The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

Introduction

The first global police event is happening. The pandemic panic concerning the novel Covid-19 virus marks a watershed. The current moment can be viewed from the standpoint of police studies as one massive global field experiment in how different practical manifestations of the police métier are manifest under different local social and political contexts, and further with what consequence for human well-being the world over. In simple terms, looking at what the police do in different countries during this crisis says a lot about the global system.

The study of policing is very relevant to the current circumstances. What follows is a short consideration of the politics of policing at the onset of a global pandemic panic surrounding Covid-19, which will last for an indeterminate period. This presumptive analysis draws on Bowling *et al* (2019, esp. pp. 20-37). In the torrent of commentary being produced in these extra-ordinary circumstances, it is important for specialist scholarship to contribute narrowly to the discussion. This means that contributions should remain based on existing empirical knowledge and tested theoretical notions and not become speculative beyond those boundaries. What do we know about the practices and politics of already existing global policing, and what might we expect as the pandemic passes and the virus becomes part of the global ecosystem? This essay is no more than a short reflection that points where thinking and research about policing might ought to go in the coming period, and it is a record of how things looked at the start of something new to one long-schooled in the politics of the police.

The first global police event

Since we are here concerned with what is surely the first truly global policing event, it is useful to start with basic terminological issues. A fundamental distinction has been made between 'high policing' and 'low policing' in understanding the politics and practices of the police. Who are the police? The police are agents linked through a complex division-of-labour by a common métier. The police métier has evolved as a set of institutional practices of tracking, surveillance, keeping watch, and unending vigilance, and it remains ready to apply force, up to and including fatal force, in pursuit of police organizational goals of reproducing social order, making crime, managing risk and governing insecurity (Bowling, 2019 *et. al.*, p. 37). In this moment of rapid transition, the

1

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

reproduction of order is in question, the management of risk is tenuous and the governance of security paramount. Because policing institutions are plural (ibid. pp. 145-163), and global (ibid. pp. 185-206), scholars have suggested we look at this effort in terms of a complex world-wide 'policing web' (Brodeur, 2010).

The distinction between high and low policing tells us about who policing is supposed to be for and whether it is done covertly or openly. Low policing is for the general good of society. In the circumstances, drastic policing measures are being undertaken or considered in almost every police jurisdiction in the world and these are being initiated on the expectation that they are for the general well-being of the population. Policing is to governance as the edge is to the knife. Put less metaphorically: policing is power. High policing denotes practices that are for the *particular* good of social, political and economic elites and it connotes a degree of covertness beyond the necessities of professional secrecy. The practice of divide-and-rule is central to high policing (Liang, 1992). We shall return to these considerations, but for now let us acknowledge that the police – street corner politicians – will inevitably, for better and for ill, be part of the social response to phenomena that are considered fundamental existential threats. The pandemic panic is such a situation. The distinction between low policing and high policing is essential if we are to gauge the extent to which policing practices are open and transparent or secretive and opaque, and are either for the general social good, or merely serve particular interests.

Police agents and the other institutional actors they work alongside, use legal tools to symbolize, represent, justify, and undertake action (Bowling et al, 2019, pp. 22-24). Socio-legal scholarship on policing is greatly attuned to the ways in which police agents acquire and use legal tools. The police métier puts the legal tools (not only criminal law ones, but also administrative) into the hands of the necessary agents in order to reproduce the existing social order, manage risk and govern insecurity. In the present, the legal tools at hand include those usually reserved for emergencies, which gives power to executive authorities in all the jurisdictions where Emergency Powers have been assumed, and this is essentially rule *by* law.

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

In the existing legal tool kit of transnational policing, perhaps the most obvious ones are those legal instruments that control social-geographical mobility. However, other dimensions of policing reveal very different kinds of legal tools. For example, any cure for the Covid-19 infection or vaccination against it will likely be subject to intellectual property law, and the policing of these legal claims is of fundamental political import (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2015). When it comes to the policing of mobility, it is very easy to see that wealth and privilege secures better promises of virus free travel than does refugee status. What may be more difficult to discern is that the policing of patent medicine produces the same pattern and, indeed, that the two patterns may dovetail. Patent medicine itself may become a means of policing. In criticizing liberal 'rule of law' type claims, socio-legal scholarship draws (even if only tacitly) on the high-low distinction in order to make the point that legality can be used ideologically to provide a hypocritical façade for more subterranean processes in the maintenance of power. Given the extra-ordinary circumstances, and the accompanying invocation of police emergency powers, national emergency measures and so forth, it is too early to tell what will be the novel manifestations of global police rule *with* law (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2015). In the present circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine powerful or wealthy persons travelling internationally in search of medical aid, and in possession of the latest and best pharmaceutical remedies, while for good bio-medical reasons the common masses remain under lockdown in their homes.

