Plural Policing of Public Places in France

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Between Private and Local Policing

Abstract

This paper analyzes the changing public/private as well as central/local relationships for the provision of public security in public places in France. It describes the emergence and development of a now frequent public-private mix in policing, based on the hot issue of regulating social behaviours in public places. The significance of the French model in terms of the nature of privatization and pluralization is then discussed and compared to international trends. The rise of a local level public-private mix, while not unique in Europe, appears as a major shift in a French environment traditionally characterized by the structural centralization of its public forces.

Keywords: France, public security, privatization, plural policing, public space, governance of security

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Introduction

In 2010, the regional branch of the Court of Auditors (*Cour des comptes*, the highest public body in charge of overseeing public spending) issued a report on the security

policy of the city of Lyons[1]. The Court declared it illegal for the mayor's office to outsource patrols on the shores of the Rhône River to private companies. In October 2013, in Meru (a small town in the region of Picardie), a social housing organization contracted with a private security company to patrol its halls and cellars. This project triggered a chain of public reactions on the status of such spaces and the role of the private security sector: should private guards be allowed to patrol the urban public space (*la voie publique*), hitherto a monopoly of police authorities?[2]

These events must be viewed in the wider context of the changing public/private as well as central/local relationships in the area of policing and security provision in France. We endeavour to analyze the meaning of such trends. In this paper, we first provide a brief research update on the private security sector in France – since the situation varies from one country to another. Second, we describe the emergence and development of a now frequent public-private mix in policing, based on the hot issue of regulating social behaviours in public places (the very nature of the activities of staff tasked with surveilling such spaces is heatedly debated these days). Third, we discuss the significance of the French model in light of the current questioning of global privatization and pluralization trends by the international academic community. The development of a local level public-private mix, while not unique in Europe, appears as a major shift in a French environment traditionally characterized by the structural centralization of its public forces.

1. Private Security Research and Controversies in France: a Brief Overview

In this section, we first provide context about the private sector of policing, before reviewing the French literature. 9,625 private security organizations were operating in France in 2012. Almost 6,000 were in fact self-employed individuals, while 11 employed more than 2,000 staff – 31.5% of the total workforce (I+C, 2013). Between 2005 and 2012, there has been a 29.5% increase of the number of private security companies. The total revenue of the private security sector in 2012 was € 5.45 billion, 68% of which was captured by the 217 companies (2.5%) employing more than 100 staff (I+C, 2013). Between 1998 and 2010, the sector's revenue has grown at the annual rate of 5.5% (Robin & Mordier, 2013). Since the early 2000s, public buyers (hospitals, administrations, etc.) have accounted for less than 25% of the total market for private security (23% in 2012) (I+C, 2013). In 2012, the total number of private security workers was 148,350, stagnating since 2001 (I+C, 2013). In 2010, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) counted 131,000 FTE workers (Robin & Mordier, 2013). Most of these jobs are concentrated in urban areas, with the Paris metropolitan area being the biggest employment zone (I+C, 2013). The high turnover materializes in a hiring rate of 60.5% and a

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1   See '*Rapport d'observations définitives de la chambre régionale des comptes concernant la gestion de la commune de Lyon   Enquête sécurité publique au cours des exercices 2003 et suivants*', released in 2010 by the Cour Régionale des Comptes.

2   *Libération*, 'Faute de moyens, la police cède à la tentation du privé', November 15th 2013.

departure rate of 59% (I+C, 2013). 41.2% of private guards under the age of 30 have no educational degree at all (Bauvet, 2007). Wages are among the lowest of all sectors (Robin & Mordier, 2013). Women account for 15% of the workforce (I+C, 2013).

Private security in France has been studied along a number of lines. Economists and business scholars study the economic growth of the market for private policing, emphasizing the job-creation potential of the sector (Konadje, 2011). The sector is a polarized one: while a handful of big companies – many of them foreign, such as Securitas (Hassid, 2010) – employing thousands of agents are profitable, many very small entities struggle for survival in a competitive context that drives prices down (Brajeux, Delbecque & Mathieu, 2013), engaging in borderline illegal business and labour practices (Tournyol du Clos, 2006). Under French law, any individual with a clean criminal record may start a private security business (Konadje, 2011). However, existing mechanisms have been described as lenient with regard to 'unclean' criminal records (Ocqueteau, 2013).

Legal scholars focus on legislation and regulation (Latour, 2009). While the legal context had been stable since the 1983 Act regulating private security activities, changes were introduced in the 2000s: private agents are now allowed to perform more policing activities, especially in airports (Ocqueteau & Warfman, 2011), and a new national regulatory body (the CNAPS) has been created (Ocqueteau, 2013). The CNAPS brings together public authorities (from the police and the judiciary) and representatives of private security employers, and delivers accreditations for private security companies. The inter-ministerial delegate for private security, Prefect Blanchou (2012), argues in favour of replacing the 1983 Act with a new general law regulating private policing. Gohin (2012) analyzes constitutional obstacles standing in the way of a complete privatization of policing.

