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#### *Abstract*

Information and intelligence have always been, and will probably remain, the most essential components of policing, and indeed, of all law enforcement work. Relying on a Belgian empirical study on the flow of administrative information within the local police forces, this paper generates some reflections on the integration of intelligence led policing (ILP) into community oriented policing (COP). Firstly we go into the basic assumptions, research questions and research design of our empirical research. Secondly, we focus on defining ILP in relation to other police models. It is argued that ILP is a working method that can be integrated into any police model. Thirdly, based on some problems policemen in the field tackle by using and exchanging information, we propose the metaphor of the hourglass as a structure that facilitates the information flow in contrast to the more traditional pyramid structure. Finally we want to make clear that COP can be considered a breeding ground for ILP that can lead to a more democratic form of policing.

#### *Introduction*

In this complex and greatly changing society, the police and other partners in integral security policy have been struggling for years with the

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question of how one can deliver a more effective, appropriate and coherent security policy. Different concepts such as COP<sup>2</sup> and problem-oriented policing are gaining popularity. In contrast to reactive and incidental policing they advocate a more pro-active and preventive security policy. The aim is to address the safety problems which underlie many ever recurring incidents by customizing the work of the police and its partners. "Intelligence" has a central role in this: both as a means in the process for adequately collecting information and analyzing problems, and as a goal to develop systematic and ILP and security<sup>3</sup>. The latter is essential in moving from 'intelligence-based policing' to 'intelligence-led policing' (ILP). Belgian federal and local police are also 'experimenting' with both concepts. By law<sup>4</sup> the choice for COP has been made which refers to principles such as external orientation, problem-solving, partnership, empowerment and accountability (Vande Sompel, Ponsaers, Vandevenne & Van Branteghem, 2006). The concept of ILP is translated into a desire to process police information as efficiently and effectively as possible in pursuance of both judicial and administrative police tasks. For example since the ministerial circular PLP 37 was implemented, local police are becoming more and more predominant, especially in the recent battle against terrorism and extremism<sup>5</sup>. In an attempt to integrate COP and ILP the notion of 'Excellent Policing' has been introduced by Belgian policy makers<sup>6</sup>. It refers to the implementation of both concepts by means of optimal management principles<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> When we work out the relationship between community policing and intelligence-led policing, we use the Belgian interpretation of community policing which refers to five pillars: external orientation, problem-solving, partnership, justification and empowerment. Each of these pillars is an essential condition for Belgian community-oriented policing. Please refer to Vande Sompel, R., Ponsaers, P., Vandevenne, Y. and Van Branteghem, J. (2006), *De bronnen van de gemeenschapsgerichte politiezorg in België*, Directie van de Relaties met de Lokale Politie.

<sup>3</sup> In the Netherlands, for example, the municipality has the role of a director. For more information refer to Versteegh, P. (2007)

<sup>4</sup> Wet tot organisatie van een geïntegreerde politiedienst gestructureerd op twee niveaus [Law on the Integrated Police structured on two levels], 7 december 1988, *B.S.*, 5 januari 2002.

<sup>5</sup> PLP 37 (20/12/2004), Ministerial circular about the cooperation and exchange of information with respect to the phenomenon of terrorism and extremism.

<sup>6</sup> International Conference, "The Belgian police. A centre of excellence". Brussels, 6-7 june 2007

<sup>7</sup> Although it is not the subject of this article it has to be mentioned that the notion of 'excellent policing' has been reviewed in a critical way (Easton, 2008).

Relying on a Belgian empirical study on the flow of administrative information within the local police forces, we want to illustrate the problems encountered in the challenging process of integrating ILP into COP. In this contribution we want to elaborate on the nature of these challenges. Firstly, we describe the research design and leading questions of our empirical study, on the basis of which reflections on this integration process have been made. Secondly, we position ILP with respect to the existing police models such as the military-bureaucratic police model, lawful policing and COP. We aim to generate conceptual clarity and discuss the way in which ILP can be captured within traditional police models and what kind of problems/reflections this brings along. Thirdly, relying on our empirical study, we elaborate on the implications for the integration of ILP into COP by proposing the hourglass metaphor. We answer the question as to what such integration really means in terms of fields of tensions such as bottom-up versus top-down flow of information, internal versus external flow of information and discretionary power of police officers on the beat. To conclude we substantiate the argument that integration of ILP can contribute to more democratic policing if integrated into COP as a police model.