The way that police agents will deploy the legal tools at their disposal is dependent on the cultural understandings of police in different localities. Already in this early phase of the global pandemic panic it is possible to see very obvious, but none-the-less interesting and remarkable, differences in local styles of policing around the world. The analysis of policing styles reflects upon the twin tropes of police 'force' and police 'service' (Bowling et al, 2019, pp. 25-26). This is not a simple dichotomy, since sometimes force is a service. For example, to the victims of hate crime, family or domestic violence, or any number of other types of violent crime, sometimes police use of coercive power is a necessary service in preserving life and limb. Likewise, at a more geo-political level, sometimes violent conflicts between political factions, and even violent competition between criminal enterprises, beckons for a transnational police response involving not only surveillance, but also the practical application of force.

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

The historical record demonstrates that police work is nonetheless always practically entwined with social service provision, even when and where high policing has been dominant (Bowling 2019, *et al,* pp. 43-49). For example, in the contemporary period when public provision of services for people with mental and emotional health problems is insufficient, more potential occurrences of disorder involving municipal police result (Marquis, 2016). Similarly, transnational policework aimed at intervening in weak, failing or failed states involves social service and community capacity-building more than it does the actual application of coercive measures (Goldsmith and Sheptycki, 2007) – although it has got to be acknowledged that the 'fortified aid compound' symbolizes the policing of a very particular form of social order (Duffield, 2010). At every level of action in the global system, policework is fundamentally shaped by the use-of-force option and the powers of surveillance, and yet somehow is intertwined with an expectation of service to society. Egon Bittner (1974) offered a benign image of how force in aid of social service can have noble ends when he pictured police officers creating a zone of containment for firefighters to do their job, perhaps using coercion (or at least the threat of it) to get things done, so the fire can get put out.

The global police response to a public health crisis such as the pandemic panic is not clearly evident as such, and so the twin tropes of police 'force' and 'service' offer useful analytical concepts for organizing an understanding of differences across jurisdictions. It is interesting to note, for example, the symbolic marshalling of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in response to the crisis as compared to South Korea where police agents have worked to actively mobilize citizen social distancing using advanced digital communications. The styles of policing in the two jurisdictions manifest different capacities and inclinations to mobilize police force in the service of social order, and the differences are measurable in infection and morbidity rates.

This analysis can be extended or elevated by considering how relations between police, people and community are shaped by the institutions of the state, market and civil society (Bowling *et al* 2019, pp. 29-31). So, for example, in the United States maximal emphasis on market relations at the expense of state capacity to provide social welfare, and in the context of institutionalized social conflict, has fractured communities and undermined the conditions of authority and trust that

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

legitimates police and government intervention in the lives of ordinary people. In Scandinavia a different balance has been struck between political organization and market relations in shaping the order of civil society.[1]

Neo-liberalism can be simply defined as an ideology advocating an extreme emphasis on market relations as the principal mode of interaction outside of the family or clan, like in the United States. Social democracy can, in equally simple terms, be defined as an ideology advocating state provision of essential social services and infrastructure thought necessary to sustain cultural life in civil society, like in Scandinavia. Thus, in very simple terms, neo-liberalism signals less state capacity and social democracy greater state capacity. The police métier as practiced in Sweden is as equally capable as in any other country, indeed it is better than most. The police métier in America has its own style. Thinking in terms of the pandemic panic then, future scholarship in police studies might focus on comparing the variability of general state capacities (in education, health and social and mental welfare) in different jurisdictions, and taking note of the different local styles of policing practice adapted to deal with the crisis. In this way, researchers will build up a picture of how the new landscape of the global system is going to be policed. Not everybody gets to live in Denmark (Fukuyama, 2011).

Explaining patterns of variation in the cultural meanings of police practice is a major preoccupation of police studies. Of central concern is the theoretical relationship between *general* cultural understandings of police and policing, as against the *specific* manifestations of occupational police subculture. Of course, a fully rounded theory would try to understand how both sides fit together. Simply put, what do police do, and what do police and people think about it? Moreover, given the present situation, what are police doing in different places around the world and how does local thinking about policing differ?

