

Jennifer Wood, Benoît Dupont, eds.

Democracy, Society and the Governance of Security

Cambridge University Press, 2006, 304 pp.

\$US 34.99 paper (0-521-61642-5), \$US 75.00 hardcover (0-521-85092-4)

Criminologist and sociologist Clifford Shearing only contributes one paper to this edited collection, but his presence is apparent on almost every page. A longstanding leader in critical policing studies, Shearing's work in recent years has become notably more proselytizing. Not content to analyze and critique existing security arrangements, he and a group of colleagues have sought to reconfigure policing scholarship as the study of how security is governed. Specifically, they advocate the embrace of a model that attends to nodes within wider networks of security. Each node is characterized by discrete configurations of mentalities, technologies, institutional arrangements and resources. The ultimate aim is to align these attributes in such a way as to provide equitable and just forms of security. Key to this formulation is that no particular node should be prioritized in attempts to understand security dynamics or in pragmatic efforts to foster security. It is an approach that effectively and self-consciously displaces the state from its longstanding privileged position as exclusive security provider.

Shearing's contribution extends his ongoing elaboration of the 'nodal governance' orientation. He pays particular attention to the philosophical lineage of thinking about the state that runs from Hobbes through Weber, culminating in the current propensity for researchers to be blind to the existence and possibilities of private or quasi-private security arrangements. His advocacy of nodal governance is not simply a call to embrace a particular analytical orientation as he also claims that the most promising (or perhaps, the only realistic) way to secure and empower disadvantaged constituencies under neo-liberalism entails realistic efforts to capitalize on the constellation of public and private security possibilities inherent in local security nodes.

The eight other contributions to the volume are authored by leading researchers in critical police scholarship and studies of governance. While not every contributor is explicitly aligned with the nodal governance orientation, all are attuned to the remarkable heterogeneity in contemporary policing and security. Consequently, the volume is admirably coherent, although when read cover-to-cover there is a certain degree of repetition. Peter Manning's chapter provides a comparative ethnographic analysis of policing the Salt Lake City Olympics and the 2004 Democratic National Convention held in Boston. Dupont sketches a welcome Bourdieu-inspired analysis of struggles within the field of security, while Monique Sparks and Andrew Goldsmith combine to examine democratic policing in South Africa. Also notable is Adam Crawford's argument that marketization processes have contributed to security increasingly becoming a 'club good.' Scott Burris considers the broad health implications of crime, policing and security. He advocates a greater role for the police in health policy which might entail front-line officers collecting health data, analyzing that data or even directly providing health services. While some of his proposals might prove beneficial, Burris' suggestion that the police could distribute clean syringes and condoms exposes a certain naiveté about how most western policing agencies would likely respond to such proposals.

All of these pieces stand on their own, but the exchange between Ian Loader and Neil Walker and Les Johnston is undoubtedly the most intriguing in terms of accentuating the assumptions and lingering questions about nodal governance. Loader and Walker's co-authored piece provides an overview of the suspicion within policing and security scholarship about the ability of the state to foster progressive or even coherent forms of governance. Part of their argument involves

interrogating the 'left Hayekian' assumptions in the nodal governance model which often appear in critiques of the state for being alternatively inefficient or incoherent in directly providing security. Loader and Walker take exception to this portrait and provide a contrasting position arguing that the state is not simply one among many equal nodes, but is a privileged entity best able to foster democratic conditions and equitable forms of security. Les Johnston provides a direct rejoinder to these critiques. While Johnston's response is somewhat of an afterthought to his chapter on transnational security governance, it is nonetheless a spirited defence of the nodal governance approach. Readers interested in the possibilities or desirability of nodal governance will undoubtedly be drawn to this exchange.

Jennifer Wood's chapter accentuates methodological considerations. As she notes, empirical studies of nodal governance have been thin on the ground. Moreover, our accounts of the successes and failures of these initiatives have typically been produced by proponents of nodal governance. As such, they have not been subject to the type of uncompromising sustained critical scrutiny that is a hallmark of the police studies tradition with which many of the contributors to this volume are associated.

Wood's detailed accounting of methodological considerations also inadvertently accentuates an additional difficulty in the prospect of generalizing the nodal governance approach. Before concrete policy proposals can be developed in any setting Wood believes that researchers must first comprehensively map all of the public, private and quasi-public actors that help provide security in that context. Detailed quantitative and qualitative information should be collected on each actor's knowledges, capabilities, resources, desired outcomes, measures of success and relations with all of the other actors in a network. This should be supplemented by an analysis of the mentalities of governance of each of these actors, including a detailed description of how access to their raw materials are regulated, how education, training and licensing are regulated, how transport modes/vehicles are regulated, and much more. The sheer scope of this epistemological project suggests that nodal governance seeks to be omniscient. Unfortunately, even with a small army of highly coordinated researchers such 'preliminary' research would likely take years to accomplish, and would culminate in a voluminous but unprioritized archive. Hence, notwithstanding the undeniable appeal in the call to attend to the particularities of local contexts and the refusal to privilege any node, advocates of nodal governance can also be frustratingly unspecific as to what exactly researchers, activists and community groups should attend to in attempting to enhance security. This lack of specificity ultimately encourages the type of colossal data collection exercise advocated by Wood.

None of this takes anything away from the volume. It is a top-tier collection of papers that will become a recurrent reference point in ongoing discussions about security, policing and governance.

Kevin D. Haggerty
Sociology and Criminology
University of Alberta
kevin.haggerty@ualberta.ca

Kevin Haggerty has published widely on policing, risk, governance, surveillance and the sociology of statistics. He and Richard Ericson have just published a new edited collection with the University of Toronto Press entitled *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility*. His review of *High-Profile Crimes: When Legal Cases Become Social Causes*, by Lynn S. Chancer recently appeared in *CJS Online*.

<http://www.cjsonline.ca/reviews/securitygov.html>

October 2006

© Canadian Journal of Sociology Online

CJS Online