



This is a repository copy of *What is the privatization of policing?*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/137838/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

White, A. (2020) What is the privatization of policing? *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 14 (3). pp. 766-777. ISSN 1752-4512

<https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay085>

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in *Policing* following peer review. The version of record Adam White; What is the Privatization of Policing?, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* is available online at:
<https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay085>

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

What is the Privatisation of Policing?

Adam White

Senior Lecturer in Criminology

Centre for Criminological Research

School of Law

University of Sheffield

adam.white@sheffield.ac.uk

Accepted for publication in *Policing* on 25th September 2018

Abstract

The politics of austerity have deepened market penetration across the UK policing sector, bringing into effect an array of new policing assemblages which cut across the public-private divide like never before and defy simple categorisation. However, public discourse has not kept pace with this fast-changing reality, all too often reducing these assemblages into an amorphous singularity – ‘privatisation’ – towards which one is either unambiguously for or against. This article accordingly sets out the analytical tools for developing a more nuanced discourse on the privatisation of policing. It first develops a new typology of privatisation across five categories: function, formulation of private sphere, trigger of privatisation, regulatory influence of the state and relationship to the ideal-type police monopoly. It then operationalises this typology using four recent examples of privatisation drawn from the UK policing sector. It lastly clarifies how this typology can be used to inform discourse on the privatisation of policing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Megan O'Neill, Gwen Robinson and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

Introduction

The fiscal crisis experienced by many western capitalist states during the 1970s is regarded as a key factor behind the privatisation of policing in the late twentieth century (Spitzer and Scull, 1977; Shearing and Stenning, 1981; Jones and Newburn, 1998). Economic stagnation, rising unemployment and an overburdened public exchequer caused many governments to impose constraints upon police force budgets at a time of deepening socioeconomic inequality and escalating crime rates, creating an unmet demand for protection among their citizenries. Over time, this demand was in part satisfied through the market, bringing into effect a range of new policing assemblages which spanned the public and private sectors in previously unseen ways.¹ Right now, this sequence of events has a pronounced air of familiarity about it. This is because we are in many respects living through a period of history repeating. Following the 2008 collapse of the global financial system, a second fiscal crisis hit many of the same western capitalist states, with familiar consequences for the economy, the public exchequer, police budgets and the privatisation of policing (Millie and Bullock, 2013). The cumulative effect of these crises is that scholars, practitioners, policy-makers and other interested parties looking upon the policing landscape today are confronted with a complex set of assemblages which cut across the public and private sectors like never before and defy simple categorisation.

In the United Kingdom (UK), however, public discourse has not kept pace with this fast-changing reality. When discussed in public fora, these assemblages and the

¹ When used as a noun – as it is here – the term ‘assemblage’ denotes any kind of socio-spatial configuration (Anderson and MacFarlane 2011). In recent years this term has been picked up by policing scholars to describe the multitude of new institutional arrangements materializing across the policing landscape precisely because of its non-specific nature (for example, see: Abrahamsen and Williams 2011). The advantage of this generic nomenclature is that, unlike many other terms in the traditional policing vocabulary, it does not automatically conjure up an association with the ‘police’, thereby creating a more evenly balanced analytical space in which to explore the ‘private’ and its relationship to the ‘public’.

processes which lie behind them are all too often reduced into a kind of amorphous singularity – ‘privatisation’ – towards which one is either unambiguously for or against. This unhelpful reductionism has been fuelled by a particularly ‘hot’ political climate (Loader and Sparks, 2010) where signature events, such the failure of G4S to fulfil the conditions of its £284 million London Olympics security contract, have served as flashpoints around which latent scepticism regarding market penetration into the policing sector has been unleashed in vociferous terms (White, 2015a, 2016). In this climate, high profile and impassioned critiques (Prescott, 2012) and defences (Green, 2012) concerning the privatisation of policing have been plentiful, whereas nuanced empirical debate on its numerous and varied forms has for the most part been conspicuously absent. As public discourse on privatisation has become, if anything, even more polarized following the recent demise of outsourcing behemoth Carillion, which at the time of its collapse in January 2018 had no less than £1.7 billion worth of government contracts on its books, there seems to be little prospect of this climate ‘cooling down’ any time soon.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of the article is to contribute towards the development of a more nuanced discourse on the privatisation of policing. It goes about this task in three parts. It first advances a new typology of privatisation across five categories: function (steering and/or rowing); formulation of private sector (market economy and/or community); trigger of privatisation (policy led and/or demand led); regulatory influence of the state (institutional and/or cultural); and relationship to the ideal-type state monopoly (strong, medium or weak). It then operationalises this typology by applying it to four recent examples of privatisation drawn from the UK policing sector: the Lincolnshire Police – G4S Strategic Partnership; the attempted crowdfunding of additional police officers by residents in Hampstead, London; the

procurement of ex-police officers by residents in Belgravia, London; and the purchase of private security patrols by residents in Frinton, Essex (see Figure 1). It lastly suggests how this typology can be used to inform public discourse on the privatisation of policing.