These are largely empirical questions and are hugely varied. For example, the policing of international borders in the context of large-scale migrations of refugees is a focused policing function, with its own unique occupational challenges and its own projection into the public

---

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/mar/13/swedes-expected-prepare-emergencies-coronavirus-necessary

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

imaginary.   And even this function is expressed differently depending of geographical location. The voluminous literature on the criminalization of immigration – 'crimmigration' – is testimony to the pre-existing problems of police authority along the borders of the state-system. During the 1990s, the circuits of global capitalism were rapidly expanding and with that came a huge growth in a variety of transnational practices and processes, and the concerns of political sociologists reflected this. Fukuyama's ideas about the 'end of history', or David Held's about 'cosmopolitan democracy', Michael Ignatieff's about the growing primacy of international human rights law, and Anne-Marie Slaughter's notion of 'R2P' – 'responsibility to protect' – were different ways of trying to understand the signs of the times (Bowling *et al*, 2019).

During that period observers described a transnational state system, where a myriad of trans-border practices knit together a complex global networked society that transcended the control of sovereign states. Subsequent to the turn of the millennium and up until now, the world has experienced a series of shocks of which the pandemic panic is only the most recent. Thinking longitudinally, how has the policing of international airports and seaports changed since the Cold War ceased in 1989? The answer to this question will differ in different parts of the world (Aas and Bosworth, 2013). Border policing in Australia has been notoriously stringent for much of this period, whereas Canadian border policing has been much less so. Policing the internal borders of Europe ceased altogether during this period, while policing the external borders became more sophisticated and strategic, leading some critics to speak in terms of 'fortress Europe' (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012).

The global pandemic panic has resulted in dramatic reinforcement of border controls and the cessation of mass travel and tourism. Europe's internal borders have been tactically mobilized in the emergency. Australia and New Zealand are islands unto themselves after the imposition of drastic border control measures. Canada cannot seal its border with the United States but has tried to, and has nonetheless declared drastic control measures on travel through international airports and seaports with the aim of facilitating return of Canadians while excluding people who do not have pre-existing legal rights in Canada.

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

It is obviously too early to say precisely what the ramifications of the shift will be for the police agents working in these different jurisdictions. Keeping in mind that the police métier essentially involves surveillance, the already existing literature on police use of biometric technologies suggests that police agents at the borders will readily adopt new devices aimed at screening bodies for manifestations of ill-health. It does not stretch credulity to suggest that, in the future, citizens' proof of immunization against specified health risks and communicable diseases will be a requirement for geographic mobility, indeed that has been partially true for a long period of time. Given the surveillance power of new digital technologies, the policing of mobility on the grounds of contagion control could become very fine grained. The borders of confinement and exclusion could be as tactically small as a city block as well as strategically large as a continent. As of today, there are millions of people all over the world experiencing 'lock-down' in their own homes on the grounds of necessity based on a public health emergency.

One of the most significant manifestations of the police métier concerns so-called public order policing. Public order policing is an umbrella term. It includes the policing of events like parades, festivals, carnivals and (when numbers warrant) even weddings and funerals. Policing public order also includes security provision at major sporting and entertainment events, mega events like the Olympics or the Commonwealth Games, and it includes policing at major political meetings such as the G20. Public order policing also obviously includes major street disturbances, riots, and other significant violent challenges to civil order. When police patrol, they are symbolizing public order. Public order policing can be achieved by persuasive means and negotiated management, it involves surveillance and intelligence gathering, pre-planning, and (if all goes according to plan) carefully calibrated coercive tactics and escalated use-of-force only as a last resort. Public order policing precepts are frequently embedded into the architecture of the urban environment, for example in the way that Disneyland or a well-designed international airport facilitate the smooth flow of consumer consumption and pedestrian traffic. The pandemic panic has greatly altered the conditions in which public order policing takes place but the ramifications of this have yet to be established beyond the immediate emergency measures.

