

The Public-Private Divide Revisited: Questioning the Middle Ground of Hybridity in Policing

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The increasing pluralisation of policing and the changing patterns of security have in the past decades called into question the sharp dividing lines between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’. For instance, Marc Schuilenburg ([2015. The securitization of society: crime, risk, and social order. New York University Press]) outlines the notion of the middle ground – where everything is becoming hybrid – which fundamentally changes the relationships and practices of policing agencies, making the conceptual pairs of public-private obsolete. However, by examining policing collaboration in the airport and maritime port environment in Norway, the empirical findings in this article reveal that the public-private divide is still salient to the various policing agencies. The findings are at odds with the conceptual and empirical assumptions about the middle ground of hybridity in policing. The article demonstrates that both public and private policing agencies strongly rely on the traditional dividing lines of public and private to navigate and make sense of their practices and relations, as well as their own sense of identity in a complex policing environment. The article discusses the implications of these findings.

Keywords: collaboration; hybridity; plural policing; the public-private divide

Introduction

Historically and theoretically, the public-private divide has been crucial for understanding government involvement in many of the key issues of social and political analysis (Weintraub 1997, Owens 2008). Within criminological inquiry, the divide has been important to understand various policing actors’ involvement in crime control. The increasing pluralisation of policing and changing patterns of security provision have called into question the sharp dividing lines between the ‘public’ and ‘private’. Security, formerly perceived as the monopoly of the state, is now delivered by a wide range of actors operating alongside each other (Bayley and Shearing 1996, Bayley and Shearing 2001, Johnston and Shearing 2003, Dupont 2006a, Schuilenburg 2015). This significant transformation in how policing is organised also seems to produce a demand for different policing agencies to seek partner

organisations to collaborate with to govern security effectively. Thus, ‘the pursuit of security’ (Zedner 2009) requires communication, coordination, and exchange of information, knowledge, expertise, and resources across organisational boundaries. Consequently, the past decades have seen the emergence of a range of new governance, policing, and security configurations that clearly transcend the public and private divide.

Several academic observers have, since the 1990s, related this development to the proliferation of hybrid policing actors (Johnston 1992, Button 2002, Dupont 2006a, Rogers 2017). Given the complexity of policing provision, Johnston (1992) and Kempa, Shearing and Burris (2005) suggest that the public-private dichotomy has lost its utility and has eroded. An even stronger claim is found in the writings of Schuilenburg (2015), who argues that the securitisation of society causes the public and private to be so interwoven that there is little use in considering only one of them. The public-private divide, according to Schuilenburg, is too narrow and lacks nuances, making it challenging to apply in the exploration of everyday practices of policing. More importantly, Schuilenburg argues that the dichotomy is increasingly fading, giving way to the middle ground, where everything and everyone is becoming hybrid. Schuilenburg (2015, p. 15) claims that it is both ‘confusing and inaccurate to continue to use such dichotomies when the facts cast doubt upon the characteristics of these terms’. According to the accounts of Schuilenburg, the idea of hybridity seems, then, to denote growing similarity and even sameness between public and private actors.

While not disputing the value of such predicaments, the article argues that the theoretical assumptions of the middle ground of hybridity, where the dichotomy of the public and private are claimed obsolete and lost utility, may create analytical vagueness, and thus be of limited use in understanding the empirical everyday practices of policing and security. As such, the article questions the claim that the move to the middle ground makes it inaccurate to continue to rely on the notion of public and private in empirical analyses. That is, the idea of

the middle ground seems to lead to an under-recognition of difference, particularly when hybridity is assumed a priori, and defining elements of the public and private tend to be undervalued. The empirical findings of this article suggest that policing agencies continue to use the vocabulary of public and private to make sense of their practices and relations. More importantly, the distinction between public and private is being perpetuated by the agencies. This raises a crucial question: to what extent do the theoretical assumptions of the middle ground of hybridity stack up to empirical scrutiny? That is, does the idea of hybridity, in the sense outlined by Schuilenburg, obscure significant differences between agencies, particularly as regards their interests and mentalities? Given this, it is appropriate to highlight the importance of difference by revisiting the dividing line of public and private, and examine its continuous empirical and analytical value when considering policing and security.

In order to address the question, the article revisits the public-private distinction by examining the relational and collaborative properties of policing agencies within the maritime port and airport environment in Norway. Exploring collaboration to shed light on the importance of difference is a fruitful point of departure, as collaborative practices create spaces in which different interests, mentalities or rationalities can meet. Within such spaces, the policing agencies are often confronted with the potential ‘blending of different elements or attributes into a new combined form’ (Waring 2015, p. 346), that is of hybridity or sameness. However, whether such blending and mixing take place is an empirical question rather than something that can be assumed a priori. Drawing on qualitative interviews with key policing agencies and survey data on perceptions of collaboration, the article aims, first, to explore whether differences arising from the public-private divide make any difference to how these agencies perceive collaboration and partnership. Secondly, it aims to examine the impact of such differences on collaboration processes, by focusing in particular on power relations, information sharing and the exchange of resources and expertise.

The article is organised in five main sections. It begins with a review of the relevant literature on the middle ground of hybridity and the public-private divide. Following these theoretical considerations, the next section sets out to contextualise these discussions by describing and examining part of the collaborative landscape of airport and port policing in Norway. The next section outlines the research methods and design of this study. This is followed by a presentation of the empirical analysis of how collaboration is understood and negotiated across and within the public-private divide. The concluding section discusses the findings and identifies the implications for future research.

The Middle Ground of Hybridity and the Public-Private Divide

References to the notion of plural policing are now commonplace (Terpstra and van Stokkom 2015). To understand this plurality, reference has been made to ‘policing beyond, below, above, and through the government’, ‘the policing complex’, and ‘the mixed economy of policing’ (Jones and Newburn 1998, Loader 2000, Crawford *et al.* 2005). These studies have a shared understanding of the notion of plurality, where actors can take many forms.