## **1. Empirical research on the flow of administrative information in local Belgian police forces**

### **1.1. Hypotheses of the research and research questions**

The starting point for this empirical research was the assumption that a lot of (administrative) information, which is crucial for the execution of police work, flows through local police organizations but is not always used in an efficient and effective way. According to policemen the storage of information can be compared to a sponge: a lot of information is absorbed but only once in a while will a couple of drops come out (de Hert & Vanderborgt, 1996). Moreover, the information is spread randomly in the manner of a garden sprinkler: it is often only by chance that the stored information falls into the hands of the person who needs it (Rozenboom, 2006).

The second premise of the research is that the concept of ILP is also interesting within the framework of administrative (non-judicial) tasks (Van de

Sompel, 2004). Until now, ILP has always been associated with investigative policing and crime control although the police have a wider role which includes public order maintenance (Eliaerts & Enhus, 1992). The tasks of administrative policing also require the collection of information and the existence of efficient and structured information management processes (Easton & Demarée, 2006).

The third assumption taken in this research is that a policy can only be successful if it is designed in direct interaction with those involved in its execution, as professionalism in policy comes through this execution process. In this research we consider streetcops (on the beat and in intervention services) as practice professionals in the area of administrative information flows. The strength of this premise lies in appreciating the experiences of the policemen in the field and gauging the value of their visions, perceptions and assumptions.

The aim of the research was to contribute to the optimisation of administrative information flows within the framework of COP and taking into account democratic principles.

From these starting points and objectives, we searched for answers on the following questions: What kind of bottlenecks do policemen experience on the beat and during interventions in relation to the flow of administrative information? Which internal and external factors obstruct or assist the gathering, flow and analysis of information? How do policemen deal with the 'tensions' generated by the problems related to the flow of information (concrete versus non-concrete information, 'bottom up' and 'top-down' information, internal versus external information exchange)? These research questions gave direction to the fieldwork and the analysis of the data during the research process.

## 1.2. Research design

As our research was explorative and focused on the perceptions and visions of different policemen we chose a qualitative design methodology to untangle the flow of administrative information of certain incidents and get some visibility of bottlenecks. The fieldwork was done in three local police organizations (one large sized in Flanders, one medium sized in Brussels and one small sized in the Wallonian provinces) which can be considered as case studies. Each case study (2 months) addresses the administrative information flow in relation to the phenomena of nuisance, football or traffic. Each case study

comprised the study of a file in relation to the selected phenomenon. For each file we analyzed how information is collected, processed, used and exchanged. We then made annotations concerning the specific items we wanted to discuss during the following interviews and focus groups.

It goes without saying that the selection of the three files is crucial to the research. Therefore we were dependent on the cooperation of the different police organizations. After an in-depth study of the file we held semi-structured interviews with four or five police officers in middle management who are key figures concerning the flow of information within the local police organization (what brings us over the three cases to a total of 14 interviews). Finally, we chose focus groups in order to allow the visions and experiences of police officers working in the district and intervention services to be aired. We held 8 focus groups with 33 policemen in total.

The research focus lay on the qualitative aspect of the flow of information – how does the information flow in relation to a specific incident and what kind of problems do streetcops encounter – without for example examining how many reports were made about the incident.

Some comments have to be made on the research design. First of all, the information which is given by the respondents is not value-free. It's about data that has already been interpreted and moreover, the information is given in pursuit of the research function (Opdebeeck & Goethals, 2002). Secondly, it has to be stressed that this research design is not aimed at generalizations but exploration. The selection of the respondents has been made by the researcher on the basis of the organogram and in close collaboration with contact persons in each police organization taking into account the practical implications of the research for the police work such as availability for example. It is not the intention that the cases are representative for the flow of administrative information within the local police in general. The findings of the case studies cannot be generalised to the information flows but it is possible to draw lessons from it for the treatment of information in similar incidents in the future or in other situations (Stake, 2000).

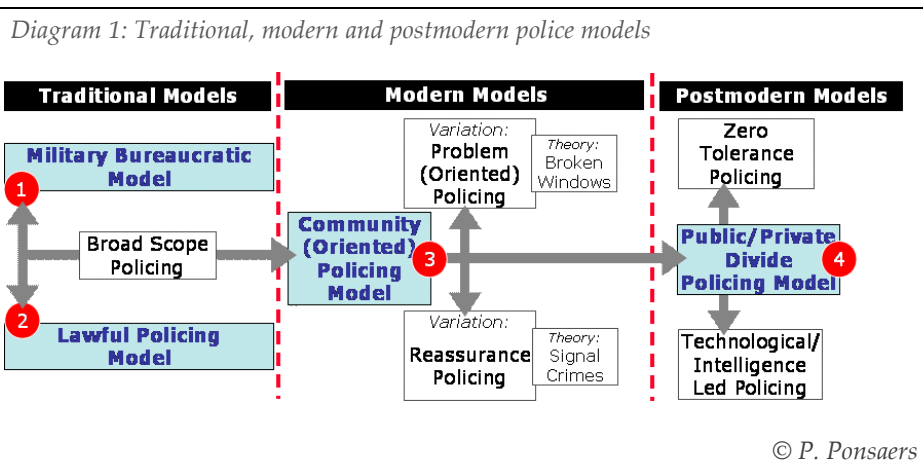
In this article we will not explain the specific flow of information in relation to nuisance, football and traffic that we mapped in the case studies: rather we want to focus on the tensions mentioned by our respondents which