Political scientists and legal scholars have a shared interest in private-public partnerships (Chevallier, 2011) and the demonopolization of security (Roché, 2004), showing that tax and budgetary constraints force public authorities to hand down security policies to the private sector (Latour, 2012). Loubet Del Bayle (2012) has concerns about the very ability of private policing to contribute to the common good. More specifically, there are concerns about the training, skills, and professionalization of agents (Brajeux, Delbecque & Mathieu, 2013).

Sociologists who study work conditions and labour relations note that private policing in France yields low-skilled, low-pay, high-turnover jobs, often held for just a few months or years by young men – few women, except in positions where interpersonal skills are considered important (Bauvet, 2010) – from ethnic minorities and/or immigrants in wait of better employment opportunities (Péroumal, 2008; Scheepers, 2012). The involvement of visible minorities in private policing has triggered discussions about racial politics (Arpagian, 2010; Hug, 2000; Scheepers, 2012). All this makes unionization unlikely (Péroumal, 2007).

Private guards are particularly conspicuous in mass private properties such as shopping malls and railway stations (Bonnet, 2006; 2008; 2012; Mongin, 2008), where they perform 'public' policing missions in spaces which are legally private, but practically public. This blurring of the private and the public is a key theme of the literature.

2. Empirical Examination of the French Experience of Plural Policing

In this section, we document aspects of the empirical reality of plural policing in France based on a number of scholarly works excerpted from a rather limited literature. By design, we provide a broad and simplified account of these works, which pertain to several large French cities. Precisely because our goal is to give a broad sense of the French case of plural policing, we focus on identifying general patterns rather than detailed, city-specific findings. Readers in search of more substantial empirical material are invited to consult these works.

2.1. Private Security Guards and the Policing of Public Spaces

The growth of the private security sector is largely fuelled by the demand for security guards in public spaces or mass private properties. This raises a number of concerns. Department stores, shopping malls, and railway stations have been around for decades in France, so why the sudden rise in private security employment in the 1990s and the 2000s?

Since the police officer population has steadily kept up with demographics, the rising numbers of private guards can only be explained by the emergence of some new security issue in these particular spaces. Commercial entities buy security because they feel they need to: for the business sector, security is an extra cost, and plays a less symbolic role than it does for government authorities. This security issue may originate in the decline of informal social controls and/or in the rise of new behaviours requiring a security response. A plausible explanation in France is the rise of antisocial behaviours since the 1980s. Conventional wisdom associates these antisocial behaviours to minority youths from deprived neighbourhoods. In Bonnet's (2006) shopping mall, typical antisocial behaviours consisted in petty theft and minor disturbances such as youths running, being loud in groups, harassing girls and so on. Such antisocial behaviours do not require heavy-handed (i.e. armed) policing tactics to be managed.

Bonnet's (2006; 2008; 2009) study of the relationships between public and private security in two mass private properties in Lyon (France) shows that public and private actors rely on different policing styles. Daily activities of public police officers hinge on bureaucratic, public administration priorities. One of their duties is to maintain availability to the public at all times at the station. Because of labour laws, manning the desk during business hours is a human resource intensive requirement. Police officers also have to perform the judiciarization of public and private security work: even mundane incidents require some type of paperwork, which eventually builds up to consume more human resources. Police officers are tasked to focus on certain types of criminals, such as undocumented aliens, as part of the national governmental crime-fighting rhetoric. Because mass private properties attract a lot of people (up to 100,000 daily visitors at some railway stations), police officers are instructed to look for wanted persons. Drug dealers are also a target of the French national police.

Most of these priorities do not suit the specific interests of the commercial entities that manage railway stations and shopping malls – these are in the business of retail or transportation, not crime-fighting. The railway company[3] and the mall's management aim at making a profit and see security as part of their commercial strategy. These companies want guards patrolling the premises, sending the message that 'security is present'. While drug dealers are not necessarily a concern, they do care about drug addicts, whose appearance disturbs commonly-held notions of *doux commerce*. Undocumented aliens or wanted persons are not perceived as a problem, as long as they behave as normal customers. Hence, the security needs of these businesses are not perfectly met by the security offer of the public police. The retail industry needs a security that walks the fine line between accommodating the customers' perceived needs (for instance, to get rid of Roma panhandlers) and respecting the customers' perceived sense of fairness and justice (for instance, to avoid the use of violence in getting rid of Roma panhandlers). Above all, retail businesses need a security that avoids antagonizing customers or their children. For instance, while the police tend to perceive minority youths as a criminal threat, businesses perceive them as future customers and children of current customers. They want to avoid the escalation of conflicts at all costs, and hire private guards with minority backgrounds with the belief that better cross-cultural communication will thus be enabled. In the shopping mall studied by Bonnet (2006), commercial activity had been disrupted, in 1998, by a riot that broke out on the last day of the month of Ramadan and involved hundreds of minority youths. Memories of this riot have shaped how security is provided. The heavy-handed approach came to be perceived by the management as a threat to business, since customers would increasingly associate the mall with urban disorder. To avoid further conflicts with minority youths, the management hired minority guards and a mediator. The security strategy is to avoid another riot, even if that involves letting a few petty thefts go unpunished.