Figure 1: Typology of Privatisation

	Function	Formulation of Private Sphere	Trigger of Privatisation	Regulatory Influence of the State	Relationship to Ideal Type Monopoly
Lincolnshire Police – G4S	Rowing	Market Economy	Policy Led	Institutional and Cultural	Strong
Crowdfunding in Hampstead, London	Steering	Community and Market Economy	Policy and Demand Led	Institutional and Cultural	Strong
Ex-police Patrols in Belgravia, London	Steering and Rowing	Community and Market Economy	Demand Led	Institutional and Cultural	Medium
Private Patrols in Frinton, Essex	Steering and Rowing	Community and Market Economy	Demand Led	Institutional	Weak

Typology

To begin with, it is important to clarify precisely what is meant by ‘policing’ and ‘privatisation’. While in the popular imagination ‘policing’ is simply taken to mean ‘what the police do’ – a definition born of the monopolistic ideals which continue to impress upon the collective consciousness in many liberal democracies (Reiner 2010) –

policing scholars have sought to move away from this interpretation over recent decades. Recognising the increasing number of actors directly engaged in policing activities yet not formally part of the police institution, they have instead gravitated towards a more pluralistic interpretation which encompasses, in the words of Jones and Newburn (1998: 18), all:

those organised forms of order maintenance, peacekeeping, rule or other enforcement, crime investigation and prevention and other forms of investigation and associated information-brokering – which may involve a conscious exercise of coercive power – undertaken by individuals or organisations, where such activities are viewed by them and/or others as a central or key defining part of their purpose.

Put simply, the scholarly norm is thus now to regard the police as just one of many actors – public or private – charged with carrying out policing functions.

While the privatisation of policing is undoubtedly one of the principal factors behind the growing acceptance of this more pluralistic interpretation, the term ‘privatisation’ is actually deployed in remarkably different ways throughout policing scholarship. Its various articulations can usefully be situated on a spectrum bookended by ‘most exacting’ definitions on one side and ‘least exacting’ definitions at the other.² When used in its most exacting form, privatisation generally refers to the transfer of defined parts of the police workforce and/or estate to the market economy. The paradigmatic examples here are those localised and empirically detailed case studies

² The ‘most exacting’/‘least exacting’ distinction is borrowed from Hay’s (2008) reflections on how the equally slippery term ‘globalisation’ is defined.

which focus on the outsourcing of specific service areas – such as custody suites, control rooms or training facilities – from a specific police force to a specific contractor (see: Skinns et al, 2017). When used in its least exacting form, privatisation usually relates to any kind of broad shift from the public sphere towards the private sphere across the policing landscape. The classic examples here are those historical overviews which illustrate how the constitution of this landscape has gone through a gradual but decisive reorientation from the state towards the market economy over the past forty or so years (see: Shearing and Stenning 2016). Both articulations – together with all the various permutations which lie in between – are perfectly justifiable so long as an accompanying rationale is put forward.

The aim of the present typology is to work with the grain of the least exacting public discourse on the privatisation of policing while, at the same time, imbuing this discourse with a something of a more exacting edge. In what follows, then, a kind of ‘in between’ definition is deployed. That is, the least exacting definition serves as a broad canvas upon which a series of more exacting definitions are stitched together. In pursuing this enterprise, it is important to briefly acknowledge some of the work already undertaken towards this (or similar) end(s). In two prominent examples, Johnston (1992, pp.183-203) and Jones and Newburn (1998, pp.199-246) advance a range of useful categories through which to conceptualise the privatisation of policing – the sectoral, spatial, structural, legal, functional and geographical (see also: Button 2002, pp.5-19). They arrive at these typologies by integrating the theoretical literature on the public/private divide with a series of empirical observations on specific policing assemblages. This approach – that is, the iterative relationship between theory *and* empirics – is significant. It illustrates how there is no definitive way of conceptualising the privatisation of policing in practice because all attempts to do so are to some extent

a product of the empirical context in which they are formulated. With this point in mind, the remainder of the section advances five categories through which to conceptualise the privatisation of policing. While some of these categories overlap with the aforementioned typologies, they have ultimately been selected not for reasons of intrinsic scholarly value but because of their immediate relevance to the four policing assemblages under examination.