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

Prior to the pandemic panic, the jurisdiction of Hong Kong had already been in a state of chronic unrest due to civil political protests against the harsh regime in Beijing. The political reasons for this have not changed, but the presence of Covid-19 has greatly altered the conditions under which political protest might take place. Further west in the Chinese sphere of influence, in the Uighur province of Xinjiang, where human rights NGOs have already observed that the treatment of local ethnic peoples has been tantamount to cultural genocide, masses of people have been effectively placed under house arrest, sealed in their homes on the grounds of pandemic prevention for their own good. Outside observers do not know what is going on in the enormous 're-education camps' that countless Uighur people have endured for several years. In a jurisdiction like China, where the virus originated, draconian population control is the expected characteristic of the police métier (Bowling et al, 2019, p. 59-60). In an authoritarian, if not totalitarian, police state, the contagion must either be harnessed to the utility of the social order, or the social order will fall.

The United States presents a very different picture (Bowling et al, 2019, pp. 51-54; 157-58; 214-218). There the police system consists in a patchwork quilt of thousands of local municipal police forces, linked in by a multi-channel national communications network, overlaid by a system of intelligence fusion centers and a welter of federal law enforcement agencies, atop which sits another network of high police agencies. The American police sector is highly militarized. Relations between the police and public in the United States are confrontational and conflictual. One of the outstanding reactions to the pandemic panic in North America was an upsurge in sales of guns and ammunition. North American public policing operates in a context that, although it exhibits a few very bright spots, is predominantly one of urban, suburban and rural social decay, marked by significant social conflict. In the United States, public institutions for education, health and social care have been severely hollowed out since the Great Society of the 1960s, and have been replaced with a massive police and penal apparatus with one of the largest, if not the largest, incarcerated populations in the world. The record of the recent past concerning natural events such as, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes shows that, in the United States, there is poor state capacity to render service during disasters and emergencies. America does not provide low policing in the general interest. Instead, front-line policing is militarized and the social exclusions thereby maintained serve particular interests and are therefore high policing.

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

The situation in the US varies greatly between regions but the rates of Covid-19 infection and mortality (and the concomitant social disorder) experienced as the pandemic panic unfolds will provide a measure of variable governmental incapacity across the continent. All the signs are that morgues in America will be overwhelmed by summer. Questions arise, however, about the extent and way in which existing racial tensions and anger over economic exclusion will play out in the circumstances and the degree to which police violence will increase. The picture is complicated by the way pluralized policing involves so-called mass private property. Spaces such as shopping malls, as well as Las Vegas, Disneyland, and Times Square, all manifest variations of privatized policing of public order and this social terrain may be subject to prolonged shut down. In the short term, the accompanying cancellation of major professional sports league games, and other public gatherings, may create social strain as the industries of mass distraction re-calibrate to the new conditions. As the plague spreads and the fatalities mount over the coming months, will the summer 'riot season' happen as normal? Perhaps it will be worse. Maybe, like professional baseball, it will be called off due to plague.

Policing the long 'war on drugs' has had an abiding effect on the police métier in America and beyond (Manning, 2010). The cultural image of the urban American police 'vice squad' is a gross stereotype (Bowling et al, 2019, p. 214-17). Nonetheless, it is a cultural expression of a reality of violence and corruption that characterize the history of American policing. The massive underground economy involving sex, drugs, guns and people that exists within the legitimate North American transcontinental economy is another possible vector for contagion during the pandemic panic. For example, what will happen within the sex industry (Law, 2019)? If it is true that the major consumers in the retail sex industry of exotic dancers and other forms of sexwork are primarily middle-aged, middle-class white males, then what will be the economic consequences, both short term and long term? Perhaps the illicit economy in North America is less a 'house of cards' than the licit one and Las Vegas will prosper. Economists refer to the market demand for the addictive products and services that feature in the 'night-time economy' (Hobbs et al, 2003) as being 'inelastic', meaning that it remains relatively fixed regardless of external factors.

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

Consider the case of Canada where, over the recent past, resources have shifted from policing serious and organized criminality towards 'national security' matters (eg. pipeline protests, First Nations protests, etc.), leaving the illicit economy to boom in the context of an economically struggling formal social order (cf. Ruddell, 2011). Shifting police priorities and the fact that the oil and gas industry in western Canada has had its day offer an important part of the explanation of the recent explosion in methamphetamine, synthetic opiates and other 'hard drugs' in the underworld of the Canadian west. What is sure is, since the 'legitimate' economic sector offers so few options for poor people, they are hugely affected by what transpires in illicit markets. How the supply lines of the illicit economy will adapt as vectors of the virus is uncertain, but the policing of illicit markets in western Canada, as elsewhere in the global system, has long been shown to be imperfect.