The evolution of the security division at the French railway company (SNCF) also illustrates these dynamics (Bonnet, 2006). For decades, SNCF internal security had been focusing on employee theft, internal fraud, anti-union activities, and warehouse protection. It was nicknamed 'the Fifth Column' inside the organization, in reference to General Franco's army during the Spanish Civil War. With the rise of antisocial behaviours and fear of crime in the 1990s, the SNCF entirely remodelled its security division. Instead of working in plain clothes, looking out for employee crime, SNCF security guards now patrol railway stations and trains in uniform, in an ostensible attempt at reassuring both customers and their fellow co-workers. The evolution of the SNCF security division shows how security priorities are contingent to company interests. For decades at the SNCF, security had meant 'employee surveillance'. When the context changed, SNCF adapted its definition

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3   The French railway company (SNCF) is a public entity placed under the authority of the Ministry of Transportation. For most intent and purposes, it acts as a private company with commercial objectives. Under French law, railway stations are private spaces, owned by the SNCF (except for the platform and railway, which are owned by Réseau Ferré de France – RFF).

of security, and security now means 'reassuring customers'. For the SNCF, security is a component of a commercial strategy.

This creates conflicts with the public police. Socially speaking, the fact that security guards are not strictly regulated by public authorities and that most of them belong to minorities sets them apart from police officers. Police officers are mostly white French individuals, with some education (civil servant exams are very competitive, even for low-skilled jobs like police officer), and being a civil servant is an important part of their professional identity. They tend to consider private security guards as mercenaries, possibly as a professional threat (because of the cost difference between public and private security), but certainly not as security professionals. Indeed, some police officers have been known to make veiled accusations that private guards might side with offenders.

2.2. New Jobs in Urban Tranquillity

Concurrently with the above-mentioned privatization trend, housing estates, local authorities, and transportation companies have been providing an increasingly visible presence in public spaces (or in spaces with a private status but a collective usage, such as buses and hallways) by hiring agents of a new kind – *not quite* police officers. As is the case in other European countries – see the English 'wardens' (Crawford, 2006) or the Dutch '*Stadswacht*' (Hauber et al., 1996) – this might be referred to as the emergence of a new nebula of activities dealing with the treatment of petty disorders and the daily mediation of conflictual situations in urban areas. These new jobs have risen in a context marked by recurring criticism towards traditional professions – the public police, especially, are perceived as cut off from the field – and the disappearance of secondary social control occupations.

Depending on the local context, these new actors are given a profusion of denominations (mediators, night correspondents, stewards, etc.). Their social/professional status may differ as well: while some of them are local public employees, most have private, temporary job contracts. They may work for various kinds of employers (social housing estates, transport companies, municipalities). Some of them even work for voluntary organizations subsidized by public authorities. Despite these differences, they share similarities that are particularly interesting for our purpose, insofar as their activity always consists in regulating public spaces by assuming a role that verges on policing. Their missions, relations with other actors, achievements, as well as their weaknesses will be illustrated below through the example of Parisian 'night-time mediators'[4] (Maillard, 2013).

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4   Indeed, the city set up a nightwatcher scheme ('correspondants de nuit') in 2004. This directly-run scheme was gradually extended and now employs 135 civil service agents in neighbourhoods within 9 districts. They will hereinafter be called 'night-time watchers' and 'night-time mediators' (the French name is '*correspondants de nuit*'). The following developments are based on interviews conducted with nightwatchers, their partners and some members of the public, as well as direct observations (see Maillard, 2013).

2.2.1. *New Jobs on the Fringe of Policing*

In all these cases, public officials have considered that public spaces may be regulated by these actors without coercion, and that security may be promoted without – at least primarily – resorting to formal police powers.

The emergence of these new actors stems from the idea that public spaces should not be regulated through repression alone. While not playing on the register of prevention in the usual sense – any more than repression – these actors do seem to fit in an ongoing trend toward the professionalization of the monitoring and disapproval of uncivil conducts. These new jobs contribute to blurring the boundaries between formal and informal social control. If, by 'policing', we mean 'attempts to regulate the distribution of security by actual or potential use of force' (Bayley & Shearing, 2001, 2), these agents are at the outer edge of such an activity. Although unable to arrest or even fine offenders, they do regulate behaviours in public spaces. The question, then, is whether this represents another way of policing cities and enforcing peace and order, not performed explicitly by criminal justice professionals or directly by the community, but instead by new practitioners attuned to their neighbourhoods (Maillard & Faget, 2002; Roché, 2002).