challenges the integration of ILP into COP. These tensions are internal versus external flow of information, police discretion in relation to the flow of information and bottom-up versus top-down flow of information. Before we zoom in on these tensions we have to explain our point of view on the relationship between ILP en COP, which generates our framework for the interpretation of these tensions.

## 2. Intelligence led policing: relation to police models

The framework of this research is based on the paradigm of COP, and specifically on the role of ILP within COP as a police model. To explain this we position ILP with respect to the existing police models such as the military-bureaucratic model, lawful policing model, COP and the public/private divide policing model. We aim to generate conceptual clarity and discuss the way in which ILP can be captured within traditional police models and what kind of problems/reflections this brings along.

For this critical reflection we build upon the conceptual clarity which Ponsaers (2001, 2008) has elaborated concerning existing/known policing models. They are reflected in the following diagram.



This diagram illustrates the four police models Ponsaers distinguishes. He considers full police models as internal-logical visions, which have a critical function on preceding police visions and build up a coherence from there. He

defines a police model as bearing clear basic assumptions in itself about the role and the place of the police in society. In this way a police model generates clear answers to key questions with regard to police discretion, the role of the law, responsibility, the relationship with the population, professionalization, legitimacy, prevention and pro/reactive police force policy (Ponsaers, 2001). On the basis of these eight core themes he distinguishes four police models: the military-bureaucratic model, lawful policing model, community oriented policing model and public-private divide policing model.

In the context of this article it is useful to summarise in a nutshell the main characteristics of the military-bureaucratic model and lawful policing model which will both be referred to later. From the military-bureaucratic model we take along the notion of the top-down approach where policemen are obeying internal rules and hierarchy (which denies the concept of police discretion) is the only way to 'go'. In this kind of model the accent is on internal rather than external responsibility with professionalization of policemen connected to obeying internal rules. Consequently there is a large gap between the population and the police, strengthened by the accent on repression rather than prevention. From the lawful policing model it is important to stress the fact that there is no police discretion as the rule of law has to be obeyed. Professionalization of policemen is connected to a high degree of specialisation with members of the population seen as informants to the police. Here too repression and reactive interventions are the 'rule'.

From this description, other concepts are considered as a theory (broken windows policing), as a reaction to a model (broad scope policing), a variant of a model (problem solving/oriented policing) or as political instrument (zero tolerance policing). As for technological/intelligence led policing, it is considered as a result of an evolution. It is a result of the use of information technology within the police organisation. In broad terms this information technology refers to different tools such as cars, computers, radio's and the use of databases. From this point of view ILP is not considered to be a police model, as defined above, but rather as a tool/technique that can be used within each police model. This is one of our essential theoretical viewpoints on which this contribution is based.

In light of the above, our starting point is that ILP is not really a police model because it does not question the fundamental goals and functions of the

police in our society. ILP is more the result of a social evolution in the use of (information) technology and can be used in any police model (Ponsaers, 2001). ILP rather describes a way in which the police organization can function better (Tilley, 2003). It does not question the objectives of the police. It is a working method by which police work can be done more precisely, intelligently and in a more structured manner (Inspectie OOV, 2004). The premise is that every part of the decision-making process must be preceded by collecting and analyzing information (den Hengst & Commissaris, 2007). The idea behind it is creating a safer society by giving a leading role to data and information when directing police work (Huisman, 2006). ILP is a working method which can be integrated within every police model (be it bureaucratic-military or community-oriented). It is our conviction that, because COP is prescribed by the Belgian law<sup>8</sup>, the idea of ILP must be integrated within the COP paradigm.

Next to the fact that ILP is often seen as an independent police model, there is the problem that ILP is often connected to the problem-solving pillar (Corion, 2003) of COP. If we assume that ILP is a part of COP as a police model, we cannot limit ILP to one pillar of COP; rather, ILP should be of importance in relation to every pillar of COP.

