Conditions, Actions and Purposes (CAP): A Dynamic Model for Community Policing in Europe

Megan O'Neill[*], Mark van der Giessen[*], Petra Saskia Bayerl[*], Yvonne Hail[*], Elizabeth Aston[*] and Jarmo Houtsonen[*]

Abstract Despite its popularity as a policing method and evidence of its positive affect on communities, community policing has defied attempts to establish a clear definition and replicable form. Often regarded as an Anglo-American policing method in origin, community policing is now found across the world and is growing in influence. The need for differentiated local implementation raises important questions regarding the core features of community policing to guide the work of practitioners. Integrating insights from the existing literature and a trans-European project involving 323 interviews with community members and police officers across eight countries, we propose a dynamic model for community policing. In this original model, we differentiate between the *conditions*, *actions* and *purposes* of community policing (CAP) and describe how these core components are required for effective community policing, interrelated, and flexible enough for local implementation. Accordingly, we show how the CAP model is adaptable while at the same time retaining a sense of what makes 'community policing' a unique and identifiable policing method. We conclude our study with a discussion of the implications for research and practice internationally.

Introduction

Despite its popularity as a policing method and evidence of its positive effects on communities (Gill *et al.*, 2014), community policing has defied attempts to establish a clear definition and replicable form. One reason is that community policing (CP) is meant to be adaptable to its social and geographical context, meaning that its implementation varies between locations, even when performed by the same police service. Multiple scholars have attempted to summarize CP's core components or principles (for example Brogden and Nijhar, 2005; Skogan, 2006; Terpstra, 2009). Yet, these previous attempts tend to

[*]Megan O'Neill, University of Dundee, Scotland. E-mail: m.oneill@dundee.ac.uk

[*]Mark van der Giessen, Aalto University, Finland

[*]Petra Saskia Bayerl, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

[*]Yvonne Hail, Police Scotland, Scotland

[*]Elizabeth Aston, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland

[*]Jarmo Houtsonen, Police University College Finland, Finland

E-mail: mark.vandergiessen@aalto.fi (M.G.), p.s.bayerl@shu.ac.uk (P.S.B.), yvonne.hail@scotland.police.uk (Y.H.), l.aston@napier.ac.uk (E.A.), jarmo.houtsonen@polamk.fi (J.H.)

present CP as a list of unsystematized discrete elements, omitting how these are interdependent, how they connect to the wider systems and structures of the police organization, and how they can be varied to incorporate contextual needs.

This is an important omission as the management and delivery of CP can be an effective method in building trust between the public and the police. Research has suggested that policing methods delivered in a consistent way, by familiar officers in specific geographical locations, supports strong and positive relationships between the police and residents (Skogan, 2006; Myhill, 2012; O'Neill and McCarthy, 2012; Gill *et al.*, 2014; O'Neill, 2019; de Maillard and Zagrodzki, 2020; Fenn and Bullock, 2022). However, without a clear model for what is (and is not) meant by 'community policing', its core components and their inter-connectedness, and the resources it requires to be effective, this method of policing risks losing coherence both within and across contexts as well as becoming undervalued as a unique policing method. The main objective of this paper is to consider what CP is envisioned to be in the literature, what it seems to be in practice, what the public expect it to be and to develop a conceptual model which will find an effective synthesis of these. We will establish an empirically grounded model for CP that identifies the structure and interdependencies between the core elements of CP and provides flexibility for implementation within a particular local organizational ethos and resource system. Thus, it is a dynamic and adaptable model that defines CP according to its core elements in a structured way, rather than as a simple list of components. We draw on 323 interviews with community members and police officers spread across eight European countries that reflect a variety of policing traditions and cultural orientations.

In doing so, we contribute to the existing literature on CP through our systematic analysis of which operational actions are included within this method, which organizational orientations need to be in place for it to be effective as well as, more fundamentally, the primary goals that this method seeks to achieve. We call this model 'CAP', which stands for the *Conditions, Actions* and *Purposes* for CP.

The paper will begin with an assessment of the current international literature on CP to give an overview of how it has been defined and utilized to date. We will then describe the methods we used in our *trans*-European research of CP and how the findings from this work shaped our CP model. Next, we will explore each of the three aspects of the CAP model in detail, demonstrating through our project data how they are flexible to account for a variety of contexts. Finally, we will conclude with an assessment of the implications of the model for CP literature, policing policy and policing practice across Europe as well as further afield.

Literature review

Ambiguity in the concept 'community policing'

Scholarship on CP tends to situate the concept as an umbrella term, which includes a variety of proactive and preventative styles of policing (Herrington and Millie, 2006) as well as forms of policing which are geographically bound to a specific neighbourhood or local area. Accordingly, there are many examples of CP that have unique adaptations for their context. For example, England and Wales developed the label of 'neighbourhood policing' for any style of policing which delivers a problem-solving orientated local policing service (Hail, 2016). In France, the term used is 'police de proximité' (de Maillard and Zagrodzki, 2020) and in Spain it is defined as 'policia de proximidad', which both roughly translate to 'proximity' policing (Dehbi, 2019). This is also the case in Denmark and The Netherlands (Kammersgaard *et al.*, 2023) In Scotland, the label attached to locally delivered policing is 'community policing' with Hamilton-Smith *et al.* (2013) arguing that both the community and neighbourhood policing concepts themselves sit under the overarching paradigm of 'reassurance policing'.

Previous scholars have identified some of the risks inherent in an ambiguous operationalization of CP. Terpstra (2009) highlights the ways in which a lack of clear definition of CP together with ambiguity surrounding the concept in both policy and practice has the potential to create an unpredictable

environment for officers, who must nevertheless be accountable for any policing issues in their area. This variation in local policing discourse has also resulted in a large volume of literature which attaches various labels to the concepts of 'local/community/neighbourhood/reassurance' policing, with some authors using all three interchangeably in the same publication (Innes, 2005; Myhill, 2012). The result has been a general sense of ambiguity and confusion surrounding the concept of CP and has exacerbated the need for a singular yet flexible conceptualization (O'Neill, 2010).