These practitioners, also called 'mediators', are thought of by their sponsors as intermediary actors between public institutions and civil society and may reinforce community cohesion within the public (Baillergeau, 2008). They are associated with the idea of strengthening ties both within neighbourhoods and between people living in these neighbourhoods and public institutions. They are supposed to help bridging the gap between institutions and underprivileged populations, as well as fostering ties within neighbourhoods. In various countries – especially in England, where policies have been influenced by neo-communitarian thinking – this debate has been linked to the need for cohesive communities, able to defend themselves from crime (Crawford, 2006). Since these actors usually are mere intermediaries, they are not endowed with specific competences and depend on other institutions and professions to deliver actual services. A closely related issue is their ability to integrate local security partnerships (see below).

2.2.2. *Regulating Public Places and Tackling Low-Level Disorders*

To fulfil their missions, these mediators must build relationships with the local population and make themselves both accessible and visible on the street. The first basic rule is to avoid displaying 'bad' relationships in the public space – i.e. direct ties with the police. Not only should public displays of complicity be avoided, but nightwatchers should strive to stand out from the police in their appearance and attitudes, always emphasizing their affiliation to the municipality and their 'serving the community' spirit.

They have to engage with a huge variety of cultural and social backgrounds. The skills and mind-sets required for establishing contact with a homeless man who does not speak French, explaining what their job involves to a passer-by, or trying to make contact with indifferent or even hostile youths from ethnic minorities are

extremely varied. It is by using various resources, drawn mainly from personal experience (charm and charisma, linguistic and cultural proximity, authority conferred by age, performing minor favours, shared tastes, humour, etc.) that these mediators manage – with greater or lesser ease – to make contact with the public. Clearly, these mediators' individual attributes (ranging from their ethnic origin to the neighbourhood they were born in) are an integral part of this process, as these attributes are often shared with the public (Divay, 2004). What all these skills have in common is an overarching ability to adapt to conditions on the field, detect potential sticking points, and find the right register, which will vary according to both the circumstances and the available repertoire of resources. This involves constant juggling between proximity and distance: knowing how to foster a certain friendliness with young people on the one hand, while avoiding any overfamiliarity on the other. The fact that these skills are difficult to 'institutionalize' and 'professionalize' raises the question of how mediators are trained: while they do benefit from a three-month course that includes modules on conflict management, the gap between the content of the training course and the skills actually required on the field is a source of concern.

On this basis, these actors provide a service which consists in regulating and monitoring public spaces. Three major aspects of their activity can be distinguished. Firstly, their continuous patrolling and the high visibility offered by their uniforms mean they offer a calming presence in public spaces at times of day that can be a source of unease for the wider population. Some areas known for being drug-trafficking spots or high-risk zones are identified in which they must provide this visible and reassuring public presence.

Second, they monitor public spaces, especially looking for signs of physical decay, thus enabling public bodies to remain responsive with regard to degradations. A significant part of their patrols is spent identifying litter 'hotspots' and broken facilities, and sending this information, on a daily basis, to competent municipal services. This activity also means that mediators pass on some general information about the state of the neighbourhood, exchanging with partners about potential public order disturbances, circulating specific information about local nuisances, reporting such environmental blemishes as unauthorized dumps, and so forth.

Finally, the emphasis on compliance with rules, which Sebastian Roché (2002) describes as respect for 'usage rules' (rules taken for granted regarding usage of public spaces) or for 'order maintenance' is at the heart of their repertoire of actions. Their tasks include intervening at skate-parks to keep the noise level down; accompanying young female students or elderly people who don't feel safe; maintaining a dissuasive presence in sensitive areas at problematic hours; reminding people of the rules that apply in public spaces; mediating conflicts taking place in public places. Such are the night-time watchers' main activities, as far as regulating the public space is concerned.

Given the particularly tense scene in some of these neighbourhoods, with the police circulating mostly in motor vehicles, night-time correspondents constitute a response located between non-response (authorities making no move despite repeated requests from residents) and over-reaction (police using violence over

minor incidents). Their interventions aim at making sure that the rules for using public spaces are respected, so that these – often very heterogeneous – spaces can be attended by all kinds of people. At the very least, they facilitate the coexistence of different ways of using public space, and at best they help weaving a social fabric by making contact with somewhat marginalised groups such as the homeless, not to mention the isolated, such as some elderly people. No doubt their action can only be successful provided they achieve the difficult reconciliation of these two terms – making sure the rules are respected without being perceived as pure law enforcement officers. Whatever the case may be, such success will always remain precarious.