Our empirical research mentioned above did not explore the way in which ILP is implemented in the Belgian local police and as such, we aren't able to pronounce upon this police policy tool. However, we can't ignore the fact that our research data illustrates that some current bottlenecks in the flow of administrative information are still linked to traditional police models thus preventing ILP from further development within the philosophy of COP. This can be considered a symptom of the fact that each police organization, which is not a synonym for a police model, struggles in the process of implementing each new police model (Easton, 2001). So do the Belgian police. In what follows we zoom in on the bottlenecks that appear in our research and then we suggest a useful metaphor, based on our framework, that might contribute to unblocking them.

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<sup>8</sup> Wet tot organisatie van een geïntegreerde politiedienst gestructureerd op twee niveaus [Law on the Integrated Police structured on two levels], 7 december 1988, *B.S.*, 5 januari 2002.



### **3. Hourglass-metaphor to avoid bottlenecks in the flow of administrative information**

The research findings indicate that in the flow of administrative information (from 'taking notice', gathering, processing, relating, analyzing and exchanging to 'dealing with') policemen are confronted by three bottlenecks which prevent the overall organization from effectively and efficiently using of information. These three bottlenecks are the tension between internal and external information exchange, police discretion in relation to the use of information and the tension between the top-down and bottom-up flow of information. We briefly describe each of these tensions and elaborate on an alternative way to avoid them in the future by proposing the hourglass-metaphor stemming from the integration of ILP into CP.

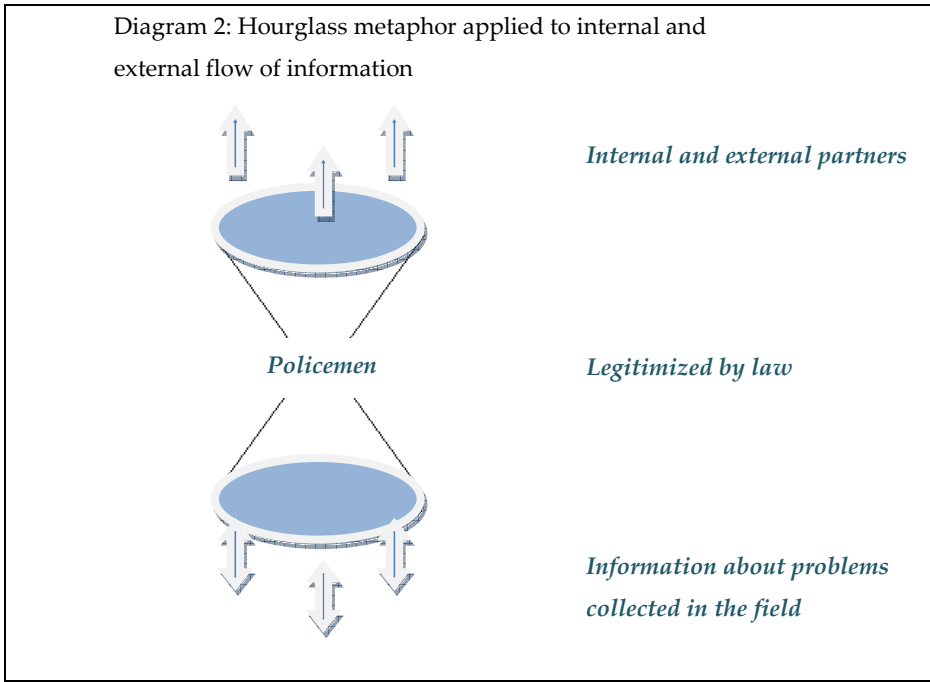
In essence the metaphor of the hourglass counterbalances the traditional pyramid structure of the current information organization (De Hert, Huisman & Vis, 2005; Meesters, Kortekaas, & Tragter, 1999; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1997). An hourglass can only be made by adding an upside down pyramid on top of the traditional pyramid structure. This upside down pyramid has important implications in terms of management principles. It puts the street cops in the 'centre' of the organization from the point of view that they are the key players in the functioning of the police organization. It implies that police managers should coach and support their personnel (which are the closest to the public) instead of merely steering and giving orders.

The hourglass should be seen as a visual framework that serves as a base for picturing how ILP can be integrated into COP. It serves as an ideal type suited for a yardstick utilization which involves a comparison of observed action with ideal-typical depictions of patterned action formulated on the basis of specific premises. This implies that they can be used to describe empirical realities by comparison (Kalberg, 1994:88).