In search of core components and definitions of CP

As noted by Brogden and Nijhar (2005: 23), 'searching for a definition of CP is a will-of-the-wisp'. Difficult though it may be, this has not deterred many attempts to do so, and conceptualisations have often involved the creation of a list of core elements or principles. Skogan (2006) for instance provides a definition of CP as an operational policing style that focuses on three key principles: *decentralization*, *citizen involvement* and *problem-solving*. When implemented together, these elements of CP are said to allow frontline officers working with local residents to become more flexible in their approach to dealing with issues at a neighbourhood level (Skogan, 2006; de Maillard and Zagrodzki, 2020). Gill *et al.* (2014) identify CP as a policing 'philosophy' and cite core concepts of '*community partnerships, organizational transformation* and *problem solving*' (emphasis added) (2014: 400). Similarly, Terpstra (2009) in his study on CP delivery across the Netherlands defines five core elements: *police proximity* to their local community, a policing style with a *problem-solving* focus, based on *prevention* and a *partnership approach* to local policing with key stakeholders and *citizen involvement*. In the UK, Tuffin *et al.* (2006) developed their own working definition of neighbourhood policing involving '…dedicated police resources for local areas and for the police and their partners to work together with the public to understand and tackle the problems that matter to them most' (p. 1). Their key principles were *targeted policing activity* (geographical) with a *problem-solving focus*, *community involvement* in

the process of identifying and resolving local priorities and the presence of *visible, accessible* and *locally known* officers in the neighbourhood. In Brogden and Nijhar's (2005: 23–24) international analysis of CP, they propose five 'general propositions': a small community focus, address problems that traditional response policing cannot, community consensus to guide police response, locally accountable policing and using police discretion positively.

These definitions above, while taking the 'shopping list' approach, do show some degree of overlap and consensus between them in the items on their lists. We would argue, however, that this degree of similarity is not sufficient as robust assessment of what 'community policing' is. The method of listing elements or principles neglects a systematic examination of how these elements not only interrelate but are in fact mutually dependent and reinforcing. These interrelationships will continue across policing contexts and jurisdictions.

The local implementation of CP

The export of CP to both European and developing nations has generated debate regarding how effectively CP concepts can cross-national borders (Ferreira, 1996). As Skogan and Hartnett (1997) have highlighted, the departure point for CP is an orientation in officers to work from 'the bottom-up'. This involves a great deal of autonomous working, close collaboration with the public and local agencies, as well as setting priorities based on local need rather than on central police policies. In some policing jurisdictions, this is not a very challenging leap to make. For others, it could be insurmountable for a variety of reasons. Brogden and Nijhar (2005) discuss how CP is designed to address problems that did not exist in European Eastern bloc countries like Slovenia in the immediate post-Cold War era. Community Police Forums failed in South Africa due to conflicting ideas as to their purpose for police officers and citizens (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005). In addition, successful CP is intended to become embedded in communities, whether these are based on interest or geography, with its success factors contingent on the expectations of each of these varied groups. However, there is no guarantee that all community groups or residents will

engage with or accept CP principles (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2013; Kammersgaard *et al.*, 2023). The concept of 'community' is itself problematic (Herbert, 2006; de Maillard and Zagrodzki, 2020), as is assuming that any particular group of people will see themselves as 'partners' in the maintenance of social order (Lynes, 1996; Brogden and Nijhar, 2005; Madsen and Kammersgaard, 2022).

Allied to this are variable policing types across the globe. Familiar to many readers will be the Anglo-American type of policing, which locates its origins in the Peelite tradition of the London Metropolitan Police (O'Neill, 2010). This type is based on a conception of the police working with the public to address crimes and disorder and thus is dependent upon good relationships with those publics. For the Anglo-American type, our research considers the cases of police forces in England (decentralized) and in Scotland (centralized).

This primacy of good relationships between the police and policed is not the case everywhere. Other countries will espouse something more along the lines of the Gendarmerie/Napoleonic type such as France, Italy or Belgium, the latter of which features in our research. In this formulation, there is a centralized police force which is in effect an army that defends the state from internal threats. This militaristic force will be balanced by other, multiple, local agencies, or by a national policing agency (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005; de Maillard and Zagrodzki, 2020). Cooperation from the public is not a requirement.

Many countries in Europe have single, national police services which, while not as militarized as the Gendarmerie, will tend to focus on more political and administrative tasks. They are primarily accountable to the central government and not to local authorities or communities. Policing tends to be orientated towards crime prevention and investigation, rather than towards quality of life issues or general welfare (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005). Examples from our research include Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland and the Northern Republic of Macedonia.

The final prominent policing type evident in Europe is that of the decentralized approach. The main example from our research is Germany. Each German state is responsible for its own policing, and this can lead to a wide variation in practices across the country. The lack of a central police authority in these decentralized countries does not necessarily mean that each police service will be more receptive to CP as a method, however (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005).

Therefore, the successful development, implementation and achievement of intended CP outcomes is contingent on the appropriate interpretation of the localized social context (van der Giessen *et al.*, 2017). The variations in social, political and cultural context of each community within and across boarders should be viewed as a fundamental variable when planning and implementing CP practice. We would argue that to date, existing approaches to CP have not yet fully accommodated local contexts while also retaining the core components of the policing method. Our research will consider what CP looks like and how it is experienced in a variety of policing jurisdictions and types in Europe (Anglo-American/Peelite, Gendarmerie/Napoleonic, national/centralized and decentralized) and reflect on how this aligns with current conceptualisations of the practice. We will use these findings to develop a dynamic model of CP that not only presents a more detailed and robust conceptualization of the practice but one which will also transcend a variety of policing contexts and public expectations. Ours is a rare cross-national study of this important policing method.

Research questions

Based on our discussion of the extant literature we formulate three research questions that structure our subsequent analysis and inform the key characteristics of our proposed model for CP:

1. How is CP conceptualized by policing practitioners in Europe across the four policing types?
2. How is CP experienced by local publics in Europe, and does this align to their expectations?
3. Can a more detailed and dynamic model of CP be developed which synthesizes existing literature, the experiences and expectations of publics and practitioners, and is viable across diverse policing contexts?