The first category is the *function* in question. There are a variety of ways to define the function(s) of policing: the broad ends towards which any given policing assemblage is directed (e.g. order maintenance or profit maximisation); the narrow ends towards which any given policing assemblage is directed (e.g. making arrests or protecting clients); the means used by any given policing assemblage in realising these ends (e.g. the exercise of force or the enactment property rights); or some combination of the above. The focus here, however, is on organisational function. When discussing the transfer of organisational functions from the public sphere to the private sphere it has become common practice for policing scholars to make a distinction between, on one side, the process of directing and financing policing goods from above and, on the other side, the process of delivering these goods on the ground. This distinction is often conceptualised using either Bayley and Shearing's (2001) 'auspice'/'provider' pairing (see Berg 2015) or Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) 'steering'/'rowing' metaphor (see Crawford, 2006). The present discussion adopts the latter terminology for the simple reason that it is more widely known. For now, then, it is sufficient to acknowledge that sometimes both steering and rowing processes are shifted from the public sphere towards the private sphere, whereas at other times they are to some extent decoupled and only one makes this journey, leaving the other behind.

The second category relates to different *formulations of the private sphere*. Given what is at stake in conceptualising the private sphere – nothing less than the realm of autonomy defined in relation to the authority of the state – different formulations abound. That said, two formulations have cemented themselves above all others in policing scholarship: the private sphere as ‘market economy’ (the voluntary exchange of goods between buyers and sellers) and the private sphere as ‘community’ (the grouping together of individuals in relation to a specific location and/or set of values). While these formulations are often linked together when discussing the ‘pluralisation of policing’ (Crawford, 2013; Jones and Lister, 2015), this is less common when discussing the ‘privatisation of policing’, where the focus tends to be on the market economy to the exclusion of community (though see Johnston 1992). This is problematic, however, because while the transfer of policing functions to the market economy is undoubtedly the central focus of public discourse in this policy area – and is accordingly the main concern of this discussion – in reality this dynamic is often bound up with a concomitant transfer of policing functions towards the community. To exclude the community from the outset is thus to unnecessarily cut off an important dimension of the privatisation process. As a consequence, both formulations are included in the present typology – that is, privatisation may engender a movement from the public sphere towards the market economy and/or the community.

The third category relates to different *triggers of privatisation*. While the full range of possible triggers is essentially limitless, Starr (1988: 15) usefully narrows down the field by distinguishing between two broad points of origin: ‘policy led’ privatisation triggered by government strategy; and ‘demand led’ privatisation triggered when demand for a good outstrips public supply and a private alternative is sought out. Importantly, both points of origin find resonance in contemporary policing

scholarship. Not only have scholars investigated the extent to which governments consume, work alongside and create the conditions for others to engage with an array of policing actors across the private sphere (Garland, 1996; Goold et al, 2010). But they have also explored why individuals, communities and businesses seek out and develop policing initiatives within this sphere, with some of the primary motivators being the rising levels of insecurity and risk sensitivity (Zedner, 2003; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011), the expansion of corporate networks across nation-state borders (Spitzer and Scull 1977) and the emergence of mass private property (Shearing and Stenning, 1981, 1983). In the present typology, both triggers assume a central role, either together or independent of one another.

The fourth category concerns the ongoing *regulatory influence of the state*. One of the central themes running through the extensive scholarship on the regulatory state is that during the course of the privatisation process, the state is rarely (if ever) removed from the equation entirely. Broadly speaking, the ongoing influence of the state can be either 'institutional' (statutory regulatory tools designed to control the delivery of privatised goods) or 'cultural' (a form of symbolic capital realised within the course of regulatory engagements) (Black 2002). Given the historic importance of the state in the policing sector, it is unsurprising to discover that both kinds of influence find articulation in contemporary policing scholarship. While some scholars map out and evaluate the numerous institutional regulatory regimes through which states control policing initiatives in the private sphere (de Ward, 1999; Button and Stiernstedt, 2016), others focus on the various strategies by which public and private actors seek to realise the symbolic capital of the state so as to enhance their standing within the policing sector (White, 2010, 2012; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011; Thumala et al, 2011). Against this backdrop, the present typology recognises that the privatization of

policing is frequently accompanied by various institutional safeguards (from regulations to contractual stipulations) and/or cultural signifiers (such as uniforms and badges) designed to retain the material and/or ideational presence of the state.

The fifth and final category reflects back on the preceding four categories to assess the overall degree of privatisation. It does so by measuring – in least exacting terms – any given initiative’s *relationship to the ideal-type state monopoly*. Within the context of the present typology, this ideal-type can be viewed as an arrangement in which both steering and rowing functions are firmly rooted in the public sphere. This ideal-type is important not just because of its historical importance as a blueprint for the police institution, but also because it has over time cemented itself in popular consciousness – what Reiner (2010: 3) terms ‘police fetishism’. This means that whenever a new privatization initiative roams into view, it is almost inevitably judged in part by its relationship to this ideal-type (White, 2015a). With this in mind the typology accordingly sees any given policing initiative as having either a ‘strong’, ‘medium’ or ‘weak’ relationship to the ideal-type policy monopoly. This is by no means an exact science, but it does at least indicate in broad historical terms the overall degree of privatization involved.