#### **3.1. External versus internal flow of information**

From a traditional point of view (military-bureaucratic or lawful policing model) the police organization is the centre and other organisations as well as civilians have to send their information to the police so that the police

have all the information needed to combat crime or disorder. In this respect information is an internal 'affair'. This one way flow of information adds to the perceived gap between the police and the population: *'They have to give information to us and not the other way around.'* [lower management in the district service]. From a community oriented point of view the process of exchanging information has to be reciprocal. The information gathered by the police should be shared with internal and external partners in function of a better service to the community. The one way flow of information is considered problematic by some of the policemen in our research because they are aware of the fact that they do have access to a great deal of concrete and non-concrete information that can be useful for the functioning of their external partners in security. Only this exchange of information should be considered within the context of a democratic constitutional state and principles such as the protection of privacy have to be respected. The challenge is to exchange information with external partners legitimized by law: *'We could say "we've got here a person who causes lots of problems" but we can't say which problems because there is our professional secrecy'* [lower management in the district service]. The diagram below shows a visualization of the hourglass applied to the perceived tension between the internal and external flow of information. From an ideal typical point of view the hourglass implies an unlimited two-way flow of information between partners in security in function of an optimum in terms of COP. Our empirical research shows that current practices are far away from this point of view; policemen indicate that it is particularly unclear what information can be passed whether true or not. Further steps can then only be taken if legitimized by law.



3.2. Police discretion in relation to the flow of information

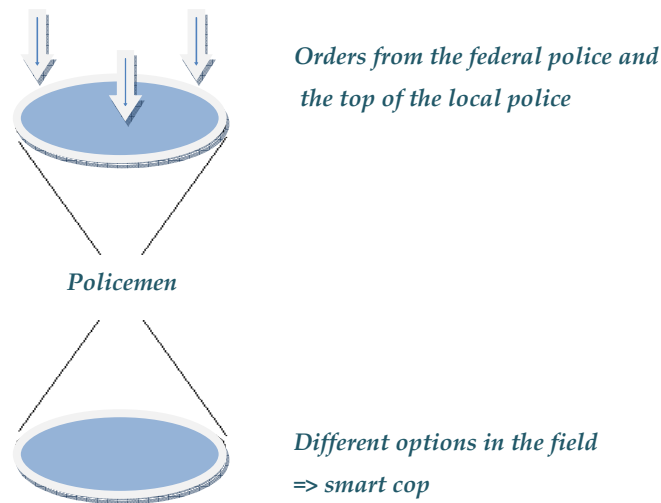
Policemen get orders from the federal police and the police management of their local police force. These guidelines should be derived from the action plans which they have to execute. Despite these directions, as our respondents, they still have to/can make a lot of decisions on the job themselves. During patrols and supervision policemen pay attention to different things and in a specific case, the individual policemen has to estimate whether the given information is true or not. Estimating the reliability and the importance of the information is *'the personal interpretation of the policeman who comes into contact with specific facts, how he or she interprets it and handles'* [middle management in the district service] This is what Huang, Lee en Wang (1999) call the 'intuitive approach': determine the quality of information based on the experience of the person concerned and his discretion and intuition as to what's important. Policemen decide themselves what's valuable, what needs further research and what not: *'That's the feeling of the policemen: evaluate the source. Does the information comes from a boozier or someone*

*who can be trusted?'* [middle management in the district service] So in practice, they have more than one option when they deal with information.

As mentioned earlier, from a traditional policing model perspective (military-bureaucratic or lawful policing model) this form of police discretion is scarce. From a community oriented view on policing police discretion is recognized as a form of policy freedom and valued in the spirit of 'smart' policing. In terms of ILP this means that all policemen should be considered as 'smart' cops taking into account their daily decisions in the field that have far-reaching consequences for the flow of information within the police organization.

Diagram 2 below reflect this point of view by visualizing policemen as centre of the organization due to the fact that they are in terms of ILP 'smart' cops. The challenge lies in the development of this possibility in order to move forward in the implementation of COP. It can be considered as one way to implement the principle of internal empowerment.

Diagram 3: Hourglass metaphor applied to police discretion



### 3.3. Top-down versus bottom-up flow of information

A third tension the policemen refer to in our research is the vertical flow of information referring to the bottom-up and top-down flow of information in the police organization.

In a traditional police model, policemen have to give the collected fieldwork information to the top and follow up on orders. In this research, policemen in the field indicate that there isn't really a threshold for giving information to the top. Policeman from the district service say that *'they can tell anything'*. Furthermore, it is indicated that *'you have to follow the staircase'* [lower management in the district service] but that the door of the boss is always open. Concerning the other direction (top-down) fieldworkers indicate they don't really know what and how much information there is at the top so they also can't estimate if all the relevant information is communicated to them: *'There are things which he will tell and other things not. It's like a mummy'*. [lower management in the district service].

