

BOOK REVIEW

POLICING THE WATERFRONT: NETWORKS, PARTNERSHIPS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF SECURITY

BY RUSSELL BREWER

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Ask any crime writer, or Hollywood producer, where the opening scene of a crime thriller should be set, and I am sure that a misty dock somewhere, in the middle of the night, with a fog-horn sounding and a few gulls screeching would feature high on their standard list of locations. The fact of the matter is that the waterfront has provided much fertile ground (and water) for significant crime events in recent memory in countries fortunate enough to have access to the world's oceans and seas.

Hence, if one were to make sense of recent themes in policing, and to test the theories against the empirical evidence, the waterfront would be a natural place to turn. It is surprising then, that Russell Brewer's book appears to be the first of its kind. Also surprising to me was the revelation, covered in the book, that the 18th century British magistrate, Patrick Colquhoun persuaded a number of private shipping merchants in 1798 to fund a new initiative whereby 60 salaried officers and 1100 part-time men were tasked to oversee the cargo transfers at London's docks and to protect that cargo until delivery. In July 1800, the *Thames River Police Act* transformed this private venture into a public policing service, thus creating what many now consider to be the first regular police force in London. This occurred well ahead of the organisation of Sir Robert Peel's London Metropolitan Police that followed 29 years later. The Thames River Police were eventually absorbed into the Metropolitan Police, but not before 1838.

Private security, then, played an early role in London's policing history, and it continues to play a key role today. The publication of *Policing the Waterfront* provides yet another challenge to the commentators who too often assert that crime control is simply a matter of resourcing the local police, increasing their firepower and bolstering their intelligence-gathering capacity. As we continue to discover, nothing could be further from the truth.¹

Dr Brewer's book is essentially a study in three parts. The first part takes readers through the significant shift *away* from police alone carrying out policing functions in modern societies, and *towards* the vast array of regulatory bodies, private and public, along with transnational police services, commercial agencies and citizen participation that all combine to limit crime and disorder generally and, into the 21st century, to forestall terrorist activity and human trafficking as well.

The author then leads readers, in the second part, through the growing literature on how these bodies co-exist, sometimes interrelating, and sometimes cutting across each other. The bulk of the book describes and follows two case studies, undertaken by the author, on the ports in the Los Angeles area (Los Angeles and Long Beach) that carry the largest volume of shipping trade in that country, and the Melbourne docklands precinct, which handles a third of all container trade in Australia. Who polices these ports? Dr Brewer reveals that there are no fewer than 23 different agencies directly involved in the management and regulation of the Los Angeles ports. There are 16 different equivalent 'network nodes' in the Melbourne ports precinct.

In the third part of the book the author draws all of these threads together to isolate the importance of social capital and trust that, he

¹ Philip Stenning, 'Governance and Accountability in a Plural Policing Environment – the Story So Far' (2009) 3 *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 22.

concludes, are essential to the creation of partnerships for successful crime prevention. He asserts, based upon the evidence, that the Californians do it much better than Melburnians. It appears that, in the Los Angeles ports, the waterfront regulatory communities are very effective at cultivating engagement in the public/private crime control space. By contrast, in Melbourne, he writes, ‘the extent to which the networked structures enable unfettered access to information and resources, encourage reciprocity, build trust, and thus facilitate large-scale co-production [of policing] is certainly questionable’.²

The case study in Melbourne highlights, for me, that policing is less likely to be effective where private agencies feel that they are expected to act as police when they are not suited for such a role (although they are happy to take responsibility for their own security services from time to time). By the same token, some public and private agencies may continue to harbour mistrust for waterside workers who have typically been depicted as less than trustworthy, especially given the deep divisions that must still persist in the aftermath of the 1998 waterfront dispute when the Maritime Union of Australia was pitted against Patrick Stevedores and the Howard Government. Asking these stakeholders to share policing tasks is akin to asking the fox to guard the henhouse. The lesson remains: partnerships are unlikely to form out of enmities.³

By contrast, Dr Brewer proffers the view that the post-September 11, 2001 environment in the United States may have created a mindset – “we are all in this together” – that has had the effect of galvanising productive relationships that have created models of cooperation in security that could not be scripted and which may be difficult to transport to settings outside of the USA.

² Russell Brewer, *Policing the Waterfront: Networks, Partnerships and the Governance of Security* (Oxford University Press, 2014) 158.

³ Tim Prenzler and Rick Sarre, ‘The Role of Partnerships in Security Management’ in Martin Gill (ed), *Handbook of Security* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 769.

Be that as it may, Dr Brewer concludes with nine propositions, the adoption of which, he maintains, would assist with putting in place the required social capital “alignment” for collaborative crime control to take place. In sum, they focus upon governments assuming more “steering” responsibilities. Moreover, they require policy-makers to promote good management and design, to foster credibility, to pursue common goals, to encourage trust in stakeholders, to find an appropriate balance of risks and rewards, and to add a liberal sprinkling of social justice initiatives.

I enjoyed *Policing the Waterfront* immensely. It is a handsome volume from an erudite writer, and an excellent new title for the Clarendon Studies in Criminology series. The book is essential reading for any person who has an interest in modern policing partnerships and the “co-production” of policing. One hopes that our policy-makers can take heed, too, of the propositions for reform that the author espouses.

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