W e are experiencing, at the turn of the 21st century, a marked transformation in the means by which order is maintained in liberal democratic societies. A shift from police to policing is taking place, one in which the state - for almost two centuries the focal point of provision and regulation in this field - is being supplemented, in some cases even elbowed out, by a range of alternative security 'suppliers'.

Governing policing in the 21st Century

Ian Loader asks how a balance of accountability, equity and effectiveness can be sustained.

Sure enough, the uniformed public police (will) continue to assume a prominent presence in tackling crime and securing order. So too - increasingly, if present trends persist - will local government. Yet these institutions seem set to form but part of what must now be viewed as a diverse, loosely-coupled 'network' of public, commercial and voluntary policing agencies (Johnston 1999).

The contours and constituent 'nodes' of this network seem broadly as follows. In addition to policing delivered directly *by* government (whether in the form of police forces, or local parks' constabularies, or 'city guards'), we might also note the emergence of policing provided *through* government, as when local councils 'contract-in' commercial

> "The failure to give a formal place to victims and communities in the criminal trial is the biggest single mistake in the justice system over the last millennium. My hope is that this will be rectified in the first decade of the next, so as to revolutionise justice and ensure it addresses the social, as well as the legal, consequences of crime."
>
> Charles Pollard, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police

patrol services for their tenants. The continued expansion of security markets in goods ranging from alarms, to CCTV, to guarding and patrols, suggests that policing is also rapidly unfolding *beyond* government; while the sporadic outbreak of citizen patrols speaks to the ongoing possibilities of policing *below* government. Nor can we ignore the onset of policing practices *above* government, whether in the form of cross-border cooperation between national police forces (around, for example, the Channel Tunnel), or the emergence of novel trans-national policing bodies, such as Europol.

We are, it appears, increasingly inhabiting a world of fragmented, plural policing. What though are the social implications of this likely to be? And how might we best respond to the challenges it throws up?

The effects of diversity

Two such implications are clearly apparent - both of which serve to undermine certain pivotal assumptions of received, state-centred ways of thinking about the police. It is evident, first, that we can no longer adequately think about policing (if indeed, we ever could) solely in terms of what the police do. As responsibility for the delivery - or, in Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) terms, 'rowing' - of policing has been ceded to various other agencies, so the state has become one among a number of shared sources of order, control and authority in society. So too have a plethora of agencies - with an assortment of legal powers - come to regulate access to and the use of 'public' spaces, and to shape for better and worse the safety and quality of people's lives. And so too - as market logics have come to the fore in this field - has the distribution of policing been skewed towards those (affluent consumers) who are willing and able to pay, at the expense of the (already) poor and vulnerable whose demands the security market shows relatively few signs of wanting to satisfy. Pluralization not only raises significant problems of inter-agency co-ordination and effectiveness. It also threatens to riddle policing with new forms of inequity and injustice.

But this is not all. It is becoming clear that the state's capacity to govern - or, as Osborne and Gaebler would have it, 'steer' - policing is also being attenuated, especially when it comes to exercising leverage over the activities and performance of bodies other than the public police. Trans-national policing chips away at the presumption that policing is co-terminous with territorial boundaries, boundaries around which institutions of accountability have hitherto been organized. The development of a barely regulated market in security makes it ever more difficult for government to exercise some control over the distribution of policing, or to bring providers to democratic account - creating, in effect, as more and more 'governmental' policing functions are transferred beyond the state, realms of 'private government' (Shearing 1996). Albeit in less pervasive ways, similar problems attend citizen surveillance and patrols.

The pluralization of policing involves, in short, the formation of new 'sites of power' (Held 1995) that are either thinly accountable to forms of democratic supervision, or else almost entirely outstrip the capacity of citizens to monitor or control them. Under these conditions, the question of police accountability does not disappear. It merely becomes re-configured within the emergent - and more taxing - issue of how to subject the network of agencies that are now involved in maintaining social order to some form of democratic governance.