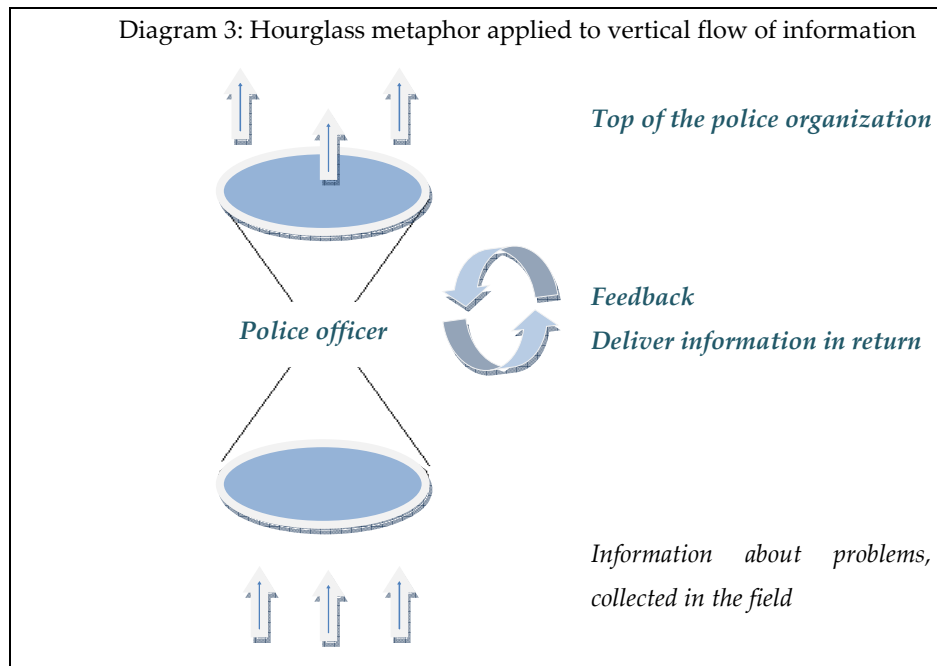
Even more important is that policemen in the field indicate that there is lack of feedback when they give information to the top: *'When I talk about it with*

*my colleagues, I see that we all like to get feedback. Sometimes, when you put some time in a case, you don't know a thing once the verbal process verbal is over.* [lower management research] *The 'culture of feedback is not fully integrated in the police organization'* [middle management, local research, cell juvenile delinquency]. Nevertheless they emphasize the importance of feedback: *'If you get no feedback, you don't know if it's useful what you do. One isn't motivated to work on either'* [middle management in the district service] *'I have given information, has that information been useful? Let me know! That motivates the district inspector to say 'look, one can do something with it' and there is a problem: that doesn't always happen and that doesn't motivate the district inspector to say 'I must go on because it's important'* [middle management in the district service]

These findings indicate that hierarchical structures, which stress the top as being the centre 'fueled' by information from the field, can partly block the flow of information within the police organization. When there is just a flow of information from the bottom to the top, the policemen in the field get no information or feedback in return. Our respondents indicate that this generates a lack of motivation for the fieldworkers. It is a missed chance to help them realize the importance and impact information can have for police work: *"at first sight, you doesn't always realizes but sometimes, certain information can proved to be important afterwards"* [middle management, local research, cell juvenile delinquency]. When there's no feedback, policemen in the field don't see that the information they delivered about things which they thought would never be solved, led to a solution or prevention of a certain problem or incident. This can affect the flow of information because, due to a lack of feedback, policemen in the field aren't exhorted or motivated to give information in the future because they don't see the effect which the giving of information can have nor do they feel appreciated for the work they did.

Replacing the traditional pyramidal structure with the hourglass provides more guarantees that a continuous information process can be sustained. Policemen in the field are the centre of the flow of information within the police organization. They pass on their information from the field to the top and by 'turning the hourglass', they get feedback on the processing of the delivered information. This hourglass metaphor reflects the implementation of

the principle of internal empowerment of the policemen in the field, a crucial pillar in the COP-policy. Diagram 3 below visualizes this point of view



To conclude, a warning has to be made concerning the interpretation of the hourglass metaphor. An important factor in any is the ongoing stream of sand. In relation to the flow of information it means that it is necessary to keep information 'running' and to avoid it from falling still at the bottom of the organization. To activate the flow of information, constant exchange and feedback is needed which implies that the hourglass has to be turned.