As noted, Johnston’s (1992) efforts to conceptualise the field of policing provision introduced the notion of hybrid policing to cover all policing agencies (both public and private), other than the public police or private security. Without any clearer description, though, hybridity seems to denote those organisations whose status and practice cut across the public-private divide (Rogers 2017). According to this understanding, the category of hybrid policing agencies is potentially very broad, as is shown by Button (2002). Yet, such an understanding of hybrid policing seems to be somewhat limited, as it may merely indicate the existence of pluralism (which is well documented), in the sense that different policing agencies now operate alongside each other. Schuilenburg (2015) outlines the middle ground and suggests that within this space everything and everyone are increasingly hybrid. To fully

grasp the idea of the middle ground of hybridity, one can draw on insights from the public administration literature, where hybrid solutions have received considerable attention. Within the frames of public administration, hybridity is described in terms of the ‘mixing’, ‘combining’, and ‘blending’ of different elements, tasks, values and organisational forms into new configurations (Christensen and Lægreid 2011, Gittell and Douglass 2012, Gulbrandsen *et al.* 2015). It is further argued that hybridisation can occur through the processes of acculturation (learning), adaptation (modification), and appropriation (borrowing) (Waring 2015). Similarly, several observers have suggested that, as organisations work together over time, they may become more similar, particularly in terms of their cultural outlook (Fossetøl *et al.* 2015, Whelan 2016, Whelan 2017). That is, agencies will tend to harmonise or incorporate, either consciously or unconsciously, the institutional logics, mentalities, interests, or strategies of others – a process similar to that of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In this sense, hybrid configurations are understood as a fusion of ideas and practices from different governing systems, which creates increasing similarity between agencies – and thus the idea of sameness emerges.

Bearing this in mind, then, the middle ground of hybridity of policing now becomes more explicit. When exploring the dynamic perspective of security governance, Schuilenburg (2015) suggests that the middle ground of hybridity is a way out of the static and fixed categories of public-private. According to Schuilenburg (2015, p. 129), ‘the middle forms the basis from which relations develop and elements from various practices attach themselves to one another to form new combinations’. These new fluid configurations result in a hybrid security model understood as a security assemblage, and the emphasis is on the indeterminacy of the elements that make up the middle ground of hybridity (Schuilenburg 2015). The way policing agencies blend features, leading to an increasing similarity has been observed, for example by van Steden *et al.* (2015), who show that the occupational

motivation and professional values of police officers and private security guards are more alike than different. Although some differences can be observed, the similarities are more pronounced and it is suggested that a ‘shared security ethos’ exists across sectors. White and Gill (2013) and White (2014) show, when exploring the public good and market rationalities of the police and private security, that ‘what we are more likely to witness is a complex blurring of relations and rationalities across the traditional public–private divide’. That is, public police and private security ‘draw upon a mix of rationalities to inform their actions: sometimes they draw upon public good rationalities, other times they draw upon market rationalities; often they draw upon both at the same time’ (White and Gill 2013, p. 89). It is precisely this mixing and blending of elements that support the idea of the middle ground of hybridity. Thus, relying on the notion of public (good) and private (market logics) in analyses does not preclude the existence of hybridity in policing.

It is important to note that, although the distinction is frequently called into question, the public-private divide still seems to have importance for public political imaginaries (Owens 2008) and, within academic debate, the distinction is still frequently drawn (Wakefield 2003, Gimenez-salinas 2004, Diphorn and Berg 2014). From a sectoral point of view, an agency is deemed public if it is part of the state or government, funded out of taxation, and offers universal or monopolistic provision. If services are provided by a for-profit organisation via the market and involve contracts and competition, they are private. However, such a distinction, based on sectors, is too simplistic, given the pluralised nature of policing. Though recognising its limitations (e.g. the divide is not useful to sort organisations into neat categories), Jones and Newburn (1998) suggest that it still has value as a didactic tool and should be seen as a continuum, with public/state provision at one end and the market at the other. Thus, it indicates a degree of difference rather than a fundamental one. As such, the distinction must be considered in terms of agencies’ ‘publicness’ and ‘privateness’, and

the interests, mentalities, or strategies of organisations may be located along this continuum. In line with this reasoning, White and Gill (2013) and White (2014) expand our understanding of the rationalities of the public good and the market with regard to policing partnerships. Although their conclusions, as shown above, suggest hybridity in that the policing agencies under investigation frequently rely upon a mix of rationalities to guide their actions, their argument also shows how the exact composition of rationalities and distribution along the spectrum of publicness and privateness should be understood as an empirical question. That is, one cannot assume that private providers follow the market logic and public agencies are guided by public good rationalities, but it is equally true that one cannot take it for granted that there will be similarity and hybridity among policing agencies – sameness may occur, but the importance of focusing on difference is equally valid.

Numerous previous studies have sought to examine the public-private divide by empirically studying the relationships and collaboration between public and private agencies (Bayley and Shearing 1996, Wakefield 2003, Crawford *et al.* 2005, Jones and Newburn 2006, Ayling *et al.* 2009). This body of literature suggests that differences in organisations' degree of publicness-privateness may influence various aspects of such relationships. Previous studies show that collaboration processes may involve extensive exchange of information, resources and expertise (Crawford 1997, Bjelland and Vestby 2017). However, several barriers to exchange have been observed, including lack of openness and motivation, unwillingness to share, cultural differences, and structural or legal limitations (e.g. issues to do with confidentiality or lack of resources) (Ayling *et al.* 2009, Crawford and Cunningham 2015). Such barriers may cause considerable frustration and conflict, and lead to intense power struggles (Crawford 1997).