An active question for research on policing is the degree to which the violence and exploitation associated with criminality increases or not in crises, and what role the occupational subculture of policing plays in specific contexts. Over the recent past, close observers have noted what is believed to be an increase of police activities regarding 'domestic violence', and violence against women and other vulnerable groups in a variety of jurisdictions around the world. In the United States, the (often conflictual) relations between police and different communities has negatively shaped the ability to provide policing services concerning violence against the vulnerable. With a booming illicit economy and a failing formal one, the associated and longstanding violence in both public and private spheres may be expected to increase as a result of the pandemic panic and its possible aftermath. Arguably this process, long underway, has already undermined democratic police legitimacy. The de-legitimation intensified over the recent past because, in Canada and other western democratic countries, the police interact with a general public who are increasingly suffering due to lack of adequate public provision of education, health and social welfare. How will North American cities be policing 'skid row' as the effects of the pandemic panic sweep through the thronging homeless population who are stuck at the very bottom of the money system?

This brings us to another important point of consideration, without which no satisfactory conclusions can be drawn from these reflections. Some very urgent questions regarding the

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

policing of illicit markets and 'dark money' have already been considered.[2] This prompts us to raise our sights and observe the goings on in the *licit* economy, where turmoil and turbulence make it very difficult to discern the activities of 'bad actors' during the present crisis. More than a decade ago Margaret Beare cast a critical light on the dark and nefarious world of policing 'dirty money' (Beare, 2003; Beare and Schneider, 2007). Prior to the turn of the millennium researchers working on law enforcement practices involving money laundering were invariably concerned with specific predicate offences, which usually involved illicit markets in drugs and psychotropic substances from the global south to the global north (Sheptycki, 2000). In that context 'dirty money' was supposedly clearly demarcated from financial flows more generally: dirty money was drug money and suspicious for that reason. Even then, the problem of money, its corruption of politics and the consequent politics of corruption were clearly evident to scholarly observers, and yet globally white-collar crime and other crimes of the powerful remained under-policed (Nelken and Levi, 1996). Following the attacks of 9/11 there was a brief period where the concern was to police both drug money and terrorist financing (Orlova and Moore, 2004; Gilmore, 2011). After the financial crisis of 2008 some criminologists argued *all* financial flows were complicit in, or somehow facilitative of, criminal harms (Passas, 2016; Ruggiero, 2013; Spapens, et al, 2018). Finally, the disclosure of the so-called *Panama Papers* and the *Paradise Papers* exposed the pervasive extent of the illicit financial underworld as a fundamental characteristic of the *licit* global banking system (Bernstein, 2017; Garfield, 2017; Shaxon, 2011, 2018). The policing of the global money system during and after the pandemic panic of 2020 will build upon this foundation, but it is very unclear what it will look like in even the not too distant future.

One final point of consideration is due, and that is the role of technology in the policing response to the pandemic panic. Police institutions have historically been at the forefront of technological innovation, especially as it concerns the police métier (Bowling et al, 2019, pps. 31-34; 158; 219-221). The activities of tracking, surveillance, keeping watch, and unending vigilance, backed up with the ability to apply force (up to and including fatal force), in pursuit of police organizational goals has long encouraged the adoption of a range of communication and information technologies, along with technologies of surveillance and coercion. That is why the ethics and

---

[2] But not all. For example. what about policing 'black market', 'profiteering', and 'hoarding'?

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

morals of so-called 'intelligence-led policing' have become so important (Fyfe, Gundhus, and Rønn, 2018).   What is concerning is the political economy and power structures that police information and surveillance technologies sustain (Haggart, Henne and Tusikov, 2019; Zuboff, 2019).   Perhaps the current turning point will usher in a new kind of global pluralized policing web; a world-wide 'authoritarian surveillant assemblage' (Topak, 2019).   Perhaps the future trajectories of pre-emptive policing will create new risks and threats without ameliorating present insecurity (Ericson, 2007; McLulloch and Wilson, 2016). Immediately prior to the pandemic panic of 2020, it was publicly revealed that police all across North America had entered a new phase of techno-policing replete with facial-recognition, advanced predictive computer analytic social profiling (including the ability to 'scrape' the social-media landscape of Facebook and Instagram in order to profile individuals), and command-and-control systems that manage front-line policing on the basis of systematic attempts aiming at total information awareness.   It is interesting to consider that the 'ambient surveillance' facilitated by a coalescence of public CCTV surveillance and surveillance of new social media has transformed the ubiquitous 'smart phone', up until now embraced by North Americans and Europeans as personally liberating, has stealthily become a technology of social control (Bowling et al, p. 2019, 161-62).