We believe answering these questions is essential in formulating a working conceptualization of CP which is both comprehensive and yet flexible enough for practical, local application. This will also be a significant development to existing scholarship on CP by illuminating the dynamic and interrelated nature of the concept, beyond the usual list of descriptive components.

Methods

To allow the development of a context-sensitive, inclusive concept of CP we utilized stratified purposive sampling across national and community boundaries. Our stratified purposive sampling strategy followed our objective to capture a wide range of perspectives of CP. We introduced diversity firstly in terms of countries and their policing types, secondly by targeting specific community groupings within these countries (the stratification). This sampling technique ensured that the participants in our research would have some knowledge or experience of CP while also ensuring that our model integrates and is sensitive to a range of perspectives (Campbell et al., 2020). We will be led by our empirical data in the first instance, and then reflect on existing CP literature to develop our dynamic model. Our primary method of data collection was structured open-ended interviews, which allowed for detailed responses from each participant, but also a degree of consistency across the data collection sites. These will be described in more detail below.

Sample

Our sample consists of participants from eight European countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Northern Republic of Macedonia and the UK (Scotland and England). This selection of countries ensured variation in the way CP is approached and executed across the four policing types discussed above as well as diversity in cultural, economic, political and historical contexts (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005). Within each country, we collected data from two groups: members of police forces with expertise in CP and informed members of the public. We investigated police as well as these citizens' perspectives

to incorporate the potential alignments and disparities between the two sides. The members of the public were stratified into five broad groupings, namely political, economic, social, technological and legal stakeholders of CP [according to the PESTL framework by Johnson and Scholes (2000)] to capture the diversity of these stakeholders and their perspectives. Researchers from each partner country were tasked with identifying the appropriate individuals to approach for the interviews from within these groupings. Thus, the exact method of recruitment will vary between jurisdictions, but the guidelines we set were to focus on groups who had some connection to or interest in how CP works in their area and its purpose. The stratified purposive sampling approach was appropriate to use as it allowed us to interview individuals most likely to have knowledge or experience of CP from a range of community viewpoints. It also enabled us to obtain a degree of consistency in participant selection across the eight countries (Campbell et al., 2020). Thus the PESTL categories cut across the contexts represented by the four policing types. While this kind of sampling may not obtain 'representativeness' as random sampling in questionnaire research seeks to do, it was the best approach to take in order to conduct qualitative interviews with an informed public across a range of national and community contexts. It thus provided a systematic and comprehensive approach to our stakeholder selection (see Table 1).

Table 1: Example participant groups

Group	Examples
Police officers with CP experience	Neighbourhood police officers, strategic level officers for CP practices and strategies
Community—political	Mayors, NGOs
Community–economic	Local businesses
Community—social	Citizens (different age groups, rural and urban), social actors such as social services, schools, healthcare sector
Community—technological	IT providers
Community—legal	Lawyers, judges, legal support

In total, we interviewed 323 people. Of these, 235 were community members and 88 were police personnel with responsibilities in CP. The number of interviews per country/policing type and per participant group can be found in Table 2. 62% of our respondents were male, 35% female (2.8% preferred not to give gender information). Across countries the gender distribution ranged from 36 to 57% women. The average age of participants across all countries was 43.1 years (range: 18–85 years). Tenure within the police was in average 17 years (range 0.5–44 years).

Data collection

We used a structured open-ended interview method that included standardized elements to allow for qualitative open coding of responses and comparison of perceptions. This approach enabled us to investigate common assumptions as well as differences in the subjective theories of practitioners and stakeholders of CP. The data used in this paper are extracted from a larger data set, which explored the role of communication technology in CP. The findings discussed here are those which relate specifically to perceptions and understandings of CP itself. Participants were asked about their experiences of the police in general, their experiences of CP specifically and what they would like CP to be. Two different interview protocols where developed: one for members of police forces with CP related tasks, the other for community members.

The interview guidelines were created in English and then translated into the native language of the included countries. A translation/back-translation procedure ensured that the translations of the interview protocols were accurate and that the meaning of the questions was not compromised in the translated versions. All interviews were conducted by researchers in the respective countries to make certain that interviewers were familiar with the language and national context. The interviews took between one and three hours each. Where possible interviews were recorded. Where this was not possible, the interviewers took detailed notes. Answers to the interview questions across all eight countries were recorded in a structured data template in English.

It is important to acknowledge that conducting this volume of data collection across eight countries is not without its challenges. The protocols above and the structured interview format were utilized to enable as much consistency as possible and to identify at an early stage any misunderstandings of what was being requested from each partner country. The data was collected by trained researchers in each jurisdiction, but data collection from multiple sources will always include a degree of variability. We discussed the protocols and methods with our partners in an in-person project meeting prior to data collection and then subsequently maintained an open dialogue with them to enable as robust a methodology as possible. However, we do accept that there will be an

Table 2: Number of interviews across countries and groups

Country	Police Type	Police	Community (total)	Social	Political	Economic	Technological	Legal	Total
Belgium	Napoleonic	11	28	12	4	4	4	4	39
Bulgaria	National	10	28	11	4	6	4	3	38
Croatia	National	10	28	12	2	4	6	4	38
Estonia	National	10	28	12	4	4	4	4	38
Finland	National	10	27	12	4	4	4	3	37
Germany	Decentralized	9	29	16	4	2	2	5	38
Northern Republic of Macedonia	National	10	28	12	4	4	4	4	38
UK (Scotland + England)	Anglo/American	18	39	19	8	4	4	4	57
Total		*88*	*235*	*106*	*34*	*32*	*32*	*31*	*323*

element of variation in terms of how the data was collected and sent back to us. We focus here on the higher-level themes which emerged from that data rather than the nuance of local experiences to avoid some of that potential variability in the data collection technique.

Data analysis

Our analytic approach followed thematic and content analytic principles (Auerback and Silverstein, 2003; Krippendorff, 2003) to identify the main topics and themes in the data. For this, answers within each of the eight topics addressed in the interviews were coded in several cycles, starting with open or initial codes (Charmaz, 2006) which were then clustered into high-order categories. The coding was conducted by two of the authors in several rounds of coding and synthesis of resulting codes to create a consolidated coding scheme. Coding was conducted in the qualitative software package NVivo. During the repeated coding and reviewing cycles, three overarching themes emerged that linked interview answers across the initial eight topics: conditions for CP, actions within CP and purposes of CP. During this coding and reviewing step, we also noted where commonalities and disparities about the themes (national as well as police-internal versus citizens) across the groups emerged. To verify and validate the international findings, focus group discussions were held with police officers and community members who provided a consensus on the overall findings giving us confidence that these findings represent a coherent and comprehensive picture of the defining aspects of CP according to those who practice it and those who are likely to be involved in it as partners and stakeholders.