Case Studies

Over recent decades, the UK policing sector has played host to countless initiatives linking the public and private spheres together in new and innovative ways. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, however, this process has experienced a pronounced acceleration. In an effort to repair the beleaguered public exchequer following the state bailout of the banking sector, the Coalition Government enforced a 20 percent reduction on the Home Office police budget between 2010 and 2015. These constraints in turn

precipitated a new wave of policing experiments, many of which entailed some kind of transfer from the public sphere to the private sphere. In this section, four of the resulting policing assemblages are weaved through the above typology so as to demonstrate its utility in bringing about a more nuanced discourse on the privatization of policing. The main criterion for selecting these assemblages is their prominence within the local and national media – all of them hit the headlines because they brought something new and interesting (and indeed jarring) into the UK policing sector. This notoriety is important because it not only means there is ample data on these examples readily available, but it also helps to connect the ensuing discussion with recent public discourse on the privatisation of policing.

Lincolnshire Police – G4S. While the aforementioned reduction in the Home Office police budget presented severe funding challenges to all police forces, the predicament faced by Lincolnshire Police was particularly acute. It already had the lowest annual expenditure and lowest total workforce number per head of population across all forces and therefore had comparatively few opportunities to make savings through workforce reduction and internal restructuring programmes (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary 2013: 36 and 153). As such, the Lincolnshire Police Command Group and Police Authority took the decision to realise a significant proportion of the requisite savings by outsourcing a range of service areas to the private sphere. Soon afterwards, the force initiated a fast paced and highly competitive tendering process, eventually signing a £229 million contract with G4S commencing in April 2012. The contract transfers the delivery of 18 service areas – including frontline operations across the control room, custody suites and police station front counters – from Lincolnshire Police to G4S over ten years. It is anticipated that the deal will save Lincolnshire Police £36 million over this period and will give G4S a profit margin of

6.2% per year (White, 2014, 2015a). This example of privatisation made the headlines for a number of reasons. At first, because it represents by some distance the most extreme case of police outsourcing in the UK and has therefore been regarded as historically significant (Johnson, 2011). More latterly, because five members of G4S staff working in the control room were suspended after making hundreds of 999 'test calls' in order to artificially inflate performance measures (Travis, 2016) – a cynical sleight of hand which serves only to obfuscate slow response times to genuine 999 emergencies.

What are the main characteristics of this case? For the most part, only rowing processes – such as dealing with 999 emergency calls, booking detainees into custody suites and addressing queries at police station front counters – have been privatised. While G4S does have some strategic buy in, the most important steering processes – such as drawing up key performance indicators and managing the contract – have remained firmly in the hands of Lincolnshire Police. Also, these rowing processes have been transferred from the public sphere to the market economy not the community. In a clear instance of voluntary exchange of goods between buyers and sellers, Lincolnshire Police announced its intention to outsource a range of service areas to the market and, following an open competition between 12 interested parties, chose G4S – one of the world's largest multinational corporations – as the preferred supplier. Furthermore, this whole process represents an unambiguous case of policy led privatisation, with the Command Group and Police Authority consciously initiating the entire enterprise having examined alternative ways forward. Importantly, even though the contract represents the most radical example of police outsourcing in the UK, the ongoing institutional and cultural influence of the public sphere remains considerable in (at least) three respects: Lincolnshire Police has a Commercial Partnership Team which

manages every aspect of the contract on a day to day basis; the majority of G4S staff are actually former Lincolnshire Police staff who transferred between institutions through TUPE regulations on day one of the contract, bringing with them a wealth of public sector experience (though this number is diminishing through employment churn);³ and the ongoing symbolic presence of the police in the outsourced service areas is palpable, with Lincolnshire Police's logo appearing alongside G4S's on all epaulets, lanyards, email signatures, letterheads and so on. As such, it is possible to reason that the Lincolnshire Police – G4S strategic partnership actually has a relatively strong relationship to the ideal-type state-centric conception of policing.

Crowdfunding in Hampstead. While the fundamental duty of the police is to serve all citizens equally regardless of wealth or status – a mission underpinned by the core Enlightenment principle of equality before the law – it is not uncommon for police forces to compete with their private sector counterparts in a quasi-market environment by charging payment for 'additional' services. Examples of what is commonly known as 'user-pays' policing include: traffic controls, guards and escorts where the beneficiary is a private business; criminal history and probity checks; reports to insurers and solicitors; and provision of training (Ayling et al, 2009: 136). In the UK, the most prominent examples of user-pays policing have come about through the Police Act 1996, which allows for certain bodies to apply for additional police officers, so long as costs are met (see Crawford and Lister, 2006). In recent years, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has used this legislation to launch Met Patrol Plus, a 'buy one get one free' scheme – where the 'one' is a police officer – aimed at Local Authorities and Business Improvement Districts in London. In November 2015, residents in

³ TUPE is the common abbreviation for the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, which protect the rights of employees when their employer changes through, for instance, the sale or outsourcing of physical assets.