2.2.3. An Uncertain Position

These new practitioners are struggling to establish a clear role for themselves in the urban environment, for reasons related to both the nature of the situations they have to deal with (e.g. major confrontations between residents and young people; conflicts over the use of some facilities) and their scope for action. Four uncertainties may be noted.

First of all, their position is an ambiguous one. The line between 'doing nothing' and 'doing too much' is a fine one to tread, especially in Paris, where the security field appears rather crowded – from National police officers to Paris municipal security officers through the agents in charge of the surveillance of social housing estates, not to mention social educators. For instance, several facilities managers have mentioned that they do not call the *correspondants de nuit* when there is a problem, either because it doesn't occur to them, or because they feel that this role should be performed by other bodies, within a logic that may be stated as follows: 'If it isn't serious, I take care of it, and if it's serious, I call in the police or the City security officers'.

Secondly, we know that these areas are beleaguered by significant generational, social or even ethnic divisions, and that, therefore, expectations towards public authorities differ greatly. This means that, even in areas where mediators are successful in establishing solid, peaceful day-to-day contact with disaffected young people on the streets, their work is not viewed favourably by some of the local residents who observe their actions and consider that mediators do not put enough distance between themselves and young people, leading to overfamiliarity. Their social proximity with parts of the public may in fact contribute to their structural professional uncertainty. In other words, remembering the distinctions made in the introduction, we might say they have difficulties in developing 'bridging social capital': rarely able to favour connections between generations or between cultural and ethnic groups, they don't foster mutual understanding between groups of people with contradictory expectations. In fact, mediators stand on a tightrope, surrounded by territorial antagonisms that must be dealt with.

The third of these uncertainties pertains to the difficult task of mediation itself, which involves enforcing rules without resorting to coercion. It could be said that mediators exercise a rather fragile authority, being typically faced with only one

alternative: reprimanding, albeit unsuccessfully (e.g. when someone rides a scooter in a pedestrian area), or not reprimanding (e.g. by not asking someone to turn down loud music that is annoying residents) so as not to jeopardize good relationships that may have taken a great deal of effort to establish. This difficulty is even more pronounced in places affected by relatively long-standing antisocial behaviour problems (e.g. sports facilities, public gardens, social-housing areas plagued with a mistrust of public authorities). In extremely tense situations, intervening to enforce a rule is not an easy matter if one does not have the official authority to sanction antisocial or criminal behaviour. Mediators are faced with a cruel dilemma. On the one hand, being entrusted with more enforcement powers (for instance to give tickets) would consolidate their authority, potentially at the cost of being seen as agents of repression. On the other hand, the lack of any coercive powers leads to their being perceived as useless, powerless, and not respected by the public, which some of them often complain about.

The fourth issue is related to partnerships. As mentioned earlier, these actors are mainly intermediaries, producing information for other actors, establishing contacts between the public and social services, etc. A central issue is therefore their ability to integrate local partnerships (Terpstra, 2008). While some arrangements do exist and conflictual situations are few and far between, cooperation remains low and at least partly asymmetric, and relationships are largely based on avoidance. Typical information exchanges occur at a level of generality that cannot foster any collective strategy. The police never direct noise complaints toward night correspondents, who in turn very rarely inform the police of failed attempts at mediation. Such is the predicament facing these new players: having to cooperate with professions whose mandate is clearer and accreditation long established, mediators actually tend to work in their shadow (Demazière, 2004).

3. New Trends Towards the Demonopolization of Legitimate Violence. Is Pluralization Further Eroding the Public Police Monopoly?

3.1. Definitions and Issue Framing

Private security boundaries have been blurred to the point that the field now potentially includes all policing activities, ranging from for-profit to private non-profit to purely volunteer policing. It also includes public/private hybrids, which might be labelled a 'policing mix'. In their assessment of the private policing concept, Kempa, Carrier, Wood and Shearing (1999) reassess the discovery of the private sector in North America based on the studies of Farnell and Shearing (1977) and Spitzer and Scull (1977). These works are described as a shock for liberal thinkers, whose basic assumption is that government should take responsibility for public safety and security. In the liberal view, security should be equally distributed under government auspices and through public mechanisms. In the U.S., the initial research focused on formal private policing organizations, with men in uniform on

the payroll of private companies. This triggered a debate about which organizations should be categorized as providing policing.

