

**SENSE OF PURPOSE AND RESPONSIVENESS:
CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE JAPANESE
KOBAN FOR THE SÃO PAULO STATE MILITARY
POLICE (SENSE DE PROPÓSITO E CAPACIDADE DE
RESPOSTA: CONTRIBUIÇÕES CULTURAIS DO KOBAN
JAPONÊS PARA A POLÍCIA MILITAR DO ESTADO DE
SÃO PAULO)**

FERRAGI, Cesar Alves¹

Abstract: This article explores some the disorganizations and reorganizations happening inside the PMESP's organizational culture, after the adoption of community policing practices based on the Japanese Koban System. The emergence of a new (democratic) order, confronting the old (repressive) one, posed incongruent challenges on officer's self-perceptions and daily routines. Many started responding by means of personal effort, performing social service activities. However, the idea of being a "social firefighter", searching for the solution of deep social inequalities, seems to contain in itself a promise that many officers, especially sergeants, cannot accomplish. Some cultural traits from the Japanese model propose different angles to observe such dynamics. They suggest that a sense of purpose at the front lines of police work – and group cohesion that emanates from it – represents a strategic concern for the PMESP's, on its endeavor towards becoming a more responsive institution.

Key Words: Koban System, PMESP, organizational culture, sense of purpose, responsiveness

Resumo: Este artigo explora algumas das desorganizações e reorganizações dentro da cultura organizacional da PMESP, após a adoção de práticas de policiamento comunitário com base no Sistema Koban japonês. O surgimento de uma nova ordem (democrática), confrontando uma velha (repressiva), implicou desafios sobre a auto-percepções de policiais e suas rotinas diárias. Muitos começaram a responder por meio de esforço pessoal, realizando atividades do tipo serviço social. No entanto, a idéia de ser um "bombeiro social", buscando resolver profundas desigualdades sociais, parece conter em si uma promessa na qual muitos praças, especialmente os sargentos, não conseguem realizar. Alguns traços culturais do modelo japonês propõem diferentes ângulos para observar esta dinâmica. Eles sugerem que um senso de propósito na linha de frente do trabalho policial – e a coesão de grupo que dele emana – representa uma preocupação

¹ Graduado em Administração Pública pela FGV-EAESP, mestre e doutor em Administração Pública pela ICU – *International Christian University*, localizada em Tóquio, Japão. Atualmente leciona relações internacionais na ESPM e trabalha no GGI - Gabinete de Gestão Integrada - da Secretaria Municipal de Segurança Urbana de São Paulo. ferragi@gmail.com

estratégica para a PMESP, em seu contínuo esforço para converter-se numa instituição mais ágil.

Palavras-chave: Sistema Koban, PMESP, cultura organizacional, senso de propósito, capacidade de resposta

1. Methodology

Along three years of PhD studies in Tokyo, the author went to São Paulo twice, in 2009 and 2010, during 4 and 3 months respectively, and started to combine a series of interviews of police officers, JICA officials, and external people involved in different stages of this process between Brazil and Japan. This ‘oral²’ knowledge allowed the author to realize some important recent changes taking place inside the organization, especially considering the role of the front line officers – notably the sergeants – along the consolidation of community policing practices. On the second visit to Brazil, the author redirected interviews and started to collect narratives of key people inside the corporation, considering its recent developments on the modality of koban. The criteria used was to pick individuals who had actively participated on the process of adapting and implanting the koban model in São Paulo, from its conception moment until its most recent evaluations. As the author started to understand the PMESP, it was essential to comprehend the development of community policing practices under a holistic approach. The concept of zoom lens, suggested by Neuman (2004), was applied beginning broadly on the characteristics of Pre-koban Phase locations (1997 – 2005) and then focusing increasingly narrowly on the specific case of a few koban-pilot projects that entered a Koban Phase (2005 – today). More than focusing on the ‘community voice’, this research focuses on the ‘internal voices’ of the PMESP. Because community policing proposes the re-construction of officers’ self-perceptions, it was important to consent them the time and space for free speech. The techniques of individual and simple group interviews were used, aiming to understand how koban-based practices relate to PMESP’s organizational life. In both cases, because this is an exploratory research, opened interviews were used. Usually the author started with an open question and allowed the individual (or individuals) to spontaneously express their points of view.