Hampstead – a wealthy North London suburb – launched a crowdfunding initiative to put additional police officers on their streets through the scheme, following what they perceived to be a sharp increase in crime after their local police station fell casualty to the politics of austerity the previous year. Within six weeks they had raised £180,000 of their £600,000 target – which would translate into six Constables and a Sergeant for three years – and were drawing increasing media attention (Proto, 2015). To begin with, media focus was on the sheer novelty of the applicant (a group of wealthy residents rather than a Local Authority or Business Improvement District) and their means of raising money (online crowdfunding) (Jefferies, 2015). Soon afterwards, however, the lens shifted to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who asserted that while he was ‘open minded’ about crowdfunding as a means of injecting extra cash into the police, he was ‘intuitively against’ any efforts by wealthy residents to capture a disproportionate share of this public good through quasi-market arrangements (Whitehead and Barrett, 2015). At the time of writing, no application has yet materialised.

What are the key elements of this case? To begin with, only certain steering processes – how to pay for police resources and where to direct them – are being privatised. Not only are other important steering processes – including the application’s ultimate sign off – staying within the grasp of MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police, but so too are all rowing processes given that additional patrols are to be undertaken exclusively by police officers. Interestingly, these steering processes are being relocated from the public sphere to both the community and (to some extent) the market economy. Not only are Hampstead residents mobilising as an organic community bound together through a strong identification with a particular geographical location, not for profit. But they are using their collective purchasing

power in a quasi-market environment to buy in extra police officers rather than pursuing private sector alternatives. Furthermore, this whole enterprise is being driven by a combination of policy led and demand led privatisation. While MOPAC initiated the Met Patrol Plus scheme on the back of the Police Act 1996, it was the desire of Hampstead residents to see more police officers on their streets which diverted the policy down its present unforeseen trajectory. Yet even though this scenario could be interpreted as a potential case of public resources being misappropriated by private interests – as alluded to by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police – the influence of the public sphere would always be considerable. The additional patrols would exist within the exact same public sector institutional architecture as every other police officer and would embody traditional police culture – and, indeed, this is precisely what the Hampstead residents want in any case. Against this backdrop, it is thus possible to contend that the Hampstead crowdfunding initiative also retains a relatively strong relationship to the ideal-type state-centric conception of policing.

Ex-Police Patrols in Belgravia. The ideal-type conception of policing articulated in liberal political thought may have contributed towards the modern nation-state building process from the 18th century onwards – especially in Northern and Western Europe – but it certainly never materialised into a true institutional reality. Not only have police forces variously been used as repressive instruments of class, racial and/or religious rule throughout modern history (Spitzer, 1993) but, either way, the market for policing has never sufficiently disappeared from view to leave enough space for a state monopoly to properly take hold (see Johnston, 1992). In the UK, where these liberal ideals are deeply rooted, even the supposed ‘golden age’ of the police during the 1950s

was marked by a small but growing market for policing (White, 2010: 41-59).⁴ Today, the UK industry has expanded into a state-regulated £6 billion plus sector which completely eclipses the police in terms of manpower (British Security Industry Association, 2015: 2). This means that when in 2017 residents of Belgravia – another wealthy London suburb – were also looking for ways to redress a perceived security vacuum caused by the declining number of police patrols under the politics of austerity, they turned not to the Metropolitan Police (like residents in Hampstead) but to the closest thing the market had to offer – the new company My Local Bobby. For between £156 - £480 per month, this company supplies close protection and investigation services performed by experienced ex-police officers and, through its ‘pursue and prosecute’ branch, has so far brought forward over 300 private criminal prosecutions with a 100 percent conviction rate.⁵ This initiative immediately drew the attention of journalists because of its stark public-private sector overlaps. Not only are its employees highly experienced state-licensed ex-police officers outfitted in 1950s-style police tunics designed in consultation with the London School of Fashion, but to facilitate its private prosecutions it maintains an information-sharing agreement with the Acro Criminal Records Office (McCoy 2017).