In fact, these developments are not limited to North America and Europe. In China prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, the police-state was already using the technological capabilities of advanced surveillance and communications to control populations. For example, in 2019 the Chinese state had banned millions of people from internal travel on the basis of the 'social credit system'. This surveillance system harnesses the power of CCTV, facial recognition, and computers to give people a 'social credit score', and if someone's score falls below a certain point, it triggers the loss of social mobility and other allowances.[3] The success that the Chinese state has had in enforcing social distancing in the wake of the contagious Covid-19 disease that incubated there is in large measure due to the surveillance capacities of technologies introduced only recently. Cell phones and hand-held devices have been useful tools of police social control in China before now. This Orwellian mass surveillance state has perhaps been seen as limited to that jurisdiction, but sharp

---

[3] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/01/china-bans-23m-discredited-citizens-from-buying-travel-tickets-social-credit-system

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

observers noted quite some time ago that the Chinese social-credit system would interfere in the sovereignty of others.[4] Like the Covid-19 virus, the new technologies of surveillance – from 'big data' to 'face-recognition' – have been let loose in the police sector. The future is here, it is just geographically uneven. Now it is a question of observing how police in each jurisdiction adapt.

Conclusions, of a sort

From a macro perspective and taking the long view it is possible to see that the Covid-19 pandemic panic coincides with a millennial shift. That is certainly how the educated elites of Russia, Japan, Iran, China and other ancient civilizations might see it. This is not, as Samuel P. Huntington argued, a 'clash of civilizations' (1993). With due regard to Michael Mann's monumental study of social power and Lesley Sklair's analysis of transnational practices generally, the analysis pursued here suggests a reconfiguration of the global system because we can see that by looking at the global police response as it is locally manifested in the various jurisdictions (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2012; Bowling et al, 2019). The so-called 'global 1%' have a 'semi-detached' relation to the national state. The transnational capitalist class and corporations of the west do not like to pay taxes and fund the state.   The members of this class who have their basis of economic and political power in countries such as Russia, China, India, Mexico and elsewhere each have a different grounds for participation in the competitive game of strategic global capital accumulation, but none of them exhibit real substantial loyalties to, or empathy with, the mass of people who embody 'the nation'. Insofar as the state system is useful in policing the flow of people, goods and money, and keeping order and maintaining control, it is instrumental. However, the ability of different states around the world to provide the services of effective 'low policing' is being currently severely tested by the pandemic panic. Where governments have embraced neo-liberalism intensively (as in the UK and the US), the effective service provision of low policing is very much in doubt. In other places, perhaps the Scandinavian countries or Germany, social democracy has been sustained (although a rising political Right, is a worrisome factor). In these latter places, governmental capacity is more robust and low policing, for the general good, seems at least possible even in the current crisis. However, since trying to use non-democratic means to

---

[4] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/28/chinas-social-credit-system-could-interfere-in-other-nations-sovereignty

achieve democratic ends is an oxymoron, it is wise to begin as you wish to end.   What will be the outcome for democratic policing after the first truly global policing event has settled?

This brief exploration into thinking about how the police métier is being put into action in the different jurisdictions of the rapidly changing world system operating in the context of crisis offers important clues as to what is happening, but this is by no means the whole picture. It is, however, at least a picture based on existing empirical knowledge and tested theoretical notions. It is not wild-eyed speculation. It is an appropriate intellectual response to the crisis to ask how police practices will serve to maintain a democratic ethos where citizens have equal access to all of the legal tools necessary to govern their lives successfully, and governmental policy is established in an open and transparent manner. This is in question in Canada, now that emergency powers are being assumed by authorities, as it is in every other national jurisdiction. Our abiding concern, as scholars of policing power, is not so much about how society will weather the pandemic panic, but rather what kind of society will we end up with after it is completed. All the signs are, when it comes to the politics of policing and social order, nothing will ever be the same. The present moment is the first global policing event and it brings back into mind that timeless question, posed in Plato's *Republic* and neatly put by the Roman satirist Juvenal around about two millennia ago: '*quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*' – who will guard the guards?

