researchers should go beyond comparing the implementation of community policing programmes in Latin America with their North American or European counterparts. The shortcomings observed are clear, as well as the reasons for them. Indeed our questioning should be directed towards other key aspects, such as:

- Beyond conducting meetings with community groups, is there a new emphasis on quality of the public service offered by the police? If so, how is this new service conducted and measured?
- Is the creation of community programmes accompanied by new models of police training that include new subject matter? If so, does that training extend to the entire police force?
- Are these programmes accompanied by reinforcement of internal controls on bad police conduct? If so, what are the mechanisms selected to do so?
- Have new and genuine mechanisms been created for the police to come clean, rather than creating mere propaganda measures?
- Is there effective communication between the so called community police and other specialised police units? If so, what are the goals and the results of that communication?
- Can you say that the product of police responses is changing to confront particular safety issues? Does persuasion replace repression in certain instances, are indiscriminate detentions of suspects replaced by more selective actions, and is there better coordination of preventive measures with criminal investigations?

If the answer to most of these questions is ‘yes’, then regardless of whether or not a ‘pure’ community policing model is implemented, the promotion of this model in Latin American should produce very positive results.

Note

1. The military police is organised in commands, battalions and companies. Companies are led by a captain and they have between 100 and 300 police officers.

References

- Albernaz, R.E., Caruso, H., and Patricio, L., 2007. Tensões e desafios de um policiamento comunitário em favelas do Rio de Janeiro. O caso do Grupamento de Policiamento em Áreas Especiais. *Sao Paulo em Perspectiva*, 21 (2),39–52
- Arias, E.D., 2006. *Drugs and democracy in Rio de Janeiro: trafficking, social networks, and public security*. Chapel Hill, CA: University of North Carolina Press.
- Beato, C., 2004. Reinventar la policía: la experiencia de Belo Horizonte [Reinventing the police: the experience of Belo Horizonte]. In: H. Frühling, ed. *En calles mas seguras: estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina* [Safer streets: studies on community policing in Latin America]. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 139–175.
- Bobea, L., 2011. The emergence of a democratic citizen security policy in the Dominican Republic. *Policing & Society 2011*, 1–19.
- Chinchilla, L., 2004. El caso del municipio de Villa Nueva, Guatemala [The case of the municipality of Villa Nueva, Guatemala]. In: H. Frühling, ed. *En calles mas seguras: estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina* [Safer streets: studies on community policing in Latin America]. Washington: Inter-American Development Bank, 39–64.
- Clarke, V.R. and Newman, G.R., 2008. Police and the prevention of terrorism. *Policing*, 1 (1), 9–20.
- Dammert, L., 2007. Dilemas de la reforma policial en América Latina. In: Haydée Caruso, Jacqueline Muniz and António Carlos Carballo Blanco eds. *Policía, Estado y Sociedad: Prácticas y Saberes Latinoamericanos*. Rio de Janeiro: Publit, 145–164.
- Da Silva, G.M.D. and Cano, I., 2007. Between damage reduction and community policing: the case of Pavao- Pavaozinho-Cantagalo in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas. In: T.R. Tyler, ed. *Legitimacy and criminal justice. International perspectives*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 186–214.
- De Mesquita Neto, P., 2004. La policía comunitaria en São Paulo: problemas de implementación y consolidación [Community policing in Sao Paulo: implementation and consolidation problems]. In: H. Frühling, ed. *En calles mas seguras: estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina* [Safer streets: studies of community policing in Latin America]. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 109–137.
- Frühling, H., 2004a. La policía comunitaria en América Latina: un análisis basado en cuatro estudios de caso [Community policing in Latin America: an analysis based on four case studies]. In: H. Frühling, ed. *En calles mas seguras: estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina* [Safer streets: studies on community policing in Latin America]. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 1–38.
- Frühling, H., 2004b. Policía comunitaria y reforma policial en América Latina: ¿Cual es su impacto? [Community policing and police reform in Latin America: what is its impact?]. In: H. Frühling and A. Candina, eds. *En participación ciudadana y reformas a la policía en América del Sur* [Citizen participation and police reforms in South America]. Santiago: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo, 11–44.
- Kahn, T., 2000. *Policía comunitaria: avaliando a experiencia*. Research Report of ILANUD financed by the Ford Foundation.
- Kahn, T., 2004. *Policía comunitaria: evaluando la experiencia de São Paulo* [Community policing: evaluating the experience of Sao Paulo], In: H. Frühling and A. Candina, eds. *En participación ciudadana y reformas a la policía en América del Sur* [Citizen participation and police reforms in South America], Santiago: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo, 188–225.
- Llorente, M., 2004. La experiencia de Bogotá: contexto y balance [The Bogotá experience: context and balance]. In: H. Frühling, ed. *Calles más seguras: estudios de policía comunitaria en América Latina* [Safer streets: community policing studies in Latin America]. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 65–108.
- Mastrofski, S., 2006. Critic. Community policing: a skeptical view. In: D. Weisburd and A.A. Braga, eds. *Police innovation. Contrasting perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 44–73.

- Muniz, J., *et al.*, 1997. Resistencias e dificuldades de um programa de policiamento comunitario. *Tempo Social*, 9 (1), 197–214.
- Núcleo Disque-Denúncia de Estudos, Pesquisas e Resultados., 2010. Heróis Anônimos. UPPs- A Visão da Favela. Rio de Janeiro.
- Rosenbaum, D.P., 1998. The changing role of the police: assessing the current transition to community policing. In: J.P. Brodeur, ed. *How to recognize good policing: problems and issues*. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 3–29.
- Ruiz, V.J.C., 2008. Polícia comunitaria en Colombia: un proceso al Ralenti, professor University of Rosario, Bogota, Colombia. Unpublished manuscript.
- Sherman, L.W., 1995. The police. In: J.Q. Wilson and J. Petersilia, eds. *Crime*. San Francisco: Center for Self-Governance, 327–348.
- Skogang, W.S., 2006. Advocate. The promise of community policing. In: D. Weisburd and A.A. Braga, eds. *Police innovation. Contrasting perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 27–43.
- Ungar, M., 2009. La mano dura: current dilemmas in Latin American police reform. In: M. Bergman and L. Whitehead, eds. *Criminality, public security and the challenge to democracy in Latin America*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 93–118.
- Weisburd, D. and Braga, A.A., 2006. Introduction: understanding police innovation. In: D. Weisburd and A.A. Braga, eds. *Police innovation. Contrasting perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–23.
- Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), 2011. *Tackling urban violence in Latin America: reversing exclusion through smart policing and social investment*. Washington, DC: WOLA.