⁴ Unfortunately, no institutions were systematically collecting data on the size and composition of this market in the immediate postwar years – as the Security Industry Authority (SIA) does today – so estimates are few and far between and vary considerably. Randall and Hamilton (1972, p.67) suggest that total private security industry sales in the UK at this time amounted to approximately £5 million, indicating a relatively small market. By contrast, Jones and Newburn (1999a, p.102) observe that in the 1951 census there were no less than 46,950 individuals working in the ‘Security occupations’, indicating a much larger market. However, it is important to note that not all of these individuals were employed in activities associated with the private security industry. Indeed, the category of ‘Security occupations’ included those working as tidesmen, signalmen, meteorological reporters, park rangers and coast guards, to name but a few (General Register Office 1956, p.111). The exact size and composition of the market during this period thus remains something of a mystery. It is incontrovertible, however, that the market has grown substantially since then. As of April 2018, the SIA recorded 325,203 licensed individuals in the UK private security industry – see: <https://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Pages/licensing-stats.aspx>

⁵ www.mylocalbobby.net/about-us/4593930224

What are the salient features of this case? In this instance, both steering and rowing processes have been privatised concurrently, but not to the same part of the private sphere. On one side, steering processes such as strategic decisions relating to procurement and deployment have been transferred from the public sphere to the community – once again a group of individuals bound together by a deep sense of geographical place. On the other side, rowing processes such as the provision of close protection on the ground have been shifted from the public sphere into the market economy – the residents have used their collective buying power in the competitive market to choose the service which suits them most, deciding upon My Local Bobby as their preferred supplier. Moreover, given that all these decision-making processes flowed from a community dissatisfied with the public supply of policing, the entire initiative stands as an unmistakable example of demand led privatisation. But while all these features suggest an instance of privatisation entirely rooted in the private sphere, the influence of the public sphere remains considerable. In institutional terms, My Local Bobby personnel – like all other personnel in the contract manned guarding sector – are licensed by the Security Industry Authority (SIA), the public body tasked with regulating the private security industry in the UK.⁶ This means that, at minimum, they have gone through a state-administrated criminal records check and training programme (White, 2015b). The company’s information-sharing agreement with the Acro Criminal Records Office adds a further institutional connection to the public sector. In cultural terms, the distinctive employment history and appearance of the company’s officers, both of which seek to recreate the ethos and symbolism of the golden age of the police, have the effect of imbuing the services it provides with a significant degree of ‘stateness’ – this indeed is the company’s unique selling point. While these connections

⁶ www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk

with the public sphere are certainly not as embedded as those in the Lincolnshire and Hampstead cases, it can still be reasoned that the Belgravia case has something like a medium strength relationship to the ideal type state centric conception of policing.

Private Patrols in Frinton. The expansion of private policing into a multi-billion pound industry has prompted ongoing concerns about a range of negative externalities, chief among them being the entrenchment and exacerbation of socioeconomic inequalities (Wood and Shearing, 2007; Loader and White, 2017). Put simply, this market gives wealthier individuals, communities and businesses access to better security measures (in terms of both quality and quantity) than poorer ones. This inequality was acutely evident when residents of Frinton – a small town on the Essex coastline – were looking for ways to redress a perceived security vacuum caused by the recent closure of a local police station under the politics of austerity. Like the residents of Belgravia they turned to the market economy, but unlike their wealthy London counterparts, they chose not to access the high end of the market, where companies like My Local Bobby offer a police-like service at a premium rate. Instead, beginning in November 2015 approximately 300 residents each began paying just £2 per week to the company AGS to provide nightly street patrols between 19.00 and 07.00, together with an emergency response function (Khomami, 2015). This initiative became headline news when just six months later the Frinton residents cancelled the contract following a series of allegations that the initiative was turning into a protection racket, with cold-callers ‘hammering on doors after dark and exaggerating crime rates’ to drum up business (Levy, 2016). In other words, it came to symbolise some of the dangers in buying services at the more cut-throat end of the market for policing.

What are the central dimensions of this case? To begin with, the Frinton case of course shares many similarities with the Belgravia case: steering processes have been

transferred from the public sphere to the community; rowing processes have been shifted from the public sphere into the market economy; and decision-making processes arose from a community dissatisfied with the public supply of policing, making the initiative a further example of demand led privatisation. When it comes to the ongoing influence of the public sphere, however, there is a contrast between the two cases. While there is still an institutional connection in the Frinton case given that AGS personnel – like all other personnel in the contract manned guarding sector – are licensed by the SIA, there appears to be less of a cultural connection. Judging by the practices which catapulted it into the news cycle, AGS has not gone to the same lengths to reproduce the symbolism and professional ethos of the police’s golden age. As a consequence, it can be concluded that, unlike the Belgravia case, the Frinton case has only a relatively weak relationship to the ideal type state centric conception of policing.