In presenting our findings below, we draw on quotes of participants to illustrate these defining aspects. To preserve anonymity while allowing a contextualization of the quotes, the participants will be identified by their country, a participant number, whether they are from the police or the community, and if from the community, which social group they represent (political, economic, social, technological or legal).

Findings

In this section, we synthesize our data analysis and the existing theoretical conceptions of CP into a model that incorporates the core elements of CP, yet integrates these in a flexible, context-dependent manner which also illuminates their internal interdependencies. We make a distinction between the three primary thematic areas for CP: (1) the organizational *conditions* that are necessary for effective CP, i.e. what the police organizations need to be; (2) the *actions* police organizations must perform for effective CP, i.e. what these organizations need to do; and (3) the societal *purposes* of CP, i.e. what CP aims to achieve. Accordingly, we use 'CAP' as a shorthand for the model. Each primary thematic area has sub-areas which provide further clarity on the requirements in practice, while also remaining sufficiently high-level to allow for local variation in expression and priority. Our model is summarized in Fig. 1.

Our data and our assessment of the existing literature indicates that these three areas constitute distinct, but highly interdependent aspects. Specifically, performing well in any one of these three thematic areas of CP requires successful realization of the other areas. Achievement of one area improves functioning in the others, while failure to address one will impair success in the other two. Moreover, our data illustrates that, while recognizable across groups, contexts and policing types (which will be highlighted in the analysis), the actual form and implementation of conditions and actions as well as the needs and expectations that drive CP are locally dependent. We will use extracts from the data to demonstrate these points. We start our discussion with the *purposes* of CP, which guide the necessary organizational *conditions* that in turn enable the *actions* to achieve effective CP.

Purposes of CP

'Purposes' captures the objectives CP aims to achieve. The accounts by our participants foregrounded three purposes: (1) *building trust*, (2) *enhancing social efficacy and cohesion*, and (3)
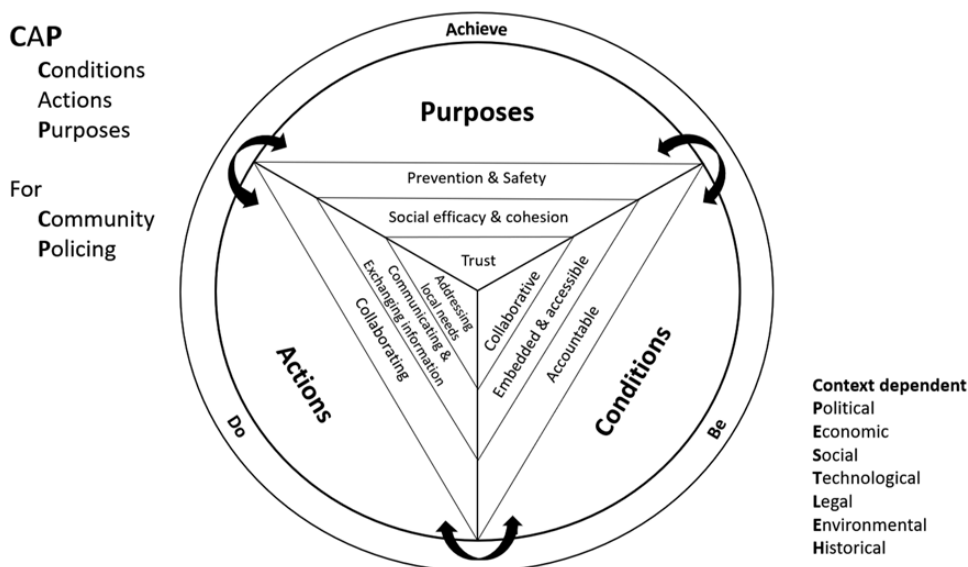
Figure 1: The CAP model for Community Policing.

preventing disorder and improving safety. These build on each other in the sense that trust is a pre-requisite for social efficacy and cohesion. Social efficacy in turn is required to prevent disorder and improve safety within communities through the collective activities of CP stakeholders. In the same regard, social cohesion can nurture trust that encourages social participation in preventative actions, while successful prevention increases security, which again can promote further social participation in other spheres of action. As our data emphasizes, purposes of CP are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Purpose 1: Building trust

'Trust' is an element of CP which is often cited in the literature (Tuffin *et al.*, 2006; Myhill, 2012; Hamilton-Smith *et al.*, 2013; Gill *et al.*, 2014) and is regarded integral to improved relationships between the police and the public. Participants across all groups perceived trust as a key ingredient as well as an achievement of CP and gave examples of trust in its many forms. They credited CP with the ability to 'build' (Croatia, 10, community, social), 'improve' (Finland, 24, community, political; Germany, 3, police) or 'have' (Scotland, 4, community, economic) trust

between the police and local communities. These phrasings clearly suggest different levels of current trust between the police and the public within these countries; still across all contexts and policing types, participants agreed that improved levels of trust should be a core *outcome* of CP.

Our participants also articulated that trust needs to be established through continuous personal engagement; for example, by a 'neighbourhood police officer which has very good contacts with the youth' and who is 'the one who handles the problem' through informal contacts should the need arise (Belgium, 9, community, social). This quote suggests that trust within a community intersects with individual experiences, and even if trust is lacking in the institution 'police', individual efforts can help establish trust with officers (Innes, 2005; Hamilton-Smith *et al.*, 2013). Once established, trust provides the basis for effective policing, for instance, in handling critical situations and crime prevention:

> *The local CP officer was able to calm the situation down because the public knew him and trusted him; he was therefore credible and diffused the situation.* (Scotland, 9, community, political)
> *Generating higher public trust in the Ministry of Interior, which in turn will*

facilitate the contact with the general public and the gathering of information for planned or committed crimes and offences of the public order (Bulgaria, 6, police)

The first quote above indicates that trust has already been established in that jurisdiction (a Peelite type), whereas for the second (a national/centralized type) trust is as yet aspirational. We also found critical voices about whether police live up to the expectations of CP for trust-building. A Belgium interviewee representing the social sector, for instance, suspects CP to be merely rhetoric as 'something to brag about at a conference but this is not at all present in practice', as 'there is no debate, dialogue, no conversation' between the police and citizens (Belgium, 22, community, social). Comments such as these illustrate that (perceived) police inaction can undermine core CP purposes such as the creation of trust.

