

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

DENNIS COOLEY (Ed). *Re-Imagining Policing in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. 337 p.

The London bombings of July 7, 2005, have evoked haunting memories of the 9/11 attacks in New York. The incidents have helped to keep national security front and centre in political debates. Recently, the quest for security is getting closer to home. Fifty-two Torontonians were gunned down in 2005. Politicians, community leaders and academics are conscientiously looking for solutions that help the police get criminals with guns off the street as well as prevent children from becoming criminals. These events raise such questions as how should we reform our laws to keep the country safe and orderly. Should we hire more police or install video cameras in public space? What can parents and community leaders do to make policing agents more accountable? Such a desperate yearning for security has made Dennis Cooley's book *Re-Imagining Policing in Canada* a highly anticipated publication in the field of criminal justice and policing.

This book is a collection of six papers originally prepared for the Law Commission of Canada as background research for its review of public and private policing. (Cooley served as Executive Director for the commission.) The commission is set to review how policing is changing in Canada in particular with respect to the emerging complex networks that include a mix of public and private security providers. Cooley's introduction situates the inquiry in the context of budget challenges and the growth of neo-liberalism in Western countries. Against this fiscal and ideological background, Joe Hermer and his colleagues present a succinct overview of the trends and directions of the latest changes in policing, and look at the diffusion of functions between state and non-state (paid and volunteer) policing agencies. They also study law reform strategies and critically examine impacts on core values in a democratic society.

The following three chapters provide a social context for the issues addressed by Cooley and Hermer. Michael Mopas attempts to map out the dispersion of power and looks at community-based and private forms of policing in Vancouver's downtown Eastside. Likewise, Laura Huey and her colleagues explore changes in Gastown and the Granville Mall of Vancouver, illustrating how merchants, property owners, and residents struggle to define and create their own distinct communities and are engaged in the negotiation of security and policing arrangements with local police forces. Christopher Murphy and Curtis Clark examine the impact of

the growth of the private sphere on the public sector in both Halifax and Edmonton. These case examples provide significant empirical evidence that helps explicate the tension among intersecting (and contradicting) interests across the borders of class, race and ethnicity in policing.

Re-imagining policing also requires a new typology of police and policing. George Rigakos takes on this challenge and introduces a labour-based taxonomy of policing activities for both the public and private sectors. His chapter sets a solid foundation for researchers to interpret the current state of policing and builds theoretical frameworks which transcend the public-private dichotomy.

The dispersion of power in the construction of commercialized “public” spaces or “community” policing programs also raise the question of power inequity in defining security and framing accountability. To emphasize this concern, Susan Eng (former chair of the Metro Toronto Police Services Board) reminds readers of the perennial “democracy gap” in policing and in the social hierarchy which mirrors “the patterns of who is satisfied and who complains.” The book concludes with Eng’s call for a governance system that is able to protect core democratic values and address societal inequities.

In general, *Re-Imagining Policing in Canada* is an easy read that offers students and researchers an accessible entry for learning about the existing challenges in law reforms and policing arrangements in the midst of the neo-liberalism which prevails in the West. Readers who are looking for a quick review of the current trends and legal environment with regard to these changes will find Hermer and his colleagues’ chapter informative and useful.

In view of the decoupling of security from the state, the issue of governance does require close scrutiny. By and large, Cooley and the other contributors effectively raise the question of civilian oversight of the policing activities of private agencies. In addressing the complexity of policing, the authors are also able to bring the current debate to a more sophisticated level and compellingly argue that governance is not only through society but also through the regulated and accountable choices of autonomous agents – citizens, consumers, parents, and employees.

The book successfully brings to the forefront the expanding private policing industry and the need for reform in governance structures. Yet it leaves the most controversial policing issues unanswered – namely racial profiling and “black against black” gun violence in inner cities. Will there be any difference between private and public policing agents, when racial ideology prevails in our society? What are the implications when communities like Jane and Finch in Toronto are constructed purely as geographical neighbourhoods, while poverty and marginalization are deeply entrenched in racial inequities? Can racial minorities be part of this re-imagining?

Rick Sin, *McMaster University*.

© Canadian Sociological Association/La Société canadienne de sociologie