A first important pitfall of this metaphor is that a constant exchange of information with external partners is seen as unproblematic whereas our research has shown that policemen in the field do not know what kind of information can or cannot be exchanged with those partners. Furthermore it became clear that this process of exchange runs up against the boundaries of our democratic state. The protection of privacy is highly respected in this regard. Nevertheless fieldworkers do indicate a possible way to deal with some of these issues. They mention giving feedback without mentioning specific data from the file. Towards the citizen for example: *'I learned that people who ask for patrols (...)*

were contacted afterwards through a letter to say where we patrolled, sometimes mentioning the hour and the day it was done. At times we mentioned the results obtained but, obviously, without mentioning any name. [middle management administrative police] On the other hand, partners are probably also somewhat reluctant to give information. After all, not only the police are bound by a duty of professional confidentiality. How these partners of the police look at this exchange of information is not encompassed by our empirical research. Research on this matter would provide some insight, firstly, on the limitations of the information exchange between police and partners and, secondly, on the factors which influence it.

A second pitfall that goes along with the first one is that the metaphor can be interpreted as another organizational structure which suits the optimal flow of mainly internal information within the police organization. This pitfall generates a fall back on ILP as a working method and could hamper the further search for the implementation of a community oriented information led policing model with service to the community as its main goal and partnership as one of the crucial pillars. These pitfalls also make clear that there is an important connection between the five COP-pillars (external orientation, problem-solving, accountability, empowerment, partnership) and that they should be implemented all together to avoid any misinterpretations. In what follows we zoom in on the way COP can act as a breeding ground for aspects of ILP as mentioned above.

#### **4. COP as a breeding ground for ILP**

In our opinion ILP is, as explained above, just a working method to optimize the use of information that can be integrated in every police model whereas COP is a broader police model developed in reaction to the traditional, more repressive police models. In spite of the fact that there is *'a great deal of daylight separating intelligence-led policing and community policing'* (Ratcliffe, 2008, p. 88) our research indicates that ILP can create possibilities to provide a service to the population when it's integrated into the ideas and pillars of COP. In what follows we consider this point of view in relation to external orientation, problem-solving, partnership, accountability and empowerment as challenging principles to implement COP.



Police information is not always sufficient to foresee incidents, to gain insight into problems and prevent them. To do this, one needs information from the broad scope of society. To gain information policemen have to, for one, 'get data from citizens by 'external orientation' so as to interpret and combine it with other data, and afterwards convert it into information and knowledge. Based on this operational knowledge police officers will (may) gain insight into the needs and complaints of the population and can consider the actions, priorities and plans the police can take so as to put this knowledge into practice through (tactical and strategic) intelligence: *"It is through the complaints that filter in that we can make up the priorities"* [lower management, intervention team]. *"We know the neighborhoods in which we patrol. We make service reports. We also have information about incidents which may have happened during the day or the night and to which we must pay attention. So we know, in respect of the information we receive, where we must pay attention during our shift."* [lower management in intervention]. According to our respondents knowing the population of the neighborhood is also useful in order to estimate the value of the information received from citizens. On the other hand, citizens and other partners also need to know the police so they *can* supply them with information. The police have to be visible and accessible and that is one of the goals of the Belgian interpretation of COP.

A second pillar of COP, which can reinforce the 'life cycle of data' (from data, information to intelligence and knowledge) and can itself also be reinforced by this cycle, is 'a problem-solving way of working'. With the help of information, there can be a different (better) intervention: *'If we are informed of something then we will reflect before and perhaps intervene differently. It is clear that it's important.'* [middle management centralized traffic service]. Furthermore, to really tackle problems and to go beyond dealing with symptoms of these problems, problems have to be *known*. Various parties need to supply and acquire useful information by combining and linking data. It is about strategic intelligence which is acquired thanks to statistics and analyses, and afterwards linked to information and experience from policemen in the field. Based on the input from the strategic and operational levels, a broader knowledge of problems or problematic areas can be obtained, and thereafter one can determine tactical priorities and set up action plans. These priorities and action

plans are on their own a form of operational intelligence, which when put into day-to-day practices bring about a continuous exchange.

Because not all problems can be solved directly through intervention, *“although they can be solved indirectly by giving people referrals towards the appropriate services”* [lower management from intervention], it is important to pass information concerning problems and incidents through to the services which have to follow up on the case and take action as appropriate. Taking time and making an effort to pass information through is not only a service to the citizen, but is also useful to the intervention service itself: *“After all, it is also important to us that if we do not see a particular problem coming back time and time again, it is not agreeable to be called again and again for the same problem. In that case, our penny will drop”*. [middle management, intervention team]. By doing so, the ‘referral function’ of the police becomes concrete and information plays an important part in this.