Purpose 2: Enhancing social efficacy and cohesion

An additional purpose emerged when participants extended the concept of trust into a collective perspective of confidence in the community itself—again in terms of either 'building' (Germany, 28, community, social) or 'having' community confidence (Belgium, 4, police). This aspect touches on the belief in the self-efficacy of the community to overcome challenges themselves, thus broadening the core purpose of CP into creating community empowerment to exercise social control and solve security-related problems without direct actions by police. This element of CP also features in the research on 'neighbourhood policing' in the UK (Tuffin *et al.*, 2006).

Informants saw CP playing a role in building social efficacy and cohesion at the local level by 'encouraging responsible neighbouring relations' (Croatia, 11, community, social). Similarly, a Belgium interviewee representing the legal sector emphasized communal responsibility in creating safety: 'everybody is responsible for some things; people need to get some responsibility' (Belgium, 13, community, legal). The same participant also suggested that police could

potentially have a larger role in building social efficacy and cohesion and help communities solve security-related problems. For instance, police could be more of a mediator, rather than a reactive or repressive force, handling problems in ways that they do not enter into the justice system. CP should thus help prevent marginalization and improve the 'inclusion of fringe groups' (Germany, 17, community, economic) regardless of their background aiding in the 'prevention of parallel structures' (Germany, 4, community, technological).

Efficacy-related ideas were represented in disparate ways across groups and policing types, although pointing to similar elements of integration and cooperation:

> *Helping to organize more secure life in communities* (Croatia, 22, community, social)
> *Strengthening potential influence of citizens* (Germany, 4, community, technological)

In contrast, participants from England often used the term 'community empowerment' (e.g. 'empower the community—make active citizens', England, 3, police).

To achieve this purpose, our participants felt that the police should act in the spirit of collaboration as well as 'educate' the public (e.g. 'educating community members about their rights', Finland, 12, community, social). Thus, while the main actors are community members, the police are viewed as having an important facilitating role.

Purpose 3: Preventing disorder and improving safety

These final elements are often seen as the primary purpose of CP, from both our participants and from the existing literature on CP (Skogan, 2006; Myhill, 2012; Gill *et al.*, 2014). Safety as an overarching CP purpose did emerge consistently, although almost always linked with the idea of crime prevention:

> *CP is a type of police carrying out preventive measures, along with rendering help and assistance to the public* (Bulgaria, 11, community, social)

More specifically, prevention and preventative policing were regarded as distinctive elements of CP:

> *Proactive approach to the citizens from the police; interest of the police for the safety issues and the activities in the community, with purpose to prevent the deviations and to manage the risks* (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 17, community, legal)

Prevention for some included police 'teaching people how to protect themselves' (Croatia, 3, community, social), relating back to the idea that CP should support the creation of self-confidence and social efficacy (see sections above). We observed some variation in the amount of agency communities were given. This ranged from the view that CP should 'enable communities to feel safe' (Scotland, 4, community, political) to the expectation that police should 'perform various tasks and activities for the purpose of protection of each citizen' (Bulgaria, 6, community, social). These two quotes also highlight variations in our data about whether 'subjective' or 'actual' safety is at stake. Although this may be challenging to quantify, some indications exist that police phrased the issues mostly around perceptions of safety, while citizens themselves phrased safety also in more 'objective' terms, e.g.:

> Participants from police organizations: *Police responding to feelings of insecurity in a positive way* (Belgium, 7, police); *Restauration of the subjective sense of security* (Germany, 1, police)
> Participants from community groups: *Protection of life and the provision of security of the citizens in their everyday lives* (Croatia, 22, community, technological); *Keeping people safe* (Scotland, 11, community, social)

This suggests somewhat diverging perspectives among interviewed groups about the exact role of police and communities in creating safety as well as the status of CP with respect to safety perceptions versus 'objective' safety. This divergence reflects debates in the literature in terms of whether CP has, or should have, a measurable impact on crime rates (Alpert *et al.*, 2001; Myhill, 2012; Gill *et al.*, 2014), or whether its value lies in a more subjective and diffused sense of enhanced security (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986; Fielding and Innes, 2006). However, participants from all policing types did cite prevention as an integral component of CP.

Summary

Overall, participants' ideas about CP *purposes* highlights that the various goals that CP is intended to achieve are broader than community safety and crime prevention alone. Successful CP is also linked to trust in the police, improved social cohesion and social efficacy. These in turn facilitate safety and crime prevention efforts, the *actions* of CP. However, in order for these goals to be realized, the appropriate *conditions* within police organizations need to be in place.

Conditions for CP

In order to be in a position to take the necessary actions involved in delivering effective CP across a variety of social, political and cultural contexts, and taking into account the purposes of CP as set out above, our data suggests that policing organizations should seek three primary relational states, or *conditions*. The three conditions identified in our model are based on local police officers (1) *being accessible and embedded in communities*, (2) *being accountable* and (3) *having openness to collaboration*. These relational states are, however, dependent on a fundamental willingness within policing to work with those outside of their organization, both the public and partner agencies (public, private and third sector). Local problems and challenges cannot be addressed by the police alone, and so an openness to sharing time and resources as well as leadership roles is imperative here, as existing literature also suggests (O'Neill and McCarthy, 2012). We will begin with an exploration of 'embeddedness and accessibility'.