2. Problem statement

During the 1990s the military police of many Brazilian states launched community-policing programs; this movement seemed to gain momentum in Brazil (FRÜHLING, 2006) and has been wildly reported by the media as an innovation in the forms of performing policing. But can the police in this country overcome strong social inequalities – poverty, income distribution, unemployment,

² Thompson (1998) outlines that the oral history of institutions contains significant knowledge in respect to their institutional developments.

among others – through the adoption of community-policing programs? A common institutional response by the São Paulo state Military Police (or PMESP – Polícia Militar do Estado de São Paulo) has been the adoption of community policing practices from the Japanese koban system (neighborhood police-based system), as an approach to respond to urgent social demands.

This paper discusses the lessons learned from a few koban pilot-projects implemented in São Paulo since 2005, under the rubric of Community Base of Safety³ (BCS, or Base Comunitária de Segurança) and focuses on how community policing (and the koban) affected the ways in which police officers perceive their roles in Brazil. This is important because one underlying problem, since the first practices started, has been the definition and scope of policing activities, especially at the operational levels, as expresses a sergeant in São Paulo: “Sometimes I feel that the police assume [way] too many responsibilities. At the police post it is common for our team to start a policing task and end up performing a social service, such as driving a pregnant woman to a hospital” (personal interview, 2009). His words indicate an abiding problem: for many police forces, not only in Brazil but also in other Latin American countries, community policing means tackling deeper social inequality issues, often stemming from entrenched poverty.

Police forces reproduce inequality inside their own organizational structure, in multidimensional ways – income, race, gender and birthplace, and this affects the institution’s culture as well as its ability to translate community policing into egalitarian and responsive practices. In São Paulo, deeper social inequalities impose a range of demands on the police, re-shaping PMESP’s self-perceptions and how it relates to the society in which it operates. A common institutional posture, especially before the introduction of the koban system, has been the enforcement of social service related activities. The idea is that solving social problems such as poverty, education, and unemployment, for example, will eventually reduce crime rates. Nevertheless, multidimensional features of inequality in Brazil hide contradictions within policing as they keep social perceptions at the Community Base of Safety – the front lines – incomplete or “misrecognized” (BOURDIEU, 1977). Police officers are expected to overcome systemic social problems by means of personal effort. As a result, frustration is apparent and widespread among officers, since they can tackle some but not all societal problems. They start responding to the demands of other institutional fields, such as public health or education, which are not the scope of policing (FERRAGI, 2010; 2011). And this creates multiple problems.

The Japanese koban organization would seem to provide solutions to some of the problems above, by re-directing PMESP’s policies towards concrete locally

³ Koban system in São Paulo indicates the way to realize community policing using activities of Koban called Base Comunitária de Segurança (BCS) and Chuzaisho called Base Comunitária de Segurança Distrital (BCSD).

based actions to prevent crime. It essentially proposes a situational (not social) crime prevention approach⁴. The idea is that offenders and victims meet when there is a “situation” that allows crime to happen. If these situations are avoided, or put under surveillance, the chances of victimization considerably decrease. This shift clarifies the role of officers, as they start prioritizing actual community policing practices instead of a variety of social demands. Such consideration is relevant for countries in the Global South, where community policing is challenged by deep social inequalities. It must be thought of not only as a tool to fight crime, but also as a model for the improvement of police-community relations and the treatment of basic human rights. It proposes a co-joint work among police and local organizations to help them look after their own risk management⁵. This method substitutes frustration and arbitrary use of force by transparency and responsive application of law, contributing, as a result, to the development of more democratic society. But would this work in Brazil?

This question is difficult to answer. The Japanese koban system seems to empower officers to get involved with community related institutions. In institutional terms, as a mean to justify their role and existence in the modern democratic Brazilian society, PMESP’s internal dynamics and processes seem to have transitioned towards a more open, accountable and competent organization on the task of performing neighborhood police-based practices. In other words, the PMESP has become more outward looking, a movement that represents “a further dimension of performance” (OECD, 2006:9). Such responsive moves are affecting PMESP’s daily organizational life, in which there is a “general acceptance of greater empowerment of clients, rather than having all key decisions made by the supplier” (OECD, 2006:16). In our case, the clients are the citizens living close to koban-pilot locations, and the suppliers are the police, mostly the front-line low ranking officers working at such places: privates, corporals and sergeants. During his fieldwork, the author observed that many PMESP’s officers recognize the koban model as a positive influence. But this question was still unanswered: Why are Brazilian officers proclaiming satisfaction within daily koban-based activities?