Another approach of private security emerged a few years later. Reacting to the narrow definition of the early U.S. studies, Bayley and Shearing (1996) later expanded the concept of private policing so as to include all non-paid forms of crime prevention in the community, including vigilantism and public-private partnerships. In today's terminology, the expanded definition of private policing would be labelled 'plural policing'. De Waard (1999) unveiled and measured the importance of for-profit policing. Despite stark differences across E.U. countries, he observed a growth of the private security sector in Europe. While Europe is nowhere near the U.S. or South Africa in terms of its level of privatization, the fact that it is not immune to privatization is interesting since the E.U. is composed of firmly established, ancient nation-states, with large public forces centrally or locally organized (very often at sub-state level).

The expansion of for-profit security is noticeable in several domains in France, ranging from cash/valuables in transit services (armoured-car transport of cash for banks, art pieces for museums ...) to the securing of privately-used buildings or publicly-used facilities (airports, train stations, shopping malls, see above). While private guards are typically tasked with securing the entrance of premises, other forms of private or public-private mix initiatives take place at the local level, often called 'mediation' (see above) and under the auspices of City Hall or of public housing and mass transit agencies.

How does France in general – and the problem of order maintenance in the French public space in particular – figure in the discussion of 'government vs. private entities in the design and distribution of security in society'? Is any 'demonopolization' of legitimate violence (Roché, 2002) taking place in France through privatization and pluralization? Privatization may be depicted as a collapse of our political organization under neoliberal attacks – and as such, denounced by academics (Nogala & Sack, 1999) –, but also as a pluralization of security providers (Crawford et al., 2005).

In France, the regulation of small disorders and petty crime is usually distributed under the auspices of local government or public service agencies by agents that do not belong to a well-established professions, such as the night watchers described above. In our examples, they contributed to pacifying public places, as opposed to imposing heavy-handed policing by the uniformed police. Although the scope of such mediation practices is not exactly known, case studies show that they can be found in many major French cities. The French case is therefore not one of pure privatization in the sense of non-government organizations assuming for-profit responsibility of public safety. Neither is it about professionals of security understood as police officers carrying out investigations or managing crowds. Rather, it is about the emergence of mediators or peacekeepers who might become full-blown policing professionals in the longer run, should that trend go uninterrupted. It is also about restructuring in-house security services so that agents reassure clients. Finally, vigilantism remains small-scale and episodic (even non-existent in the field research we conducted in Paris). The notion that communities, and therefore community members, should be strong and defend themselves is not common

in France, where public authorities even have trouble mobilizing neighbours in neighbourhood watch schemes[5]. Limited research suggests that the scope of vigilantism is limited in France and possibly in Southern Europe. While instances of vigilantism were punctually observed after large rioting events, they did not spread to other neighbourhoods or cities and did not last beyond a couple of months.

Notions of privatization and pluralization are difficult to define, in part because the meaning of these words tends to change over time. Nonetheless, our conceptualization for France seems to break apart from the U.S. literature published over the last decade. France does not experience tensions between central or local government and vigilant citizens or private firms, but rather:

a) a new division of labour between central and local government; local government increasing its influence and tending to redefine both how public order needs to be addressed (increased physical presence on the streets, conflict resolution, informing the public about risks), and the personnel who carry these new missions (mediators rather than police officers);

b) private companies tending to deliver 'public services' in mass private properties, with policies aimed at reassuring their clients.

The U.S. and Europe differ greatly in how plural policing is organized, and various countries in Europe also vary significantly, while western continental European countries seem to share a lot. However, at a higher level of generality and when it comes to political symbols and imagery, common ground does seem to exist between the U.S. and Europe (including France) as far as *issue framing* is concerned.

The U.S. debate about the meaning of privatization can be best illustrated by the discussion between Brian Forst and Peter Manning (1999). This debate occurred at two different levels: the symbolic and the service dimension. Forst, an economist, came in defence of efficacy/efficiency and accountability through competition and market forces. Peter Manning, a political scientist, advocated the uniqueness of the policing sector and the relationship between coercion and government. According to Forst, the key factor to decide which policing mix is best should be 'value for money' (what service for what cost?), whereas for Manning, the symbolism of (good) public police should prevail: only a public body can aim at justice and cohesiveness.

In France, the public debate also hinges on the 'nature' of 'internal security' and 'policing', albeit in a slightly different way. Such a symbolic approach does exist, and advocates of the public view claim that security should be enforced by the government in charge – as part of the so-called 'regalian' duties[6]. Others, in the name of cost efficiency, push toward the development of private activities and proper regulation mechanisms at the national as well as the E.U. level – openly so

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5   The '*voisin vigilant*' (alert neighbour) scheme was launched in 2006 in rural areas, and was supported by a directive in June 2011. No comprehensive evaluation of this scheme has been carried out. The head of its national association boasts membership of 2000 municipalities (probably small ones in rural France, out of a total of 36,000 in France) in the media (see http://www.bfmtv.com/societe/securite-voisins-vigilants-surveillent-quartier-605578.html).