Condition 1: Embeddedness and accessibility

Embeddedness refers to police organizations being either physically or relationally close to communities. Accessibility builds from embeddedness in that community members (the public and other stakeholders) are not only familiar with their local policing team, but also that they know how to contact the police and feel comfortable in doing so. This relationship, however achieved in a local context, results in a police organization which sees close contact with the public and deep local knowledge of people, place and events as essential to achieving its aims and goals. Participants from across our sample groups highlighted the importance of having a local officer who regularly policed the same area and whom they knew how to contact. For instance, when asked how they would define CP, participants provided definitions that, in the main, were based on the principle of local embeddedness and accessibility:

> […] policemen are assigned to work in a neighbourhood, where they establish contacts with the local people […] By that, in the long run, the expectations are to reduce crime in the neighbourhood. (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 16, community, social)
>
> [CP is] a way of getting closer to the community (people) by the police. For example, familiarity, embedded in community, being seen as part of the community. (Scotland, 4, community, political)
>
> CP requires police that are close to their citizens; it requires visibility to the community and approachability so that people can easily report problems; it means listening to what citizens want and are concerned about. (Belgium, 19, community, social)

For many jurisdictions, it is unrealistic to expect that a single police officer would have complete responsibility for specific geographic regions. Therefore, the basic principle of 'embeddedness' can apply to small groups of officers or patrol staff who maintain regular contact with the residents and stakeholders of a specified area for an extended period. Crime is experienced differently within and across space, with some neighbourhoods and/or streets being more susceptible to crime and anti-social behaviour than others are. If CP is to be effective in its core principles, including crime prevention and trust, the individual characteristics and nuances of each local space should be important to the policing organization in an attempt to deliver cost effective, efficient policing to the areas which need them the most. For a policing organization also to be accessible to residents and stakeholders in a meaningful way requires dedicated resource in terms of officers and staff to work in a non-emergency capacity, as well as a variety of methods of communication. These communication and interaction methods are described in more detail in the section below on CP *actions*.

Condition 2: Accountability

In the context of CP, accountability refers to an aspect of the relationship between the police and the public, and not to police oversight bodies and issues of misconduct. Accountability builds from accessibility and compels police officers to maintain regular communication with their publics and partners in order to report on the work they are doing to achieve the agreed CP goals. There are many ways accountability could be achieved, but the primary aspect is for police to view their relationship with the public as one where they are in engaged in a constant dialogue and need to demonstrate how they are meeting the needs and challenges of their local area appropriately and in a timely manner (Skogan, 2006; Hamilton-Smith et al., 2013). As our participants noted, this can be viewed as an unusual practice in some jurisdictions, such as in the Gendarmerie/Napoleonic policing type of Belgium:

> [CP] is contrary to the traditional definition of the police: it is a police which is in the community, responsive, accountability towards the community, police is a partner and is looking for partnerships. (Belgium, 3, community, social)

Other participants emphasized the importance of transparency in areas such as the work that the police do, their level of resources and when things go wrong:

> *Minimize mistakes and [have] openness [about] mistakes.* (Germany, 19, community, social)
> *Achieving better transparency with respect to the running costs and expenditures, [transparency about] the activities undertaken by the staff* (Bulgaria, 7, community, economic)
> *How are we going to implement this? Building bridges with citizens, low profile, accountability, dialogue, communication...* (Belgium, 3, police)

For CP to be an effective method, our respondents felt that the police organizations should embrace a position of openness about their work and see their communities and partners as groups to whom they need to regularly keep informed about their achievements, their shortcomings and plans for the future. Policing organizations in the Napoleonic and centralized types might find this especially challenging, especially if there is a history of repressive policing in formerly fascist states. A traditional position of secrecy is also evident in Anglo-American and decentralized types (see Reiner, 2010). However, if this can be overcome, accountability facilitates collaboration between the police, communities and partners, the final aspect of CP conditions, to be considered next.

Condition 3: Openness to collaboration

Aspects of disorder and anti-social behaviour that most affect communities on a regular basis are not always 'crimes' and can only be fully addressed through the involvement of other organizations, agencies and the public. Our respondents discussed how police organizations need to have a willingness to be open to these external collaborations. Our respondents took slightly different approaches in terms of what role the public, or communities, played in collaboration. For example, the two quotes below show views whereby partners are identified as being other agencies:

> *It is [about] making a strong network and using it in order to make safety in the community. This means involving partners and through partners getting closer to community.* (Estonia, 7, police)
> *[CP involves] collaboration with other services, for example fire department, local city service. In the past I worked for […] the ministry of internal affairs. [T]here were a lot of possible domains to collaborate.* (Belgium, 21, community, legal)

The following two respondents, however, list citizens (the public) themselves as equal partners with whom they need to collaborate to achieve the goals of CP:

> *Police work in close proximity to citizens. This requires presence, dialogue, networking (broadly with regional stakeholders, citizens, other authorities).* (Finland, 10, community, social)
> *CP is collaboration between citizens and police, where police officers are required to be responsive and react quickly.* (Bulgaria, 27, community, technological)

These mixed views on who is a 'partner' in a collaboration is reflected in the literature on partnership working in the police (Myhill, 2012; Hamilton-Smith *et al.*, 2013). While there might not be exact agreement in terms of who is regarded as a partner in CP across our diverse contexts, what the participants have in common is a general openness to and acceptance of the need to work outside of their own organizations in order to achieve the purposes of CP. The exact mechanisms by which the police can collaborate with the public and their partner agencies is the focus of the final section of the research findings.

Summary

This section on the *conditions* for CP demonstrates participants' expectations about the relational states, or organizational orientations, which are needed in order to facilitate the *purposes* of CP discussed earlier. These relational states require police

organizations to be open, connected and accountable to other partners and to the public. As highlighted above, this shift away from insularity may be easier to achieve in some policing jurisdictions than in others, due to historical, political and cultural contexts, for example. Once these conditions are achieved, only then can the specific *actions* of CP be successful. As Gill *et al.* (2014) also highlighted in their systematic review of CP, organizations that failed to achieve the 'transformational' component of CP across the police organization were unlikely to have a lasting impact through their actions.

Actions for CP

Following from the *conditions* within the CAP model, we now move on to discuss what police organizations, partners, NGOs and community members need to 'do', or the *actions* they should take, in order to realize the purposes of CP. Building on our participants' narratives we suggest that 'doing' CP is based on all partners involved working within three key interrelated principles: (1) *addressing local needs*, (2) *communicating and exchanging information*, and (3) *collaborating*. The following sections will explore each of these in turn, and how our participants framed these.