⁴ While Social Crime Prevention aims to prevent crimes by tackling the social rather than the physical environment (ICPC, 2010), Situational Crime Prevention “seeks to forestall the occurrence of crime, rather than to detect and sanction offenders. It seeks not to eliminate criminal or delinquent tendencies through improvement of society or its institutions, but merely to make criminal action less attractive to offenders” (CLARK, 1997:2). While this paper recognizes that reducing the motivation to offense is important, the author argues that the PMESP has put exacerbated efforts to alter social conditions and patterns of behavior in São Paulo – what generates frustration among officers.

⁵ Under a situational crime prevention approach, the police are not focused on the criminal justice system. Conversely, they moderate “public and private organizations and agencies — schools, hospitals, transit systems, shops and malls, manufacturing businesses and phone companies, local parks and entertainment facilities, pubs and parking lots — whose products, services and operations spawn opportunities for a vast range of different crimes” (CLARK, 1997:2).

3. Significance

The leadership of the PMESP has been actively working towards change. They want to form a “new police officer for the future”, not necessarily focusing on the current old generation, as outlined by a colonel (personal interview, 2010). This is also true for police forces in other Brazilian states. In June 2010 the author had the chance to interview a delegation of 25 Brazilian officers, from 12 different federative states, during a JICA seminar in Tokyo. They came as part of JICA’s technical cooperation on koban-based training. An interesting point is that none of them were colonels, but rather middle and lower ranking officers. Instead, middle rank officials, who will ascend to upper ranks, were selected to learn features of the Japanese koban system. “We are thinking about the future of the Brazilian police forces”, affirmed the coordinator of community policing courses at the National Public Security Secretariat (Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Pública – SENASP). He reinforced that “if we come to Japan it is because we believe on the effects of the Japanese koban system for Brazil (...) it is changing the way we do policing in the country” (personal interview, 2010). They predict that the police in Brazil will change in the future generations, when these young officers ascend to higher positions.

Consequently, the adoption of koban-based practices reinforces a progressive development and strengthens community policing not only in São Paulo, but also in Brazil. This study analyzes the subtleties and complexities of PMESP transition towards community policing. It is not its intention to make too large affirmations or claims about the future, but rather to outline the contradictions and clarifications derived from the institutionalization process of community policing and the adoption of koban-based practices by the PMESP. These findings occupy policy significance, not only to generate relevant knowledge for the PMESP itself, but also because since late 2008 another 11 metropolitan areas in Brazil started to adopt similar practices, in addition to three Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador and Guatemala (JICA website, 2011). If these police forces can learn the benefits and challenges derived from the São Paulo case, they will be able to start one step ahead on the task of adapting this Japanese modality⁶.

Correspondingly, the Brazilians and Japanese who started this cooperation were concerned about the crime situation in Brazil, and they must search for indicators so that the project is actually considered successful. But what this paper

⁶ Such issues are also very much linked to all of the Arab countries now struggling for more humane forms of government. They especially need to reform brutal police regimes into organizations that can serve as models for improvement of human rights and create constructive relationships between police and communities. Would something along the lines of São Paulo’s introduction of the koban police model work there?

argues in terms of significance is that, even if a substantial decrease on crime rates cannot be measured immediately, it will change the ways in which the police work and eventually this will change how officers interact with citizens – and how citizens interact with the police. When we turn to low ranking officers, it is observable that their daily routines imply constant interaction with people. They are not chasing criminals all the time; instead they are present in police posts, streets and events. Public perceptions about police work will not change from one day to another, neither from a year to another. It will take some time. But, over time, because the koban organization affects the way in which the PMESP thinks about itself, including self-perceptions by the ordinary sergeants, corporals and privates, this will change the way in which officers interact with local communities.