Based on this, we can see that hybridity of policing, following the accounts of the middle ground, is not a development that can be simply assumed, but one demanding a close

empirical examination of everyday practices of collaborative efforts and relationships. This will be undertaken in the following sections.

Standardised Regulation and the Collaborative Landscape of Aviation and Maritime Policing in Norway

Ports and airports can be seen as prime sites for studying public-private collaboration, as well as meeting points between high and low policing (Brodeur 2010). Such areas are central nodes in the infrastructure of globalisation (Salter 2008, Brewer 2014, Eski 2016), where the constant flow of people, goods, and capital are policed and regulated. This highlights an important linkage between security and flow. Airports and ports are spaces that need to be secure – both the spaces themselves and the flows that pass through them.

In view of new risks and vulnerabilities, airports and ports are places of intensified regulation (Salter 2008), whose international dimension is a prominent feature. This, however, is not surprising as, by its very nature, aviation and maritime security seem to demand an international response. These places are understood as national spaces connected to international ones, since aircraft and ships traverse national jurisdictions. In the case of Norway, the national regulation of aviation and maritime security is influenced and closely bound by international conventions (e.g. ICAO's Annex 17, or the ISPS-code¹) and EU-regulations. An important feature of these regulations is that they seek to establish common standards for different countries as regards aviation and maritime security. Consequently, Norwegian policing and security agencies' efforts to govern security in these spaces can be expected to resemble those of agencies operating in other countries, particularly European

¹ The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a UN specialist agency, and Annex 17 concerns aviation security and sets security standards. The International Ship and Port Facility code (ISPS-code) is administered by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the equivalent body for maritime security.

countries. The regulatory framework suggests there is a standardised and harmonised security governance of these spaces.

The security infrastructure at airports and ports often involves multiple organisations operating with different mentalities and interests, which span the public-private divide. To meet challenges associated with the policing of flows, various agencies are increasingly involved in partnerships, either as a direct consequence of standardised regulation or through voluntary engagement. The situation is further complicated by the fact that airports and ports are seen as both national points of access (involving e.g. border control and national security) and sites where economic and business imperatives prevail (e.g. those of airlines and airport operators). Policing agencies may thus be trapped between contradictory logics and strategies (collective and individual, public and private interests), which can affect the interaction between agencies.

In the case of Norway, policing organisations at airports and ports devote considerable time and resources to collaboration. At Oslo Airport, the police and customs have a shared interest in securing the border, and this creates numerous opportunities for collaboration. These agencies have, for instance, established several temporary joint operations directed at policing illicit cross-border flows. The agencies have also established a formal interagency intelligence unit. The formalisation has enabled new and extensive sharing of information across organisational boundaries. In addition to these public-public arrangements, there are numerous public-private partnerships operating to police the flows, ranging from information exchange and joint operational activities to formalised and strategic contacts points, such as local security committees and a crime prevention forum.

The collaborative policing environment of ports in Norway has many similarities with what happens in airports. There are several active local inter-agency and public-private partnerships and networks on the waterfront, with varying degrees of formalisation.

Following recommendations made in the ISPS-code, port security committees are thought to have led to an increased commitment, locally, to working on crime and security at the waterfront. In the ports of Stavanger and Kristiansand, for example, these informal forums seem to facilitate information-sharing across public-private organisations. Because of their informal character, they evolve rapidly and their exact nature varies according to circumstances.

An interesting feature of the policing environment is the possible influence of regulatory practices on collaborative relations. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has delegated responsibility for implementing aviation and maritime security to two regulatory entities. To ensure compliance, these authorities conduct regular audits. By definition, then, these regulators have the capacity to exercise control over others and some of the interaction with other (policing) agencies may be governed by hierarchical control. Nonetheless, the regulatory practice found in the airport and port environments share resemblances with the ‘responsive regulation’ model (Brewer 2014).

Methods

This article is based on a larger project analysing different aspects of security governance at ports and airports in Norway. Data for this article is derived from in-depth interviews and an electronic survey of key stakeholders involved in producing and delivering security. The mixed-method approach was important as it made possible a comprehensive assessment of the security governance of ports and airports.

Between (late) 2015 and 2017, a total of 76 interviews were conducted. Relevant organisations were identified through an extensive online search, official databases or membership lists, and snowball sampling. An exhaustive list of organisations involved in security governance at the selected ports and airports was produced, and access to these

organisations was obtained. Accordingly, participants belonged to the full spectrum of agencies dealing with security and crime. The agencies range from law enforcement and intelligence agencies, governmental bodies (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Justice and Public Security), regulatory authorities (The Norwegian Coastal Administration, Civil Aviation Authority Norway), to customs, private security companies, and business or industry stakeholders (e.g. airport operators, port authorities, airlines, shipping companies). Interviewees were drawn from many organisations, some of these having security as their primary concern (e.g. the police, and private security companies) whereas others saw security as one concern among others (e.g. customs, regulatory authorities, industry/business stakeholders).

The semi-structured interviews covered a range of topics, among other the participant's experience and understanding of their work and activities in relation to security. Specific questions concerning collaboration and security networks (e.g. trust and reciprocity, sharing of information, governance, the public-private divide, challenges, and possibilities) were also addressed during the interviews. The interviews were recorded and lasted between one and two hours, on average. All interviews were transcribed, and interviewees had the opportunity to read and approve the transcripts, to ensure the data was accurate and that no sensitive information was mentioned.