Partnership, which materializes in a reciprocal exchange of information, is also an essential factor in obtaining information and knowledge. When there is good cooperation with partners, one will communicate and exchange information. When there is good cooperation with citizens and (external and internal) partners, information can be obtained which may contribute greatly to the work of the police. In the words of one respondent: *“It is better to put our heads together.”* [lower management district service]. To exchange information which can be used to tackle problems or prevent them one needs a degree of cooperation and deliberation. It is through combining and linking one’s own (police) data with data from other social actors that interesting information (for all partners) can be obtained. When one can add experience to the mix, knowledge can even be obtained. To stimulate the exchange of information and to preserve the processes which facilitate it, the authorities and partners who pass information to the police (including federal and national police components, internal police services and other police zones as external social actors), need to receive information or at least feedback. It is about the giving of information from the different participants to the police, and thereafter, the police giving information back to the different (internal) partners whilst bearing

in mind the principles of privacy<sup>9</sup>. That means that there is an interaction between giving and receiving data. By doing so, given and interpreted data (=information) can be interpreted (again) by the authorities who initially received it. This can be linked to other data and experience so that even knowledge can be obtained .

A data cycle based on continuous data gathering and feedback can also initiate and stimulate accountability. When policemen describe what they are doing in the field, one can, thanks to that information, gain some insight into the incidents and the problems experienced by police staff: *“We will tell the responsible officer of day-to-day tasks: look, we did this about that and that is what happened or we went there and there was nothing to see.”* [lower management district service]. Information, which is recorded in police documents and can be seen by superiors as ‘data’, can also be used to see what the policemen are doing. From this process information can be obtained albeit not from an operational point of view but for policy, evaluation or control purposes. Accountability also means giving feedback to (internal and external) partners who gave data or information. Such feedback gives these partners information, and vice versa: the policemen gets (new) information - which can further evolve to background knowledge - if partners receive information from the police and want to air their opinions or give feedback themselves.

Our research, which focused on interviewing fieldworkers, showed especially the strength of ‘empowerment’. This principle offers great possibilities to the people working in the field to truly rise to the level of ‘smart cop’. By stimulating horizontal reciprocal exchange of information and the exchange of information top-down and bottom-up, one can enrich the body of knowledge, which then can reinforce the sense of empowerment required to tackle the problems encountered in day-to-day police work in the field. Some policemen say that action plans and priorities can overly dominate their daily shift; others say that they determine for themselves which things need to be taken care of and what problems need their attention. Through knowledge of the problems and by knowing all the partners and specialized services, police officers can better position the incidents in their daily practices, exercise their discretion in a well-

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<sup>9</sup> Needless to say that is the rub.

founded way or ask for the help of their partners in security. Through all of these things one can obtain intelligence: converting knowledge so as to have the possibility of taking action (namely problem-solving) (Willmer, 1970; Huisman, 2006). Furthermore, empowerment can change attitudes such as *“When I go out and I do not want to find anything I will not.”* [middle management in an administrative police service] into an attitude characterized by motivation to collect information.

## 5. Conclusion

In this contribution we developed the argument that ILP is a working method that can be used in COP as a police model in order to develop more democratic policing.

Findings from our research on the flow of administrative information in the local police show that problems which occur on the field can partly be linked to (characteristics of) traditional police models. Some of the tensions such as the tension between the internal and external flow of information, the discretion of fieldworkers in relation to the flow of information and the tension between the bottom-up and top-down flow of information are captured in the traditional vision on the police (such as the military-bureaucratic model or the lawful policing model). As a consequence ILP is implemented in a context that still suffers from characteristics such as a rather closed system, with the accent on accomplishment of internal goals and legitimized by the absence of societal disorder or by law. Fieldworkers are motivated to use ILP by obeying internal rules and procedures and citizens are mainly perceived as informants.

This context is mainly a symptom of Belgian police organizations struggling with the implementation of COP as a new police model. The implementation of this new police model cannot be done overnight and persistent efforts are needed. Our reasoning above indicates that one of the efforts - to achieve this objective - should be directed towards the integration of ILP in COP to prevent it from being reduced to a mere working method. COP can indeed be a breeding ground for ILP. COP generates a context in which police discretion is accepted and dealt with, the law is seen as a means to an end (service to the public), external accountability is strongly emphasized and the legitimacy of the police functioning lies in the relation to democracy. The

integration of ILP within this context can be a step forward to more democratic policing. The empirical research shows that taking into account democratic principles such as the protection of privacy is an important condition to integrate ILP into COP.

To support this step towards integration, the proposed metaphor of the hourglass is promising. It is a visual framework which makes an interpretation/optimization of ILP taking into account the central COP-principles such as external orientation, problem-solving, partnership, accountability and empowerment. If translated into the management of the police organization it can be a trump card in terms of integrating ILP into COP. Although the power of COP relies on the combination of the five pillars, our empirical research indicates that internal empowerment of policemen in the field could be a strong lever to integrate ILP into COP and thereby contributing towards more democratic policing.

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