Finally, the reality in Japan and the background of the police in this country is very particular. There is a cultural support for Japanese officers to interact with citizens (AMES, 1981; McCARGO, 2004), but the current developments of Japanese society are quite challenging for the maintenance of such arrangement. The burden of the police is getting heavier, not only because the budget of the police is being cut, but also because society is changing. Amid a worsening crime situation in Japan, the reinforcement of the traditional crime deterrent functions of the koban system has currently become a hot topic. The Japanese media constantly reports cases of child abuse, domestic violence and other interpersonal conflicts. The Japanese police system presupposes this good police-community interaction to solve such cases. But in terms of this paper's significance, which is actually intriguing, is that this technical assistance is reciprocal: something can be learned from Brazil, a completely different country with distinctive developments and levels of crime. For example, Japanese officials are copying an idea from BCS Ranieri to construct small libraries at koban locations in Japan. What is unusual from the idea of policing in Japan is that the empowerment of police officers, even if it is still working on progress, represents a central point why community policing works or might work. It is an awareness that is not so present in Japan, but will be important in the future. Maybe in the last 50 to 100 years such understanding was not imperative because most people were law abiding, they would talk to policemen, and they would not consider policemen as alien or representative of an oppressive system – partly because the system has not been that oppressive. However, in order to keep society safe, many actors are involved. Most of them are invisible, such as neighbors, and represent a “collective capacity” (GOLDSTEIN, 2003:90) that is hard for the police to reproduce. In case of an assassination, for example, neighbors may know about the incident, as they can hear discussions or screams during the crime. The case of São Paulo expresses that community network is an essential feature for policing anywhere; police practices that involve other actors such as schoolteachers,

dentists, doctors, for example, tend to provide better results because if officers cannot get into citizens' houses, other people and organizations can. They end up playing the role of active collaborators with the police. Because Japanese society is changing, this empowerment of local police is something that Japan can learn from São Paulo.

4. The Pre-koban and Koban Phases

The notion of PMESP's evolution will be considered in this dissertation because it clarifies not only the organization's character but also that of the larger social system under construction in Brazil. An organization's "inner dynamics" are "the expression, in a quite matter-of-the-fact way, of a built-in push toward determinate change, a source of directionality in history – without prejudice to the idea that much change is a result of 'external' influences" (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:20-21). PMESP's brief history and turning points indicate external influences that significantly affected the police's internal dynamics and progressively pushed in the institutional movement for the adoption of community policing. In order to clarify the influence of koban-based practices on the institutionalization of community policing practices in São Paulo, this paper identifies the following time frames on PMESP's recent historical narrative, focusing on the last two:

1. Repressive phase: pre-1988 until the 1988 New Federal Constitution and its impact
2. Transitional phase: 1990 to 1997 – The Beginning of Community Policing
3. Pre-koban phase: 1997 to 2005 – The adoption of Community Policing programs
4. Koban phase: 2005 until today – The adoption of Koban practices in some locations

Before the koban system, the so-called 'philosophy of community policing' was 'orbiting' around São Paulo state (Pre-koban phase, 1997 – 2005). Community-policing posts were implemented without a clear and concrete set of practices. They lacked defined procedures, being limited by theoretical discussions and debates. Even if many police officers passed through training on community policing, and a few others acknowledged that it was an important 'new way' of framing police work, resistance to change, lack of understanding and misunderstanding were the most common observed results, especially at the local level – sergeants, corporals and privates (UCHIDA, 2007). Sergeants, who are the leaders among the lowest ranking officials, remarkably did not understand what community policing was. As a consequence, their subordinates – corporals and privates – were not empowered with practical standards of conducting daily

policing like practices.

Inside PMESP's hierarchy the Community Base of Safety, or BCS, represents the smallest unit and counts with the lowest ranking officials. There are few privates and corporals and one sergeant in each BCS, in increasing order of hierarchy. A central point of this article focuses on the key figure of sergeants. They are the leaders inside the lowest ranking structure, and represent a bridge between the front line voices and the higher (middle and upper ranking) levels of the PMESP. Because sergeants connect the voices between the top and the bottom of the institution, they are also the ones who absorb the contradictions between them, acting as a pillow or a "cushion" that softens the impact between these two worlds (UCHIDA, 2007:156).