The interview transcripts were coded and analysed following the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). All transcripts were read and re-read, to increase my familiarity with their content. Coding involved the identification and comparison of key themes across interviews, as themes were identified inductively from the data. Analysis was facilitated by NVivo 11. The codes guiding the analysis were influenced by my prior theoretical familiarity with policing and collaboration literature. The aim of the analysis was to identify overarching themes pertaining to collaboration and the public-private divide, and

to give a thick and rich description of these themes. The quotations used in this article have been selected for their informative value.

In addition to the interviews, a questionnaire was developed to explore how collaboration was perceived. During the first part of 2017, the questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 896 participants involved in authorising and/or delivering security at five airports and five ports in Norway. In total, 511 participants responded, giving a response rate of 57%. The questionnaire was based on an adapted version of the Perception of Interprofessional Collaboration Model questionnaire (PINCOM-Q) (Ødegård 2006). The questionnaire is composed of 64 items, formulated as statements, and responses to them were rated on a 7-degree Likert scale (from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)). Each construct is operationalised by four items. Among the constructs to measure perception of collaboration were motivation to collaborate, professional power, communication, governance, and trust.

[Table 1 near here]

Descriptive analyses were conducted to explore the main patterns of the data. Index variables of the 16 constructs of perception were computed on the basis of average scores. Analyses of Cronbach's alpha were conducted to check the reliability of the constructs derived from the PINCOM. One-way analysis variance (ANOVA) was used to test for differences in average scores between groups. As the article relies mainly on interviews, I will not elaborate further on the sample size and characteristics, and the statistical analysis.

Findings

The Case for Revisiting the Public-Private Divide: Differences in Perception of Collaboration

On the basis of the notion of the middle ground of hybridity in policing introduced above,

one would expect there to be few differences between policing agencies as regards their mentalities, interests, collaboration, and alike. One way to explore the hypothesis is to have a closer look at this study's survey data on how collaboration is perceived by different policing agencies.

The survey findings suggest that there are differences in what aspects various agencies perceive as most prominent in collaboration processes. The greatest differences were found between private and public policing agencies. The various policing agencies were grouped together as a dummy variable² according to their publicness-privateness. Public agencies are the police, regulatory agencies, the customs authorities, publicly owned companies, or other public organisations (e.g. municipal institutions). Private agencies are private businesses and private security companies.

[Figure 1 near here]

The above figure shows the mean-score distribution for the various constructs of perception of collaboration for the public and private actors. Overall, public policing actors had a higher mean score for all constructs, compared with the private actors. This is an indication that public policing agencies place a more positive valuation on collaboration than their private counterparts. Differences in average scores between groups (e.g. public vs private sector) were tested using t-tests and ANOVA. The ANOVA indicated significant effects on all constructs but one (governance 1). This indicates that the observed differences in means with respect to perception between public and private actors were statistically significant.

However, it is important to be aware of the difficulty of grouping agencies into neat binary categories. For instance, there might be considerable differences within the two groups as regards their perception of collaboration. To check for this, one-way ANOVA and post hoc

² 1= Public (N=271), 0= Private (N=240)

tests were applied to explore differences in means within each group. Tukey's HSD post hoc test showed that the statistically significant differences observed between group means were found almost exclusively between public-private. The only significant differences within groups were found between the police and customs authorities on the professional power construct, and between the police and other public agencies on the governance 2 construct.

The analysis suggests that those agencies classed as public are clearly distinguishable from those bodies classed as private. Accordingly, there seem to be some clear differences between the agencies connected with the scale of publicness-privateness, particularly regarding how collaboration is understood. In view of this, the next sections will explore these differences in more detail by examining interviewees' narratives about collaboration and how these relate to the notion of publicness-privateness.

Reaching Consensus – a matter of Interests?

One dominant view of collaboration that was repeatedly expressed during interviews relating both to ports and to airports, was that establishing a shared understanding or consensus about various issues was crucial for a productive and effective relationship. As previously shown, such consensus can relate to such matters as common goals or aims, strategies and solutions, perspectives, or rules (Crawford 1997, Thomson and Perry 2006, Whelan 2017). In particular, interviewees emphasised the importance of making expectations, procedures, and guidelines explicit and clear to all involved in collaboration. Establishing consensus can help to create a stable and predictable collaborative environment. For this reason, many of the interviewees say that clarifying responsibilities and aims is the first step in establishing relationships with partner organisations. As Fleming and Rhodes (2005, p. 195) argue, shared values and norms are often the glue that holds a complex set of relationships together. However, the idea of consensus expressed by the interviewees does not seem to represent a

merging or blending of values or logics along the lines of hybridity. Rather, differences seem to emerge with regard to how collaboration processes evolve.

Although consensus is viewed as crucial by many agencies, exactly how it can be achieved is problematic. Due to the plural nature of policing at ports and airports, most of the interviewees said that being able to rely on informal relationships with partner organisations was of great value. However, these informal ties are not necessarily as structured as those containing a contractual element. Reaching consensus may therefore give rise to organisational tensions. For instance, a port facility security officer (PFSO) said:

Mutual understanding (...) would help reduce unnecessary interference in collaborative processes. However, it's precisely such interference that's almost always present, and that's because some people and agencies find it too difficult to agree. And this is extremely annoying really... it's damn frustrating and detrimental to the relationship.
(Private business 34)

What this indicates is that the process of reaching a shared agreement may involve considerable frustration and tension, particularly as agencies may be pursuing their own agendas or interests. Accordingly, several of the interviewees from private organisations linked such frustration to a perceived scepticism on the part of their (public) collaborative partner(s). To explain such scepticism, the interference described by the PFSO above is very telling as the interviewee continued to maintain that the interference is connected with a public reluctance to collaborate and to adopt goals of market logic. These challenges are further elaborated below.

Power Relations and Conflicts

As pointed out by Crawford (1997), collaboration can take various forms and even range from cooperation to competition and conflict (see also Diphoorn and Berg 2014, Crawford and Cunningham 2015). Thus, differences in structural power relations can exist between

agencies. A crucial question is whether the challenges described by the interviewees can be linked with the notion of publicness-privateness.