Conclusion

The article has now illustrated how the typology can be utilised to make sense of the complex policing assemblages coming into effect under the politics of austerity. It just remains, then, to clarify how this process might help scholars, practitioners, policy-makers and other interested parties to enter into a more informed public discourse on the privatisation of policing. To begin with, it provides a more nuanced conceptual vocabulary for describing and explaining the numerous and varied forms of privatisation. In reference to the limited number of examples above, for instance, it illustrates how sometimes the privatisation of policing takes shape around a transfer of steering functions from the public sphere toward the private sphere (crowdfunding in Hampstead), sometimes rowing functions (Lincolnshire Police – G4S) and other times both functions at once (ex-police in Belgravia and private patrols in Frinton). In some

instances, it centres upon a shift from the public sphere towards the market economy (Lincolnshire Police – G4S) and in other instances towards both the market economy and community (crowdfunding in Hampstead, ex-police in Belgravia and private patrols in Frinton). On some occasions, the shift from the public sphere towards the private sphere is policy led (Lincolnshire Police – G4S), on some occasions demand led (ex-police in Belgravia and private patrols in Frinton) and on other occasions both at once (crowdfunding in Hampstead). In some cases, the ongoing influence of the public sphere takes the form of institutional safeguards (private patrols in Frinton) and in other cases both institutional safeguards and cultural signifiers (Lincolnshire Police – G4S, crowdfunding in Hampstead and ex-police in Belgravia). Lastly, sometimes this combination of variables results in a relatively strong relationship with the ideal type state-centric conception of policing (Lincolnshire Police – G4S and crowdfunding in Hampstead), sometimes a medium relationship (ex-police in Belgravia) and other times a relatively weak relationship (private patrols in Frinton). What is more, these are only the combinations resulting from the four policing assemblages under examination. The total number of possible combinations available through the typology is much greater, meaning it should have more to offer looking ahead as the policing landscape in the UK and beyond continues to undergo far reaching transformations of this nature.

However, the typology offers more than just a conceptual vocabulary for describing and explaining the privatisation of policing. It also lays down the groundwork for the development of more refined value judgements. It does so by illustrating the pitfalls in adopting a position either unambiguously for or against the privatisation of policing. None of the examples above represent a clear and decisive transfer of policing functions from the public sphere towards the private sphere. Rather they all represent a complex blend of public and private architectures, behaviours and

motivations. As a consequence, ardent critics of the ideals which lie behind privatisation might actually find – against their better judgement – some ‘good’ in this reality. Similarly, fervent defenders of these same ideals might actually find – likewise against their better judgement – some ‘bad’. In other words, the complex empirical trends brought into frame through the typology bump up against any such polarised normative positions. This is not to suggest that observers should drop these normative positions, for they remain important yardsticks against which to judge the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ in the privatisation of policing. Nor does it point towards any kind of resolution in this policy area. But it does hopefully signpost the way towards a better quality of debate – and that is the ultimate objective of this article.

References

Abrahamsen, R. and Williams, M. (2011), *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, B. and McFarlane, C. (2011), ‘Assemblage and Geography’, *Area* 43(2): 124-7.

Ayling, J. Grabowsky, P. and Shearing, C. (2009) *Lengthening the Arm of the Law: Enhancing Police Resources in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bayley, D. and Shearing, C. (2001) *The New Structure of Policing: Description, Conceptualization and Research Agenda*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Black, J. (2002) Critical Reflections on Regulation. *Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy* 27(1), 1-37.

British Security Industry Association (2015) *Securing the Nation's Future* (Worcester: British Security Industry Association).

Button, M. (2002) *Private Policing*. Cullompton: Willan.

Button, M. and Stiernstedt, P. (2016) 'Comparing Private Security Regulation in the European Union', *Policing & Society*, doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1161624

Crawford, A. (2006) 'Networked Governance and the Post-Regulatory State? Steering, Rowing and Anchoring the Provision of Policing and Security', *Theoretical Criminology*, 10(4): 449-479.

Crawford, A. (2013) The Police, Policing and the Future of the 'Extended Policing Family', in Brown, J. (ed.) *The Future of Policing*. London: Routledge, pp.173-190.

Crawford, A. and Lister, S. (2006) 'Additional Security Patrols in Residential Areas: Notes from the Marketplace', *Policing & Society*, 16(2): 164-188.

De Waard, J. (1999) 'The Private Security Industry in International Perspective', *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 7(2): 143-174.

Garland, D. (1996) 'The Limits of the Sovereign State: Strategies of Crime Control in Contemporary Society', *British Journal of Criminology* 36(4): 445-471.

General Register Office (1956) *Census 1951, Classification of Occupations*. London: HMSO.

Goold, B., Loader, I. and Thumala, A. (2010) 'Consuming Security? Tools for a Sociology of Security Consumption', *Theoretical Criminology* 14(1), 3-30.

Green, D. (2012) *Speech to the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners* (September 11th).

Habermas, J. (1991) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Hay, C. (2008) 'Globalisation and Public Policy', in M. Moran, M. Rein, and R. E. Goodin, (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.587-605.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2013) *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*. London: HMIC.