6   '*Régalien*' is a difficult to translate word that is associated with the rise of the central authority and powers of the King of France over local or regional warlords. The concept includes the right to exercise the sole legitimate violence through the means of the army, the judiciary and the police.

since the release of a White paper by the then French Minister of Interior Michèle Alliot-Marie, with a foreword by the President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy (INHESJ, 2008), a trend that was to be pursued later by socialist Minister of Interior Manuel Valls, see for example his speech of November 2013[7].

3.2. The Theoretical and Practical Importance of the Distribution of Order Maintenance in the Public Space

After acknowledging apparent similarities (in the framing of the issue of privatization) and dissimilarities (in relation with the actual role of central government and the involvement of citizens) between countries, we need to focus on why a new model of policing is emerging in France.

Why are public police authorities not stepping up in reaction to the rise of private and semi-private forms of policing? The explanation is twofold. First, and obviously, the fiscal crisis has restricted government investments in public security, and the subsequent lack of manpower has forced the private sector to buy its own security to compensate for the shortcomings of the official police. This explanation is certainly valid, but only partially.

The other explanation is that both private guards in private spaces and mediators in public spaces offer new styles of public space regulation that strongly differ from police practices—a different policing style. Most private guards are unarmed, and mediators are *never* armed. They patrol mainly on foot. Their activity relies on contact and dialogue with the public. Use of force during their activity is almost absent. Mediators, as suggested by their job title, seek to establish a relationship with the public, by mobilising relational skills. The ethnic identity of agents may be one of the aspects of their recruitment and action, even though this is denied officially (Bonnet, 2014): they often belong to the same minority ethnic groups as the public they should regulate. All these aspects depart significantly from the characteristics of the French public police. In a nutshell, private guards or mediators are not merely a cheaper version of police officers: they are qualitatively and symbolically different, and they enforce a different type of security, more attuned to the needs and priorities of customers (Bonnet, 2006; 2008; Wakefield, 2003).

The emergence of these new jobs affects police forces as a profession. Mediators take on activities of street patrolling, daily contact with the public, and order maintenance, all of which could be performed by the police. As a result, police officers, who also have to fulfil bureaucratic and procedural duties, often end up filling out paperwork relative to operations carried out by others. Therefore, French pluralization contributes to opening up police forces as an organization: although coordination with mediators might be weak, these new jobs do contribute to making the production of security more diverse and imply that the police have to negotiate and exchange information with other actors. Another aspect is that it reinforces a

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7   http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Archives/Archives-Manuel-Valls-mai-2012-avril-2014/Interventions-du-Ministre/Discours-aux-forces-de-securite, accessed 5 January 2015.

tendency towards the bureaucratization of the police and tends to widen the gap with the citizenry.

How do these various actors coordinate their action on the field? Do they exchange information, define the limits of their respective roles in a more or less explicit manner? While conflicts do happen – police may criticise private guards for not disclosing information, mediators may criticize the police for not offering them support –, they *seldom* happen. While competition between these actors is limited, cooperation and shared strategies remain sporadic. While some networking procedures do exist (how and when to call the police, for instance) and some information does get exchanged (Parisian nightwatchers send daily reports to their partners, including the police), relationships remain weakly integrated. Police officers may sometimes be wary of private guards, whom they regard as not entirely trustworthy, especially when they are from a minority and perceived as too close to the population they have to police.

The regulation of public behaviours in mass private property and enforcement of order maintenance in public spaces by non-public police personnel should attract theoretical attention, and has done so to a certain extent. Two overlapping questions can be raised here: What are the theoretical implications of such a shift on the legitimation of state power? And how to explain such a rise in continental E.U. countries such as France, that do not lack a strong state backbone, as opposed to post-communist Russia or post-apartheid South Africa, where the private security boom finds an easy explanation?

What can be observed in France is not only a pluralization of policing in the sense that private companies perform a 'public duty' (a duty that used to be the monopoly of government agents, i.e. civil servants), but also a 'de-police-ation' process: work that used to be done by the police is being taken over by agents which are neither central nor local police and sometimes not police at all, such as the French mediators. They are non-police actors, working outside of police organizations (municipal or national), possibly under the joint management of mayors and public utility companies (public transportation, housing).

The theoretical reading of the expansion of non-public policing is therefore twofold: central government is pulling back, and police forces are not the only means for ensuring tranquillity at the local level. In the context of southern continental Europe, this is not a benign remark. In fact, in these particular national contexts, the largest policing forces are not local, but national by status, i.e. they are affiliated to the central government and the agents are statutory national civil servants who operate under national laws. While security is almost universally conceived of as a kind of social right to be distributed under government auspices and by public agents, crucially, in France its distribution is centrally designed and orchestrated, as opposed to locally organised in other nations, such as the U.S. or the U.K., where public policing forces are mainly local (municipal in the U.S., regional in the U.K.).