Regulating diversity

In the wake of an increasingly widespread realization that plural policing is here to stay, this question has begun to receive some attention of late - in both academic and official circles. Within the former, Jones and Newburn (1998: 269) and Johnston (1999: ch. 10) have contended that institutional means have to be found of connecting policing networks to the common good'. Within the latter, Ian Blair - the recently appointed Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police - has given more concrete form to such suggestions, arguing that the police should become the centre point of a coordinated system of patrol

services, wherein they would act as guardians of the public interest by 'training and accrediting' (by means of a 'police compliant' kitemark) the myriad of private, municipal and voluntary agencies who deliver police services on the ground (Blair 1998).

While these are important and in some respects cogent proposals, they don't go nearly far enough. I wonder, in particular, whether Blair's plans to make a regulator out of a provider offer the best way forward here. If we are to respond adequately to the problems thrown up by the advent of plural policing, more radical forms of thinking and institution building are, it seems to me, required; ones that forge a renewed role for government, not as all-purpose deliverers of policing services (that world has, in all likelihood, gone for good), but as *active regulators* of diverse policing systems. For only government possesses the resources required to deal with the threats to democratic and equitable provision that plural policing poses.

Policing commissions

To this end I have recently suggested - along lines not dissimilar to those proposed by the Patten Commission on the Future of Policing in Northern Ireland - the establishment of national, regional and local *policing commissions* whose task it would be to formulate policing policies and coordinate service delivery across policing networks, and to bring to democratic account the various bodies that comprise them (Loader 1999). In pursuit of the former, such bodies would concern themselves with developing policing plans for particular localities or regions and deciding upon the police's role in delivering them; they would issue contracts to agencies who might tender to provide services under these plans (something that might beneficially include using public funds to 'buy-in' services for disadvantaged communities); And they would inspect, monitor and evaluate the policing services that are subsequently provided. To ensure the latter, the work of such commissions would need to be legally underpinned by a principle

of public justice oriented to maximizing public participation in processes of policy formation, protecting human rights, and seeking to ensure that all citizens are provided with a 'fair' share of available policing resources.

This of course is little more than a preliminary sketch of how we might move forward in this field, and it no doubt leaves many ends loose and untied. It seems to me, however, that it is along these lines that we must begin to think if we are to govern policing in the 21st century in ways that stand some chance of rendering its multiple provision not merely effective, but also equitable and democratically legitimate.

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"**During the last decade the media, politicians and civil servants have, at last, started to take seriously the extent of miscarriages of justice within the penal system.**"

Harry Fletcher, Assistant General Secretary, National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO)

Poverty traps

The social exclusion unit has produced some energetic initiatives, but it has yet to make a difference on the streets and estates, argues David Walker.

The social exclusion unit (SEU) was set up in December 1997, initially with a three-year shelf life. During recent months the unit has been under review. Naturally, in this brave new world, this has been led by management consultants KPMG, well known for their expertise in poverty and inequality.

The SEU's test has to be whether it has cracked the age-old problem of British government's departmentalism and succeeded in "joining up" social policies. The answer is no, but then it has been vastly more successful in coordinating and leading initiatives than, say, the women's unit. And that is because the SEU has had Tony Blair's personal attention. Thanks to Downing Street, it has, albeit temporarily, focused attention on teen pregnancy, sink estates and young people who have dropped off the ladder of jobs and training.

But there are hot potatoes it has kept its fingers away from. Refugees, for example. It refrained from comment on the suggestion that the army recruit from young offender institutions, which some regard as a sure-fire recipe for future social problems. It has been mute on what many would see as the obvious way of cutting social exclusion (aka poverty): increasing state benefits.

What Tony Blair will not claim is that on the streets, estates or elsewhere in the hidden world of poverty the SEU has so far had any demonstrable effect. What it does is "intermediate" - it encourages the others to get up and go. After all, ex-treasury high flyer Moira Wallace leads just a tiny group of civil servants on secondment. They have produced targets and clarity of vision. They have reached out to academic experts, the voluntary sector and local authorities, if not

to the poor themselves, and created impressive policy networks. (Is this, asks one participant, really just a way of keeping people on message rather than listening to them?)