Jefferies, D. (2015) 'A group of Hampstead residents are crowd-funding their own police force. What a brilliant idea', *The Independent* (13th November).

Johnson, W. (2011) 'Private firm wins £200m police deal', *The Independent* (21st December).

Johnston, L. (1992) *The Rebirth of Private Policing*. London: Routledge.

Jones, T. and Lister, S. (2015) 'The Policing of Public Space Recent Developments in Plural Policing in England and Wales', *European Journal of Policing* 2(3): 245-266

Jones, T. and Newburn, T. (1998) *Private Security and Public Policing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jones, T. and Newburn, T. (1999) 'Policing Public and Private Space in Late Modern Britain', in Carlen, P. and Morgan, R. (eds.) *Crime Unlimited: Questions for the 21st Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 99-119.

Khomami, N. (2015) 'Frinton residents pay security firm to patrol streets', *The Guardian* (3rd November).

Levy, A. (2016) 'Security firm's night patrols axed in town with no police after they are accused of harassing residents into joining scheme', *Daily Mail* (18th May).

Loader, I. and Sparks, R. (2010) *Public Criminology?* London: Routledge.

Loader, I. and A. White (2017) 'How can we better align private security with the public interest? Towards a Civilizing Model of Regulation', *Regulation & Governance*, 11(2): 166-184.

McCoy, F. (2017) 'My Local Bobby: Meet the Brave New World of Elite Law Enforcement', *The Evening Standard* (6th April 2017).

Millie, A. and Bullock, K. (2013) 'Policing in a Time of Contraction and Constraint: Re-Imagining the Role and Function of Contemporary Policing', *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 13(2): 133-142.

Osborne, D. and Gaebler, T. (1992) *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming Government*. Massachusetts: Adison Wesley.

Prescott, J. (2012) 'Police Privatisation: We Can't let Profit Take Over', *The Guardian* (7th March).

Proto, L. (2015) 'Hampstead residents in crowdfunding bid to 'buy in' extra police officers', *Evening Standard* (7th November).

Randall, W. E. and Hamilton, P. (1972) 'The Security Industry of the United Kingdom: Its Growth, Role, Accountability, and Future', in Wiles, P. and McClintock, F. H. (eds.) *The Security Industry in the United Kingdom: Papers Presented to the Cropwood Round-Table Conference July 1972*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Institute of Criminology, 67-72.

Reiner, R. (2010) *The Politics of the Police*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shearing, C. and Stenning, P. (1981) 'Modern Private Security: Its Growth and Implications', *Crime and Justice* 3: 193-245.

Shearing, C. and Stenning, P. (1983) 'Private Security: Implications for Social Control', *Social Problems* 30(5): 493-506.

Skinns, L., Wooff, A. and Sprawson, A. (2017) 'Preliminary Findings on Police Custody Delivery in the Twenty-First Century: Is it Good Enough?', *Policing and Society* 27(4): 358-371.

Spitzer, S. and Scull, A. (1977) 'Privatization and Capitalist Development: The Case of the Private Police', *Social Problems* 25(1): 18-29.

Spitzer, S. (1993) 'The Political Economy of Policing', in D. Greenberg (ed.) *Crime and Capitalism: Readings in Marxist Criminology*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp.568-595.

Starr, P. (1988) 'The Meaning of Privatization', *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 6(1): 6-41

Thumala, A., Goold, B. and Loader, I. (2011) 'A Tainted Trade: Moral Ambivalence and Legitimation Work in the Private Security Industry', *British Journal of Sociology*, 62(2): 283-303.

Travis, A. (2016) 'G4S police control room staff suspended over claims of bogus 999 calls', *The Guardian* (23rd May).

White, A. (2010) *The Politics of Private Security: Regulation, Reform and Re-Legitimation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

White, A. (2012) 'The New Political Economy of Private Security', *Theoretical Criminology* 16(1): 85-101.

White, A. (2014) 'Post-Crisis Policing and Public-Private Partnerships: The Case of Lincolnshire Police and G4S', *British Journal of Criminology* 54(6): 1002-1022.

White, A. (2015a) 'The Politics of Police 'Privatization': A Multiple Streams Approach', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 15(3): 283-299.

White, A. (2015b) 'The Impact of the Private Security Industry Act 2001', *Security Journal*, 28(4): 425-442.

White, A. (2016) 'Private Security and the Politics of Accountability'. In S. Lister and M. Rowe (eds.) *Accountability of Policing*. Routledge, London, pp.172-191.

Whitehead, T. and Barrett, D, (2015) 'Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe open minded to public crowd-funding police officers', *The Telegraph* (10th November 2015).

Wood, J. and Shearing, C. (2007) *Imagining Security*. Cullompton: Willan.

Zedner, L. (2003) 'Too Much Security?', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*,
31(3): 155-184.