References

Aas, K.F. and Bosworth, M. (2013) *The Borders of Punishment: Migration, Punishment and Social Exclusion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Beare, Margaret E. (2003) *Critical Reflections on transnational organized crime, money laundering and corruption*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Beare, Margaret E. and Schneider, S. (2007) *Money Laundering in Canada; chasing dirty and dangerous dollars*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Bernstein, Jake (2017) *Secrecy World: Inside the Panama Papers Investigation of Illicit Money Networks and the Global Elite*, New York Henry Holt and Co.

Bittner, E, (1974) 'Florence Nightingale in pursuit of Willie Sutton: a theory of police', in H. Jacob (ed.) *The Potential for Reform of Criminal Justice*, Beverly Hills: Sage

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

Bowling, B, and Sheptycki, J. (2015) 'Global Policing and Transnational Rule with Law' *Transnational Legal Theory*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 141-173; https://doi.org/10.1080/20414005.2015.1042235

Bowling, B, Reiner, R. and Sheptycki, J, (2019) *The Politics of the Police* 5th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Brodeur. J-P. (2010) *The Policing Web,* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Duffield, Mark, (2010) 'The Fortified Aid Compound' Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding

Ericson, R.V. (2007) *Crime in an Insecure World*, Cambridge: Polity

Fukuyama, F. (2011) *The Origins of Political Order*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Fyfe, Nick, Gundhus, Helene O.I. and Rønn, Kira Vrist (2018) *Moral Issues in Intelligence-Led Policing*, London and New York: Routledge

Garfield Juliette (2017) 'Paradise Papers leak reveals secrets of the world elite's hidden wealth' *The Guardian*, Sun. Nov. 5, 2017

Gilmore, W.C. (2011) *Dirty Money: The Evolution of International Measures to Counter Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism (4th ed)* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

Goldsmith, A, and Sheptycki, J. (2007) *Crafting Transnational Policing*, Oxford: Hart

Haggart, Blayne, Henne, Kathryn and Tusikov, Natasha, (2019) *Information, Technology and Control in the Changing World*, London: Palgrave Macmillan
Hobbs, Dick, Hadfield, Phil, Lister, Stuart, Winlow, Simon (2003) *Bouncers; Violence and Governance in the Night-time Economy*, Oxford: Clarendon

Huntington, S.P. (1993) 'The Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs*, Summer

Law, T. (2019) 'His reputation precedes him; examining the construction and management of the Pimp in Nightclubs' *Deviant Behavior*, https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2018.1519140

Liang, H-H (1992) *The Rise of the Modern Police and the European State System from Metternich to the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Manning, P.K. (2010) *Democratic Policing for a Changing World*, Fernwood Publishing

Marquis, G. (2016) *The Vigilant Eye; Policing Canada from 1867 to 9-11*, Nova Scotia: Fernwood

McCulloch, J. and Wilson, D. (2016) *Pre-crime; pre-emption, precaution and the future*, London" Routledge

The Politics of Policing a Pandemic Panic

By James Sheptycki (March 2020)

Nelken, David and Levi, Michael (1996) 'The Corruption of Politics and the Politics of Corruption: An Overview', *Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 1-17

Orlova, Alexandra V. and Moore, James W. "'Umbrellas' or 'Building Blocks'?: Defining international terrorism and transnational organized crime in international law' Houston Journal of International Law Vol. 27 (2004-05) pp.268-293

Passas, Nikos (2016) *Transnational Financial Crime*, London: Routledge

Ruddell, Rick (2011) 'Boomtown Policing: Responding to the Dark Side of Resource Development' Policing, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 328-342 doi:10.1093/police/par034

Ruggiero, Vincenzo (2013) *The Crimes of the Economy; A criminological analysis of economic thought*, London: Routledge

Shaxon, Nicholas (2011) *Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and the Men who Stole the World*, London: Palgrave MacMillan

Shaxson, Nicholas (2018) *The Finance Curse; How Global Finance is making us all poorer*, London: Bodley Head

Sheptycki, J. (2000) *Issues in Transnational Policing*, London: Routledge

Spapens Toine, Rob White, Daan van Uhm, Wim Huisman (2018) *Green Crimes and Dirty Money*, London: Routledge

Topak, O. (2019) The authoritarian surveillant assemblage: Authoritarian state surveillance in Turkey', *Security Dialogue*, Volume: 50 issue: 5, page(s): 454-472
https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619850336

Zuboff, Shoshana (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, New York: Public Affairs