After the Transitional Phase (1990 – 1997) and before the koban system was adopted, the philosophy of community policing circulated mostly among the upper echelons of the organization, even though not all of the upper ranking officials were convinced, nor middle or subaltern ranking ones. However, the main problem is that sergeants, who represent this dialogue between the top and the bottom of the institution, were very lost; they lacked a clear understanding of community policing. This happened, in part, because São Paulo's advance on community policing offered a structure for the search of new strategies that could function and, throughout "try and error", it would be verified if they would actually function (MASTROFSKI & UCHIDA, 1993). Mastrofski (1994) suggests that this problem should be tackled by a substantial increase on information production and the police's processing capacity⁷. A significant problem for the institutionalization of community policing has been the absence of descriptive data about daily operational processes, what characterized the organizational life at BCSs on the Pre-koban phase.

Under a rigid militaristic hierarchy, many sergeants prefer to merely reproduce orders from above, even if not fully understood, what eventually generates conflicts with the immediate subordinates and undermine their role of institutional interpreters. This still represents a challenge. It is common that an instruction considered an absurd by them, who follow orders from above, would eventually been imposed to corporals and privates. This generated tensions and an environment of mistrust among corporals and privates, who would consider sergeants as mere reproducers of orders. Sergeants, therefore, were confronted with the possibilities of being considered either loose or tight, depending on how they acted with their subordinates. Because they occupy a bridging position, they are part of the corporation's two worlds and, at the same time, they do not have their own space (UCHIDA, 2007). This factor has been adversely affecting the

⁷ Indeed, the capacity to examine problems, analyze them, search for alternatives and evaluate the results require a much deeper commitment on research and development by the PMESP, a challenge also observed in North America (GOLDSTEIN, 1990:161)

development process of their role and distinctiveness along the institutionalization process of community policing.

When the so-called koban system arrived in a few locations, Koban Phase (2005 – until today), it changed a lot such aspect, because it positively affected sergeants' understanding about community policing. This is a crucial point in the internal dynamics of PMESP's work. From this moment, sergeants at some koban pilot projects started to feel empowered, because they understood much more how to coordinate BCS activities. Because they received institutional support – a clear detailed list of activities to accomplish, a schedule to be planned, and periodic visits from Japanese and PMESP experts, for example – they became leaders who started empowering their subordinates. At the operational level, at least, the adoption of the koban seemed to encouraged new ways of looking at the nature and substance of community policing programs, and of considering their rationale inside PMESP' organizational life. As a consequence, it drove strategic issues into the open; it propelled koban-like locations to 'reinvent' themselves, bringing bottom up initiatives to the table and summing up this great reservoir of energy represented by sergeants and their subordinates. As a consequence, the knowledge about community policing at the lower levels of the PMESP increased a lot⁸.

More than suggesting that koban represents the right model for PMESP's endeavor towards responsiveness, this paper proposes different angles for analyzing the organization's contradictions, raising questions and posing reflections about the benefits and challenges of adopting the Japanese model. It is only in a framework of trust that knowledge of risk can be adequately understood and form the basis of effective community policing (ERICSON & HAGGERTY, 1997). Privacy, trust, surveillance, and risk supervision go hand in hand in monitoring the probabilities and possibilities of action by community policing practices in Brazil.

In PMESP's case, resistance on adopting community policing is clearly observable. From the beginning of its implementation, during the Pre-koban Phase (1997 – 2005), community policing was perceived like any other law or regulation. It was a very cold-hearted procedure that had to be followed, even if not fully understood by officers and citizens. But over the years, especially after the so-called koban system is introduced, there is a change on the internal structure of the PMESP. Police officers, especially the low ranking ones, start to commit to daily policing practices on a different way at some pilot projects. As much as officers also play a role – they put their uniforms and perform

⁸ Some authors might argue that the PMESP started developing a "community or locally-based crime prevention" strategy, which includes all those actions that "change the conditions in neighborhoods that influence crime, victimization, and the resulting insecurity" (ICPC, 2010:2).

appropriate conducts in a given society – their own expectations about such role has been affected. These low ranking officers started making suggestions to higher ranking officers, bringing ideas, participating on meetings, raising their own opinions and bringing people's concerns to the table.