Action 1: Understanding and addressing local needs

There was a surprising consensus amongst participants from across our partner countries and policing types in the centrality of understanding and addressing local needs and issues, both proactively and reactively, in CP. One Croatian police officer described CP as being 'a concept of work that includes defining police priorities based on the needs of the community' (Croatia, 1, police), while a refugee community support worker defined CP as: 'policing which supports local issues and priorities' (Scotland, 2, community, social). For many community members CP is based on providing an 'understanding of the local reality' (Belgium, 2, community, social), emphasizing the importance of understanding the local area and its specific issues. From a strategic perspective, a senior

executive of a local disability charity set out the clear distinction between response policing and CP:

> CP has expertise in local issues, cooperates with local stakeholders 'builds a foundation for cooperation' by going to the community with continuous cooperation, increased understanding of local issues. (Finland, 6, community, social)

These quotes emphasize the consensus across countries and policing styles and between participants. A further consensus that emerged from our data around addressing local needs was that the police alone should not be responsible for identifying local policing issues. Instead, it was reported that a partnership approach is needed which includes community members, NGOs and local government:

> It is important for communities and individuals to have a voice and give an opinion and information to create a joint investment in safeguarding our most vulnerable in our communities. (England, 1, police)

Generally, our data highlighted the importance of police organizations allowing a central, guiding role to local priorities. This varied in terms of the degree of strategic influence afforded to local issues in each jurisdiction, but agreement was noted across participant groups that taking guidance from communities is seen as a core action of CP. This is a common element in the existing literature on CP which takes the 'shopping list' approach (see for example, Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1994; Segrave and Ratcliff, 2004; Aston and Scott, 2014). Identifying and finding resolutions to local policing issues and concerns is achieved by police communicating successfully with local residents. The following section will highlight the relationship between engagement and communication and information exchange.

Action 2: Communicating and exchanging information

Our participants indicated that the communication styles used by the police are extremely important in CP. The data collected showed that 'good' CP was

connected to communication skills: 'clear communication of the neighbourhood police officer' (Belgium, 13, community, legal). The importance of 'respect and good communication skills' (England, 4, police) was also evident. Clearly, the attitude and approachability of police are important in facilitating communication, and in turn encouraging information sharing (see also Aston *et al.*, 2021). Showing politeness was important: 'The police staff should be polite and sufficiently trained to communicate with the general public' (Bulgaria, 18, community, economic). Furthermore, listening skills, being non-judgemental, and providing information to the public were highlighted: 'listening, not judging' (19), 'giving information' (16) (Belgium, 16 and 19, community, social).

A variety of modes of communication were also seen as important. In Finland, for example, the emphasis was on face-to-face communication, as well as phone, email and social media. Participants also felt that communication should occur on a regular basis in order to identify local problems: 'everyday communication with citizens and conversation for the existing problems in the local community' (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 21, community, economic). The data thus suggests that personal and face-to-face contact is integral in building trust. In-depth knowledge of neighbourhood officers was seen to be connected to quality of contacts built up over time in these examples with youth:

> He knew them since they were little, he had a lot of informal contact with them... and when a problem arose, he was the one who handled the problem. By means of little things and dialogue searching for a solution. (Belgium, 9, community, social).
> You have to be really close to young people to earn the trust and then they will open themselves. (Estonia, 11, community, economic).

In describing 'good' CP, communication, information sharing and collaboration were seen as connected, e.g.: 'communication among citizens, cooperation, information sharing and joint activities' (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 8, police), in

that interaction was a vehicle to information sharing: 'information gathering through the interacting with refugees' (Belgium, 6, police). At the same time, partnership working and information sharing were seen to require 'close trustful communication'. (Estonia, 5, police). According to this participant, CP involves:

> [neighbourhood intervention teams] controlling and at the same time also talking to people to see if there are any problems. They are observing problems and searching for solutions in a communicative manner (Belgium, 15, community, social).

The pairing of 'controlling' with 'talking' in the quote above suggests that in some policing types, such as those of the Napoleonic and national/centralized, the balance of law enforcement and crime prevention methods within CP may lean more towards the former rather than the latter. As with other aspects of the CAP model, the manner in which each principle is enacted may vary, but each of them is apparent.

Our respondents highlighted that police also need to be willing to share information with policing partners, including communities, in order to facilitate the continual flow of information, which is required for CP to achieve its societal purposes. Communication should ideally be at least two-way, or even multi-directional between communities, police and partner organizations. However, police respondents sometimes perceived communication as rather one-way, e.g. talks with schools, colleges, information campaigns such as 'prevention at schools' (Germany, 5, police). In Finland, by contrast, community participants mentioned visits and participation in events and said that learning could be two-way, e.g. using 'information sharing session' (Finland, 8, community, social), and ranged from 'educating community members about their rights' to the police learning about the community through a visit (Finland, 12, community, social). Police respondents in England (in the Peelite tradition) highlighted that this is not just about finding out about the problems in an area but also sharing what has been done, as well as 'taking ownership

and responsibility for issues arising and problems to be solved' (England, 4, police) and 'delivering on promises' (England, 6, police). In Germany, the police were involved in creating 'security together – an open discussion between police and migrants' (Germany, 31, community, legal). Perceptions of what exactly 'communication' looks like between the police and the public will vary between jurisdictions, but all did agree that this is an important principle of CP.

Action 3: Collaborating

'Condition 3' above described the need for policing organizations to be open to collaboration with other partners. 'Action 3' here focuses on the operational techniques of collaborating. This involves actions such as 'developing relevant networks' (Belgium, 12, police), with, for example, street workers, emergency services, private companies, banks and security sector. Although this varied across policing types, it involved similar partners, for example, local prevention councils, municipalities and citizens (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 3, police). In England, 'building strong relationships' with target groups, stakeholders, and organizations was important for problem-solving (England, 2, police). This includes 'daily contact with local councillors to feed in issues' (England, 7, police) to develop 'good working relationships with the community' (England, 5, police).