The different agencies are, of course, aware of the multitude of actors involved in policing and security, and that collaboration is inevitably becoming a natural part of everyday life. However, at the same time, interviewees emphasise that the challenges already mentioned – agreeing on goals and creating consensus for the direction of the collaboration – can be amplified by the underlying differences in interests of the various agencies. Reflecting on the differences between inter-agency and public-private collaboration, one police officer working with border control at a port noted that this is easier when only public agencies are involved. Collaboration with private actors, by contrast, was deemed much more demanding as the ‘interests are often so different. (...). My experience is that you have this “us” against “them”, public versus private’ (Police 20). Similar experiences were described by another police officer:

The different actors have different goals and are driven by different and sometimes contradictory interests. In some cases, when I have presented an idea or offered some suggestions for changes based on analyses, I have encountered opposition from private actors because the suggestions may result in increased costs or investments. The different interests can quickly develop into a situation of non-cooperation. (Police 19)

According to these police narratives, the publicness-privateness dimension seems to be of importance in discussions where agencies are trying to agree on their collaborative efforts. The ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality suggests that the shared logic of publicness increases the categorisation of agencies into neat groups and it seems that this process makes it even more challenging for public agencies to accept the existence of other interests. This mentality is also concerned with the differing view on security as presented by the interviewees. While van Steden *et al.* (2015) highlight the possibility of a shared security ethos across sectors, in the case examined here, such an ethos is most evident within sectors than across them. Public

agencies made it clear that the security they provide collectively is quite different from their private counterparts' exclusive and commodified provision, where profit is the motive. Such different manifestations of security may be interpreted in the light of the public good and market rationalities (White and Gill 2013). Public agencies may not always see, or want to acknowledge, market rationalities as valuable, even if such rationalities may contribute to the public good. That is, the frameworks of public agencies are clearly bound by their preference for the logic of publicness, and this may pose problems for the everyday practice of policing and security.

Therefore, despite having a shared understanding that collaborative approaches are beneficial, there seems to be a need for something of a 'balancing act' in reaching consensus between different and sometimes contradictory interests. Thus, some organisational interests or agendas are seen as more compatible with one's own interests than others. This balancing act, however, is not peculiar to the police – many interviewees from across all organisations gave similar accounts. A PFSO from one private company described some of these challenges and balancing acts in more detail:

Everyone has their own agenda, that's how it is. (...) In terms of collaboration, even if it concerns security, terrorism, emergency planning, or crime, it's not always easy to reconcile our commercial, economic interests, with other agencies' understandings and wishes. This also has major consequences. For example, it's not particularly fun or motivating to do this type of work, when you meet resistance over and over again simply because you represent other interests and ideas. Just because we're concerned with profit, this does not mean that it should be difficult to collaborate with us regarding security. I find it strange that people often say 'No, we're not competitors in security, it's in everyone's interest that we work together.' But the reality is different when all these interests meet. (Private business 47)

This quote summarises the multiple dilemmas that policing agencies may face when trying to establish inter-organisational partnerships. It also underlines the apparent lack of

understanding for different perspectives. Arguably, these different accounts capture a key element in the establishment of collaboration, namely the challenge of negotiating boundaries and consensus concerning goals and interests. Giacomantonio (2015) notes that power relations are still relevant as collaboration processes involve, sometimes very demanding, negotiations. The negotiation processes also capture some of the structural conflicts or frictions that may be generated (Crawford 1997). As such, it seems that the fear of losing organisational autonomy, as boundaries of public and private agencies are crossed through collaboration, can increase tension and lead to confusion among the agencies (Gill 2015). This suggests that these relations are potential sources of conflict and may impede the development of effective collaborative practices. Moreover, as the policing agencies differ in terms of their mentalities (e.g. economic ethos versus public interest), which make collaboration challenging, this difference seems largely to be determined by the degree of publicness-privateness. Accordingly, the divide is of use not only in distinguishing between public and private policing bodies (Jones and Newburn 1998), but also in helping our understanding of the establishment of collaborative efforts across organisations and subsequent challenges that may arise. What follows from this, then, are questions about the consequences of these challenges.

Inter-organisational Power Struggles – Information Sharing, Trust and Reciprocity

Many different, and to some extent successful, policing and security partnerships do in fact exist at ports and airports, despite difficulties in establishing and maintaining them. One such example is the police-customs collaboration on intelligence-exchange that has been established at Oslo Airport. This example can be used to shed light on important processes behind perceptions of good working relations. Describing the beneficial outcomes of this relationship, a customs officer noted enthusiastically:

You often have many common interests, and we've had cases in which both of us have an interest in an arriving object. By being familiar with the people who are doing the same type of work in the other agency, it's much easier to say, 'on this flight, for instance, we've noticed a person that isn't of interest to us, but who might be of interest to you based on this, and so on.' (Customs 21)

This customs officer went on to argue, in line with views expressed by police officers also involved, that one needs to be aware of what information one's own organisation needs and what the partner organisation needs and wants. The quote highlights the fact that information and particularly the exchange and sharing of information is crucial for carrying on effective collaboration. As we have seen, the belief in the pivotal position of information exchange in ensuring good and effective partnerships is shared among many of the policing agencies and across the public-private divide. Similar accounts are given by Crawford *et al.* (2005), who argue that information exchange is central to policing partnerships. Brewer (2013, 2014) elaborates on the importance of trust and reciprocity in partnerships, and notes that 'social capital born of trusting interagency relations is key to enabling efficacious cooperative partnership between policing agencies' (Brewer 2013, p. 375).