In community policing locations, as for the PMESP's work in general, two particular cases of needing to balance the requests of different stakeholders frequently arise – where the government may be perceived as a client and where citizens may be similarly perceived. Usually, the former case is associated with PMESP's commitment with law enforcement, performing under the logics of the old (repressive) order: the police exist to reprimand crime, arrest thieves and protect the 'good citizen'. The later coincides with the emergence of a new (democratic) order, in which officers respond to the democratic regime by providing 'user-friendly' services, with accurate risk information flows, and assuming that citizens are honest until proven otherwise. In real life, an officer will probably recognize both the government and citizens as clients, but where he or she places the balance between them will determine PMESP's organizational culture. In practice, such organizational culture is constantly on the process of changing, being defined by the organization's legislative mandate, other specific directions given to it – such as the changes since the 1988 Constitution – and by its own institutional leadership or strategic planning framework (colonels and other high ranking officials). Finding the right balance between the old and new orders, more than a matter of sharply defined choice, represents more a case of balancing priorities to actual circumstances and problems. To the PMESP as a whole, at a more institutional perspective, it means finding the tune that provides satisfaction to internal and external social pressures.

5. Key concept: Towards more responsiveness

Nonet and Selznick's (2001) analysis of a developmental model for law and societies in transition might elucidate some clarifications about PMESP movement towards more responsiveness. The authors argue that the application of a development perspective, even if "controversial" and "troublesome", is "fruitful and even inescapable" (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:18-19). In summary, they outline three stages of evolution in the relation of law to the political and social order: (1) repressive, (2) autonomous, and (3) responsive⁹. Such change is progressive, nevertheless, in that some phases are considered "prior to others, often in time, but more significantly in importance and function" (NONET &

⁹ The authors distinguish three modalities of law-in-society: "(1) law as the servant of repressive power, (2) law as a differentiated institution capable of taming repression and protecting its own integrity, and (3) law as a facilitator of response to social needs and aspirations" (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:14-15). For a more detailed explanation of these stages, please see Nonet and Selznick (2001) page 16.

SELZNICK, 2001:24). The autonomous and responsive stages – ‘advanced’ or ‘higher’ ones – establish new and more sophisticated know-hows, while resolving the enduring and more basic urgencies of earlier stages. In the author’s model, “repressive law is ‘prior’ in the sense that it resolves the fundamental problems of establishing political order, a condition without the legal and political system cannot move the ‘higher’ pursuits” (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:25). They opportunely add that “autonomous law presupposes and builds upon that achievement, just as responsive law builds upon the more limited but basic constitutional cornerstones of the ‘rule of law’ stage” (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:25).

When suggesting that the PMESP is moving towards more responsiveness, this paper consider as valid Nonet and Selznick’s (2001) attempt to clarify society’s systematic connections and to identify the specific configurations in which they occur. The police, performing under a legalist framework, certainly reproduce alterations on the character of law – and such changes will affect police-community relations. However, it is not the intention of this paper to firmly define in which stage Brazilian law and PMESP’s movement towards more responsiveness currently is. The social change happening in Brazil, pushed by the broad philosophy of re-democratization and socio-economical improvements, is imposing a pattern of transformation that results in the advent of a new order; an imperative that also imposes the emergence of a new police with larger competencies. The PMESP is, thus, increasing its capacities for problem solving. This study is interested in the practical and policy-oriented transformations – being the adoption of koban one of them – that elucidate how PMESP’s organizational life has been changing. Our understanding of social change would be insufficient if we do not analyze the means of adaptation that create new and potentially viable historical alternatives for the PMESP.

Moreover, this work does not explore in depth the performance of public services at the governmental level, but simply that there has been a shift in the value’s system of the public management of the military police, towards more accountability and involvement with local communities. The re-democratization movement, at large, and the institutionalization of community policing, more specifically, express a shift on PMESP’s basic posture, towards a stage that flows in the direction of an autonomous and responsive application of law. In this sense, Nonet and Selznick (2001) three basic “states” of law-in-society are useful to clarify the mixed character that the PMESP, as any legal institution, is likely to have. The elements of one stage “may be more or less salient, strongly institutionalized or only incipient, in the foreground of awareness or only dimly perceived” (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:17). Their model can be used to frame the development of the characteristic function of the PMESP, or in other words, its core spirit, towards more responsiveness.