Under the SEU's leadership, perhaps for the first time, Whitehall is producing policy analysis *up to American standards* of rigour. But it is still only reports and committee papers. If David Blunkett and his civil servants, let alone the chief schools inspector, Chris Woodhead, won't play ball, the SEU has not got the power to alter Whitehall's geography and power plays. Mainstream education policy, let alone mainstream poverty policy (that's to say, what the treasury is prepared to spend on low-income people), are set out of its bounds. So far, the SEU has fought shy of recommending radical changes in the structure of the state, such as creating a children's minister or commissioner, which many say is a logical conclusion of New Labour policy initiatives. It has been silent on relations between councils and the centre even though many of its suggestions depend on active local leadership.

Officials in the SEU work to a committee of second-rank ministers – Andrew Smith, treasury chief secretary, Hilary Armstrong from environment, Tessa Jowell from employment *among them. But their clout inside the machine comes from the prime minister. Day to day, that means his senior policy adviser Geoff Mulgan. Demos, which Mulgan founded, may have a reputation for flakiness; his work with the SEU has been intensely practical. But the SEU's proximity to No. 10 is risky; if Blair or Mulgan lose interest or move on...*

So far, the SEU's big reports on truancy and rough sleeping have led to energetic initiatives. Louise Casey, the homelessness tsarina formerly with Shelter, has fixed targets for cutting the number of bodies sleeping on city pavements; she is calling in experts, under a dedicated cabinet committee. (The SEU has been nothing if not inclusive: voluntary workers have been seen gazing around the cabinet office in awe at being invited to the seat of power.)

The SEU's strategy for neighbourhood renewal published

Social exclusion unit recommendations

- **Truancy**: cut time lost by a third by 2002
- **Rough sleepers**: cut by two thirds by 2002
- **Neighbourhoods**: national strategy embracing jobs, crime, health, housing and 'dynamic local leaders' for worst estates
- **Teen pregnancy**: better co-ordination, advice, child-care support packages, CSA targeting of fathers
- **Teen training**: create new advice and support service to steer deprived 13-19 year olds through the system

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in September last year, built on a comprehensive study of the worst estates, spawned "policy action teams" across Whitehall. They have been looking at everything from why some council blocks are so hard to let, to how aerobics classes for older and poorer people at the local pool might help get them back in the social swim. There is more to come, notably an all-singing, all-dancing urban policy white paper promised for the spring. That, however, will be produced by the department for the environment, transport and regions and there is no guarantee its priorities based, for example, on its review commissioned from Lord Rogers the architect, are the same as the SEU's.

The existence of the SEU has done nothing to thin out the piranha shoals of competing public organisations. Its big report on new opportunities for 16-18 year olds not in school or jobs may not survive immersion in a tank full of training schemes, rival colleges and funding bodies, tight social security and housing rules.

Here, the data are well known. Under the Tories, the quest for better youth opportunities produced umpteen schemes, umpteen studies. The question is how to drive through a single initiative. Rough sleepers are politically sexy, tiny in number and, though intractable, a problem easy to define. Untrained, jobless young people are much harder to get to grips with.

The SEU is only one of New Labour's firework display of initiatives, task forces and schemes. Bad housing estates are

the target of a plethora of policies to do with crime and disorder, the physical fabric of housing, jobs, training, neighbourly nuisance, more caretakers. Some 20 'zones' or area-based initiatives have been created.

Who is there in Whitehall to look across the array of policies and ask, for example, whether pressure on councils to bring the private sector into service provision might conflict with the acknowledged need to expand employment opportunities for the low paid and low skilled? The SEU is not in charge because no one is, not even Tony Blair.

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David Walker

This article first appeared in the Guardian newspaper November 1999.

> **"My hope for the next decade would be to see a greater emphasis on crime prevention and a real acknowledgement in the framing and practice of penal policy that social exclusion, poverty, racism and homelessness contribute to offending. There also needs to be a recognition that retrograde measures resulting in the incarceration of young people do little to challenge the continuing inequalities within the criminal justice system and society."**
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> **Angela Slaven, Chief Executive, Divert**