Although the exchange of information is deemed crucial and effective for some partnerships, this is not necessarily the case for all collaborative efforts. Many of the policing agencies find that the public police have a pre-eminent position as regards the exchange and collection of information and expertise. In interviews with the police, it is interesting to note that they also assign themselves such a central position. Nonetheless, a number of interviewees, particularly those belonging to private agencies, say that the police, despite their perceived central position, do not actively seek knowledge, information and expertise outside their sectoral domain. A good example is the importance of local knowledge for security work at the airport and ports, and how such knowledge may be shared between agencies.

In line with Dupont (2006b), such local knowledge could be viewed as a type of capital that is accumulated, mobilised, and shared among agencies. Thus, different agencies have the opportunity to become ‘knowledge-brokers’ (Ericson and Haggerty 1997). However, interviewees called attention to a lack of interest on the part of the police in obtaining and making use of the necessary information about sites that are being policed and made secure. The public police thus seem to struggle to take the position of a successful knowledge-broker, particularly as they tend to have a hierarchical view of collaboration. That is, police organisations are generally guided by their strong hierarchical and legal-bureaucratic role perception (Mawby and Wright 2008). For example, one PFSO argued that the police should take a more active role in searching for information, knowledge and expertise:

If there is a major event at the port, the police get the responsibility for the site. I think, then, an important prerequisite for being able to take this role seriously is to have obtained sufficient information. However, in those forums I am involved in, which are both formal and personal relationships, the police aren’t particularly present or interested. So, from a collaboration perspective, I wish that they would take a more active role and seek more information. (Private business 44)

What is highlighted here seems to be the essence of the frustration felt by private agencies. Knowledge, information, and expertise found in different (private) policing agencies are seen as valuable resources, that are potentially critical for the governing of security. However, the potential of information exchange does not seem to be fully exploited in the collaborative efforts at the ports and airport.

Contrary to this view, police representatives argued that they do indeed seek information. The police narratives seem to express a feeling on the part of the interviewees that the police have some sort of an obligation or right to collect information, and in many instances this is, in fact, the case (e.g. information for crime investigation). More

interestingly, many interviewees spoke about how to obtain information ‘out there’ from other policing agencies. As one police officer put it:

It will give you a better and bigger picture when you start thinking in this way, who’s actually around us. I think it can help you to identify partners faster, or I do not know if you should call it partners though, but they’re sensors for us. (Police 19)

Such ‘sensors’ are understood as actors who can provide the police with relevant information. But to decide what should be deemed relevant, the police ‘need to go out and talk to them and explain a couple of things’ (police 19). Once again, these accounts demonstrate the hierarchical view of collaboration taken by the police. The notion of a sensor, in this context, clearly suggests that in encounters between the police and private agencies, the agencies are not deemed equal partners; in fact, they are not seen as partners at all. It is precisely this strongly hierarchical command mentality of the police – ‘the need to explain’ certain things – that indicates its publicness. Among these policing and security agencies one can sense not only different ideas about information and knowledge exchange between public and private, but also the tension that may arise from such differences. The tension becomes particularly evident when the policing agencies speak about reciprocity in collaboration processes.

As noted above, Brewer (2013, 2014) captures how inter-agency partnership is dependent on norms of trust. Other studies have also shown the importance of trust and reciprocity in collaborative policing (O’Neill and McCarthy 2014, Whelan 2017). When reflecting on the role of reciprocity, a number of interviewees emphasised that the way reciprocity is perceived may vary considerably between agencies. However, there appears to be a tendency for reciprocity with regard to information and knowledge to be dependent on sectoral allegiance: public agencies tend to share information more readily with other public agencies, and private organisations experience more reciprocity from other private organisations. Explaining how to seek and obtain information, one PFSO expressed:

Our collaboration with the RSO [recognised security organisation] is very good. That's where we get all the information we really need. (...). It really helps me to do my job, and I'd rather call them [name of persons], than [name of person], the Coastal Administration or the police if I need to ask for something. I feel it's the professional interests we have in common. (...). We need to do what's best for us, you know, and they know our port facility, they know what they are talking about. (Private business 45)

From the public perspective, a similar picture is given:

If you think about other governmental agencies, you naturally have trust in that relationship. We're both parts of the government. (...). In general, I think public agencies work well together. (...) And this is particularly evident in security incidents. Here, our collaboration is excellent. Yes, there are open lines between us. But of course, over the years you get to know each other, that's very helpful, and we know those working in the Ministry on these issues. (Regulatory authority 12)

Speaking about these different perspectives on reciprocity, interviewees mentioned two sets of explanations. The first concerns who possesses relevant information and their willingness to share it. As we have seen, local knowledge and information exist, yet it seems that not all agencies have equal access to it. As one PFSO put it: 'Locally, the police and PST³, but also the coastal administration are too closed in how they operate with regard to the information they possess, information that we often view as crucial for strategic choices in our company' (Private business 40). In a similar vein, a representative from one private company at the airport said 'Collaboration with certain public agencies is obstructed by our lack of authorisation to receive classified information' (Private business 29). Within partnerships, some agencies thus have the ability to set limits for certain types of information, particularly with regard to how it should be shared, and which agencies should get access. Following Foucault (1990) and Latour (1986), power can be seen as the process of enrolling and mobilizing others' capacities and resources. At the same time, Wood and Shearing (2007, p.

³ The Norwegian Police Security Service.