This aspect should fundamentally inform any interpretation of such frequently referred-to phenomena as 'pluralization' or the 'multiplication of agencies'. Obviously, 'a complex of interlaced systems of agencies' can be observed everywhere (Kemp *et al.*, 1999, 199). But expressing such principles in highly general terms and

contexts makes them unclear and uncertain in their application. What matters as much as the status of the organizations (public or private) are the auspices under which they work (public or private, local or national).

Taking into account the governance, missions, and staffing of local security mechanisms might shed light on these issues. First of all, if pluralization is defined by an increase in either the number of organizations that are assigned to producing security in a given place, or by the types of agencies in charge of delivering such a service, then France is definitely embarked on a pluralization process. However, the pluralization that is occurring in France when it comes to public spaces has a dual meaning that we mentioned above: it is both a pluralization in terms of the balance between central and local leadership under public auspices on the one hand, and a hybridization of penal and non-penal approaches (and therefore police and non-police personnel) on the other.

The rise of local leadership at the level of municipalities has been one of the striking trends since the early 1980s. It is backed up by the decentralization of a whole series of former central government prerogatives, such as public transportation, social benefits allowance, roads, primary and secondary education – even if policing is not among them. Mayors have highlighted the political importance of daily security (the deputy mayor is often in charge of this dossier), have become players in local prevention of crime along with the police and the courts (Douillet & Maillard, 2008), have strengthened their organizational capacities – revamping organizational charts; creating security directorates, prevention directorates, prevention and security directorates; increasing municipal police headcount and hiring other personnel in charge of public peace; mobilizing technology, often including CCTV (Roché, 2004) ... In addition, and importantly, mayors have shifted the border between policing and non-policing tasks for the purpose of order maintenance (see above the observed renewal of 'policing styles', if we may say so for non-police agents). This does not seem to be a 'French' approach, in the sense of an idiosyncratic way of dealing with urban disorders. Instead, it may be interpreted as the plural way in which European cities have dealt with petty urban disorders, mobilizing a vast array of both repressive and non-repressive resources.

4. Conclusion. Securing Public Places: Demonopolization with Limited Privatization

Rather than explaining the rise of private security in terms of personnel or turnover[8], we have focused on how the security of public places or quasi-public spaces is governed in France. We have done so because of the centrality of spaces open to public

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8   This 'can be categorized into six viable explanatory factors: (1) rising crime and related problems, (2) growth of mass private property, (3) economic rationalities, (4) government policy toward private sector participation, (5) an overburdened police force and (6) professionalization of private security', according to Van Steden, 2007, 35.

in political debates. Do our observations and analysis feed the interpretation that France is undergoing such related processes as demonopolization and pluralization?

While we do conclude on the existence of overall demonopolization and pluralization processes in France, we still believe a closer look is required. That pluralization is happening can be seen in the rapid growth of private companies that are assuming a new role by servicing new needs or taking over some police duties, although not in public places (streets, parks and the like) so far. These are times of fiscal restraint, which is likely to put more pressure on all form of governments in the short run, as has been the case in the recent past. However, demonopolization mainly impacts the central government, which ends up having to share with local authorities what was believed to be its prerogatives and responsibilities. Central demonopolization is accompanied by a reinforcement of local public authorities, in particular for managing the public spaces of large metropolitan areas. Therefore, the overall picture is more complex than a mere privatization shift from public to private, and includes *a move from the central to the local level*. In addition, local authorities tend to reinterpret local security in 'non police-personnel only' terms, making use of non-police personnel to undertake typical peacekeeping missions in public places. Pluralization happens at the organizational level (central and local governments) as well as in terms of means to an end (tranquillity). From this perspective, the French situation would be close to what Terpstra & al. (2013) call the 'local government as the coordinator': municipalities have reinforced their resources to regulate public spaces in a social and political context dominated by a growing concern for low-level physical and social disorders. To what extent an actor clearly playing a coordinator role will be established remains to be seen. In French localities, coexistence is often observed with a combination of central police personnel (a peculiarity of centralized policing systems), local police personnel, and local non-police personnel – the latter two reporting to the mayor. In the eyes of the national police, municipal officials do not enjoy sufficient legitimacy to act as 'the' coordinators.

On the whole, this gives a rather complicated image of the current pluralization of policing in France[9]. This conclusion tends to contend against the view, at least in France, of a neoliberal tide washing off the shores of the public design and provision of daily security, without acknowledging slow and major transformations in the provision of public security. The dynamics of Europeanization on the one hand and decentralization on the other are currently contributing to major reorganizations of the policing landscape in Europe. It is therefore no surprise that European conceptualizations come off as more complex than U.S. ones.

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9   See, for the case of Paris, where plural policing oscillates between monopoly, delegation, coordination, and joint action, Maillard and Zagrodzki (2015).

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