Our data highlights the importance of working in partnership with communities and key organizations: 'everything depends on cooperation partners, the more you make cooperation the better are results' (Estonia, 7, police). This involves, for example, 'prevention activities, activities in partnership with schools' (Croatia, 2, community, legal). It must also include the community: 'the police must take a more active role in the community and engage with every member, not just the leaders' (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 1, community, legal). The challenges of doing this, however, are not minor and have been noted in the literature (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005; Myhill, 2012). As one participant noted, 'there is a big willingness of the police to be part of these networks BUT often they are hindered by the organization or by the legislation'. (Belgium,

14, community, technological). Working collaboratively requires trust but at the same time trust can be built by communicating effectively and sharing information:

> *CP means partnership [working] between the members of the community and the police for maintaining the peace and order in the community* (Northern Republic of Macedonia, 3, community, legal)

Summary

This section on the *actions* of CP reflects how the underlying *purpose* of CP guides their nature and focus. When the appropriate *conditions* are in place, these actions can be enabled and will further achieve the *purpose* of CP in a virtuous cycle. For example, being accessible (condition) in a community enables a focus on local needs (action) which helps to build trust (purpose) between the police and the public.

Conclusion

This paper has presented findings from a multi-national European study of CP through detailed interviews with police officers and members of key community groups. We reflected on these empirical data while considering the extant academic literature on CP, to develop a full analysis of what CP is in theory, how it seems to work in practice and what it could be in future. Using this analysis, we propose that CP is best understood as having three core themes, which we refer to as 'CAP': *conditions, actions* and *purposes.* An important component of the CAP model for CP is that the three themes and their sub-themes described above are not to be read as a static list of discrete elements, or a 'shopping list' of components. To date, much of the existing literature on CP takes this approach (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005; Skogan, 2006; Terpstra, 2009), which limits our understanding of what CP is and how it is to be effectively achieved. As we have demonstrated here, all three components are needed and become mutually reinforcing in a dynamic relationship. If a police organization

is aware of what it wants to achieve through CP *(purposes),* it can change internal perspectives and philosophies *(conditions)* which will enable the subsequent *actions* to be robust, meaningful and appropriately resourced. Through these actions, the purposes of CP can be realized, which reinforces the changes to organizational philosophy and perspectives and supports ongoing actions in CP. The inverse is also true, in that if one of the components is not sufficiently achieved, such as communication *(actions)*, this suggests that the organization has not completely adopted the necessary states of being *(conditions)* to reach the societal goals of CP *(purposes).*

The findings above suggest a general model although there were variations across the four policing types which our participating countries represent. For example, countries with national or centralized policing types which have a recent history of oppressive policing styles will likely find that there is a great deal of work to do in establishing the *purpose* and *conditions* of CP before they can implement effective *actions*. Particularly, our findings indicate that care must be taken in assuming a community wants to be involved in policing activities, as any form of collaboration requires a certain amount of pre-existing trust between the respective community and police forces. Furthermore, successful CP is dependent on meeting the unique needs and requirements of a specific community (van der Giessen *et al.*, 2017). As such, care must be taken not to implement CP practices that meet the needs and requirements of one community but fail to address, or amplify problems present in, another.

Our model is deliberately conceptual to allow flexibility across jurisdictions. The CAP model's policy implications require that the *purposes*, *actions*, and *conditions* of CP are translated into specific strategic goals, means and resources. In other words, the core components and sub-components of CP must be defined and articulated more concretely in each context, which presupposes local strategy analysis. First, the purpose of CP must be expressed in terms of selected policy goals. Second, a set of appropriate and effective conditions (means) must be implemented to achieve those goals. As for effective actions, these

are possible when the necessary enabling factors and resources are locally available. Such enabling factors could include human resources and staff competencies, organizational capacities and procedures, systems of reward for community work, financial investments, new legislation or technological innovations. Having sufficient resource for CP is not to be underestimated as the model will fail entirely without it. Finally, robust methods of testing and evaluating the effects of CP in each jurisdiction are needed to have a better understanding of its exact impact on those communities.

The need for effective and accountable policing, sensitive to local context, is particularly prominent at the current time. Events such as the 'Black Lives Matter' movement and calls to 'defund' the police since 2020 show the extent to which many publics do not feel that current policing systems are meeting their needs. We would argue that our CAP model is a good starting point for revaluating what local policing is and what it could be, in a way that puts the voice of the local publics central to policy and practice decision-making.

By taking this approach, we have developed an original model that is grounded in empirical research and bridges the current gap between a concise general definition of CP and flexibility for the local context. The CAP model thus develops both the academic literature on CP and the operational utility of this policing technique internationally. Future research on the model should explore its applicability outside of Europe as well as the skills needed within a workforce to achieve it. The role of digital communication within CP could also be considered in the context of CAP.

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Megan O'Neill is a Reader in Human Geography at the University of Dundee and an Associate Director of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). Her work focuses on aspects of police culture, public sector pluralization in policing and surveillance practices of the state.

Mark van der Giessen is a post-doctoral researcher at the Aalto University School of Business in Finland. His current research is on sensemaking and stigma, specifically how these notions are implicated in various forms of cooperation and collaboration in the context of safety and security challenges.

Petra Saskia Bayerl is Professor of Digital Communication and Security and Head of Research lead at CENTRIC (Centre of Excellence in Terrorism, Resilience, Intelligence and Organized Crime Research), Sheffield Hallam University, UK. Her research investigates organizational and societal implications of new security technologies.

Yvonne Hail is the Business Intelligence Coordinator at Police Scotland and a former Research Fellow who has a conducted multiple research projects with and on policing organizations both in Scotland and across Europe. She defended her PhD thesis in 2016, which examined the impact of police reform on local policing in Scotland.

Elizabeth Aston is the Director of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research and an Associate Professor of Criminology at Edinburgh Napier University. Her research focuses on local policing (e.g. community policing, stop and search), police legitimacy, and intersections between policing and health (e.g. drugs) and technology.

Jarmo Houtsonen is a Senior Researcher at the Police University College of Finland. His current research focuses on two topics: the legitimacy of information network intelligence, and frontline agencies' cooperation in the detection and prevention of domestic violence.