15) note that some (state) actors in the process of enrolment 'are rather concerned with expanding their capacities and resources in furtherance of their mission'. These public policing agencies are thus involved in power relations when they seek to enlist others to share information with them, while at the same time operating as gatekeepers to other information. Such power relations may shed light on the existence of sectoral allegiance. As shown by Whelan and Dupont (2017), the nature of such allegiance has to some extent been overlooked in the literature. Given their closed environment, private agencies tend to develop alternative conduits for exchange, particularly by establishing ties with other private organisations. As noted by the interviewees, a 'common professional interest' plays a crucial role in their private-private relationships, in the sense that they already have a mutual framework to work within, and it seems that such a common interest can lead to 'natural' trust, similar to that described in the public-public collaboration. As a consequence, the tendency for there to be private-private sector relationships seems to be strengthened, both by the frustration experienced by these actors because of the difficulty of accessing local knowledge and information, and by their shared understanding.

The second explanation concerns different views on what type of information is being shared. That is, private policing agencies argue that they are interested in strategic information from the public agencies. One interviewee said:

The police and the coastal administration must share information about their observations, threat assessments and the like, as well as having a dialogue with the operators if they want to collect information from all actors about employees who might be a security threat. (Private business 35)

Among the interviewees, it is felt that such strategic information can contribute to improving security and policing at the ports and airport, particularly by making sure that decisions are based on intelligence and local knowledge. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the

intelligence doctrine for the police declares that certain information can and should be made available to external agencies (Politidirektoratet 2014). Here, one interviewee, with extensive experience in the police, but now working in a private company, states that the information that could potentially be shared is very difficult to obtain: ‘You need to know your way around to get the necessary information. The information is difficult to access, but it is available. So, you just need to accept the system’ (Private business 76). Obtaining information thus requires a great amount of effort on the part of the (private) agencies to navigate within the difficult field of information exchange with the police and other (public) agencies. Again, this may help understand the nature of sectoral allegiance. The private agencies share not only the characteristics of their privateness (e.g. market rationalities) but also the constant difficulty of exchange and its attendant frustrations. In a sense, this seems to forge a stronger tie between private-private policing organisations, making exchange between them easier and more important. Moreover, the fact that one needs to know one’s way around the system to obtain information shows the importance of establishing informal relations. Several studies have demonstrated that interpersonal trust and informal relations are crucial to the smooth flow of resources and information between agencies (Crawford *et al.* 2005, Brewer 2014, Bjelland and Vestby 2017). In line with the idea of sectoral allegiance, private-private informal relations are viewed by the interviewees as strategies to overcome, or at least reduce, the barriers to exchange that private agencies encounter.

Public agencies, on the other hand, seem to have a somewhat different view about what information should be shared or obtained. While to some extent acknowledging the importance of strategic information, these agencies say that exchange is dependent on the sensitivity of the matter. Exchange, therefore, tends to be at a more general level. As one customs officer at the port explains:

It's about information, you know. What we can and cannot share, and to what extent we can go into detail on the things [information] being shared. With regard to sharing between public agencies, it's pretty easy, I think. The formalities are established and known to all. With other actors, we tend to be vaguer, or not necessarily vague, but more general. Information we share is at a general level. (Customs 51)

This highlights one particular issue regarding information exchange within collaborative partnerships – an issue that can lead to considerable organisational tension. That is, if there is no common understanding or guiding principles about how to share information and what information should be shared, one runs the risk of creating barriers between agencies, particularly between those at different ends of the public-private divide. A representative from the Customs stresses the importance of such common understandings by noting that one may withhold information that should have been shared, as guidelines may not be sorted out and agreed upon, and exchange is sometimes hindered by confidentiality.

In the light of this, it is clear that negotiation over issues of confidentiality is crucial to avoid creating organisational barriers, since different policing agencies are bound by different legislation. Drafting a common understanding of information exchange, however, is not only concerned with fleshing out legal rules relating to sensitive and confidential data. In order to establish reciprocity within partnerships, one also needs to be aware of differences in agencies' interests and their potential contribution to exchange of information, resources and expertise. Consequently, one key aspect of reciprocity is that exchange is regarded as balanced amongst the policing agencies. However, it seems to be difficult for some agencies to adhere to the idea of balanced exchange, and there seems to be a power struggle that challenges collaboration and reciprocity. The power struggle is particularly evident in public agencies, which raises the issue of the publicness-privateness of agencies and their interests. This point was articulated powerfully by a police official who said: 'Although we work together closely on a daily basis, we must not forget that we're the police: we're the police

and they're commercial actors' (Police 13). This quote reinforces the 'us' and 'them' mentality outlined above. What is indicated here is that public (police) agencies seem to be sceptical of those operating within the frames of a different logic – the market. This tendency illuminates the fact that meetings between different policing agencies do not necessarily involve the blending and mixing of the agencies interests or mentalities. Rather, it seems that these interests often seem incompatible and the perception of difference is reinforced. Thus, information exchange and trust within the airport and port environment is determined and contested according to the degree of agencies' publicness or privateness.

Discussion

The notion of the middle ground, where everything and everyone is increasingly hybrid, suggests, as collaborations progress and proliferate, that one could expect to experience fewer and fewer differences between policing agencies. From this perspective, it would follow that, in most situations, the hybridity should be prominent in empirical practice, particularly if the middle is all ground between what is seen as exclusively public or private. This is particularly the case if the security assemblages of the middle ground cannot be demarcated by assigning them hard boundaries (Schuilenburg 2015). Also, as Schuilenburg (2015, p. 15) argues, the public-private distinction is often difficult to apply to real-life practice, and can thus be seriously questioned. The main argument of this article is, though, at odds with the conceptual assumptions of the middle ground as outlined by Schuilenburg. The empirical findings challenge the perception of the middle ground of hybridity, as the public-private divide is a salient feature of the language used by the various policing agencies. The article shows that the notion of public-private is crucial to how agencies view themselves in comparison with others, and to how they seek to position themselves within collaborative efforts by making reference to this divide. This is a strong indication that the policing

agencies under investigation rely on the traditional dividing line of public and private to navigate and make sense of their practices and relations, as well as their own identity in a complex policing environment. It may, of course, be the case that different agencies rely on the language of public and private to inform their actions and relations simply because their frames of reference or conceptual language are still influenced by the historical power of these concepts. The findings of this article, however, suggest that this is more than simply a reiteration of a powerful traditional vocabulary inherited from the past. That is, the various policing agencies represent interests that are clearly empirically different, and these differences have a substantial influence on the collaborations explored in this study. Therefore, the article questions the claim made by Schuilenburg (2015) that it is confusing and inaccurate to continue to rely on the notion of public and private in analyses.

More specifically, the empirical findings reveal the importance of interest for understanding the public and private distinction. The issue of difference in interests was pointed out in several interviews. The question of whose interests are being served can be used to draw a dividing line between the public and private (Benn and Gaus 1983). In essence, an organisation that provides services designed to benefit any or every member of a community is one that serves the public interest. By contrast, if an organisation only benefits a particular individual or organisation, then it serves a private interest. I would like to suggest that the notion of interest deserves proper criminological attention in future research. Although acknowledged (Shearing and Stenning 1981), the diverging interests highlighted in this article represent a significant challenge to the middle ground of hybridity. For instance, the analysis put forward suggests that it can indeed be challenging for agencies to agree on objectives and aims because of differences in their interests. If examined in the light of the publicness-privateness continuum, diverging interests may add another layer to the analysis. The public police and other public policing agencies may have some similarities and

differences, but they are all distinguishable from bodies that can be classed as private as regards their interests. This provides a novel insight into the way in which the notion of interest influences security governance.

The findings indicate that policing agencies which have a similar cultural outlook and shared interests seem to experience greater reciprocity in their collaborative efforts. Building rapport and trust over time is particularly important, but is a challenging task in the process of reciprocity. Within the partnerships investigated in this article, trust seems to be facilitated by stability in interpersonal relations between agencies. But as the above findings suggest, establishing trust is easier within the sector one belongs to. As such, the importance of sectoral allegiance comes to the fore. The narratives reveal a profound lack of trust across the boundaries of public and private agencies. Public-public and private-private partnerships may, therefore, experience less tension than those that cross the public-private divide. Thus, differing interests arising from the divide also seem to affect matters of reciprocity and trust.

In the empirical context analysed, local knowledge, information, and expertise are seen as important capital that can be mobilised and exchanged. However, the analysis suggests there is an unwillingness to share such capital among all policing agencies, this being particularly true of the public police. There are, of course, some confidentiality barriers to information exchange (Ericson and Haggerty 1997, Bjelland and Vestby 2017). This unwillingness, therefore, is partly related to issues of confidentiality and the desire to ensure that sensitive information is not misused. However, the reluctance on the part of the public police to share and collect local knowledge and information is also linked to their mentality. The 'us' and 'them' perspective and the view that 'we are the police' impose limits on exchange that cannot be justified by formal legal norms of confidentiality alone, but seem to arise from a state-centric mentality where the police seek to maintain their power and position in the plural policing environment. The position carries resemblance with what Shearing

(2006) describes as the refusal to acknowledge private governments. Moreover, the criminal justice logic of public policing agencies is, in practice, often incompatible with the profitability logic of private agencies. This, together with the hierarchical view of collaboration that has been described, clearly creates tension, and the resultant power struggles clearly cut across the boundaries of the public-private divide. In this respect, the division between public and private is being constantly renewed and maintained by the agencies. This supports the view that the exact composition and distribution along the spectrum of publicness and privateness should be understood as an empirical question.

In order to understand differences in plural policing, van Stokkom and Terpstra (2018) highlight the importance of historical, cultural and political factors. Although the Norwegian policing context share similarities with regard to policing systems found elsewhere (e.g. pluralisation), the state apparatus is still strong and play a significant role in policing (Gundhus and Larsson 2007, Høigård 2011). This may influence the organisation of the plural policing system, in particular, the demarcation towards other (private) policing bodies. This raises the important question to what extent can the findings be geographically determined. As such, the empirical findings concerning the reinforcement of the public-private divide should be treated with some caution, particularly with regard to its generalisability. Nonetheless, the conceptual arguments seem to be useful in broader contexts.

Concluding Remarks

In the light of these findings, I propose that one should be aware of the diverging interests and mentalities that exist, and of how these can influence collaboration between policing agencies. I do not dispute the idea that the divide between them is being contested and recast into different configurations. However, this study clearly suggests that the dividing line

between public and private still has significant analytical value in examinations of the empirical context of policing, particularly by noting the importance of difference. This, therefore, demands a closer focus on such awareness. Drawing inspiration from the insight of Jones and Newburn (1998) that the public-private is a matter of degree, this study points to the importance of further research that brings together the two dimensions of interest and mentality in studies of pluralised policing and collaboration. Such a combination could provide a useful tool for classifying policing agencies that attach importance to the notions of 'publicness' and 'privateness', and for examining how agencies can be situated along this continuum. By expanding the one-dimensional scale of publicness and privateness, one may avoid fixating on the historical reference point of plural policing, which focuses almost exclusively on the public police and private security. That is, a vast array of other agencies (both public and private) also operates within the (plural) policing environment, and with such an expansion these agencies may be captured. Finally, the empirical contextualisation of the notion of the middle ground of hybridity demonstrated in this article raises a broader question of whether theoretical concepts developed within policing studies serve as productive conduits for further understanding or whether they may, in fact, become potential blocks against insight.

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Table 1. Sector representation, N=511

Sector	N
Police	66
Regulatory authority	44
Customs	53
Publicly owned company	39
Other public body	69
Private business	167
Private security company	73
Total	511

Figure 1: Perception of collaboration, public versus private actors