Nonet and Selznick (2001) understanding of a development model, rather than serving as a historical synopsis about the PMESP, can be used as a theory of institutional constraint and response that identifies “potentials for change in a specified range of situations” (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:23). The authors remember that, clearly, not all internal dynamics reveal a developmental process because some might simply be the transformation of one type of social organization into another. As mentioned earlier, from an official point of view the PMESP is a legalist institution. It means that it defends and follows the constitution, even if it was imposed by a dictator state through special acts or extraordinary laws. Although a movement towards more responsiveness might permit a higher degree of institutional integrity, such aspiration may in fact encounter other laudable needs. The PMESP is performing on a highly institutionalized environment, which imposes a series of different demands and social pressures into its organizational life (FERRAGI, 2010; 2011). While adaptation is central to any pattern of progress, the adaptive outcome may be quite precarious. For this reason a responsive law stage is less stable than an autonomous one, because “(...) the attainment of complex human ideals always depends on an ultimate fragile network of supporting circumstances” (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:26). Finally, the authors opportunely add that because a repressive law stage also has its degree of instability, due to precarious legitimacy, only the autonomous stage offers the possibility of an enduring and stable institutional order.

This development model, thus, can be re-framed as a triangulation, in which autonomous law points to the tensions in that stage that generate both possibility of recession to repressive arrangements and a chance for greater responsiveness. The PMESP is certainly facing external social pressures that demand larger institutional competencies for the pursuit of integrity. Nevertheless, it is hard to realize all the demands posed by citizens, because they might loose consistency. Nonet and Selznick (2001) suggest that responsiveness is a precarious ideal whose “attainment and desirability are generally contingent” and depend mainly on the demands posed and the resources available. To a certain extent, “a call for responsive law can also be a harmful distraction from more basic urgencies” (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001:116). Even where opportunities are present, the desirability of greater responsiveness may depend on how far Brazilian society or the PMESP should go in sacrificing other institutionalized values and myths for the quest of institutional integrity. The emergence of a new democratic – and responsive – order, in which the movement of community policing is inserted, offers the space to confront old perceptions that officers had about themselves, as well as public understandings about police work.

In such lines, this paper explores the contradictions between the old (repressive) and the new (democratic) orders. The former holds the idea of the heroic police officer performing on a dichotomy world – where officers are the ‘good guys’ fighting the ‘evil criminals’ supported by a “Manicheist rhetoric of spiritual warfare” that “is transposed to the police environment and vigorously appropriated to the experience of coercion in police practices” (ALBERNAZ, 2010:539). The later encompasses the community policing philosophy, in which officers perform at an instable world with a diverse set of activities – in the same day they might interact with a high-class citizen, arrest a criminal, talk to a business owner, and so on. Still, if we turn to the internal organizational life of the BCSs, a crucial problem is that such “spiritual warfare” seems to persist. The PMESP seems to translate and perpetuate the figure of the heroic police officer, who now becomes a “social firefighter” battling larger social problems through the performance of social service related activities. Concomitantly, officers and communities might identify the old repressive and ostensive modality of policing as a firm hand against crime, and community policing as a too soft approach to tackle such problematic. The confrontation of these rationales represents challenges for the consolidation of community policing, because they substantially affect the execution and desirability of less repressive and more responsive actions by the PMESP.

In the context of service delivery, quality on provision of policing comprises several components, such as “timeliness, accuracy, accessibility and appropriateness,” (OECD, 1996:17). A problem is that values differ from Japan to Brazil, due to differences on historical, political and cultural backgrounds, and to a certain extent express part of the relationship between the police (supplier) and the communities (client) they serve. In Japan, social arrangements express participation, harmony and equality as constant variables over police work, and are a remind of the good police-community relationship built along the years. In contrast, the military legacy and deep social inequalities impose a different logic over police-community relations in Brazil. First, following a military legacy, Brazilian police reproduce mostly a top down flow, with a bit of back and forth process between the levels; but basically it has been top down. If officers follow orders, it is fine. But, indeed, as much as a better car can be produced if a worker at the conveying belt brings his or her suggestions to the big boss, in Japan the police work has much more of this kind of interactions, mostly through internal meetings. Second, entrenched poverty generates the necessity of responding to a variety of social demands. In part, these factors explain why social service activities in Brazil have acquired a prominent role along community policing practices: for lower ranking officers, especially sergeants, the move towards “responsiveness” meant responding to larger social problems, as well as to incongruent logics imposed by the military police’s higher echelons.

Social scientists have observed that the police present a considerable ability to act according to their own judgments, independently of hierarchical controls (LIPSKI, 1980; MUIR, 1977; REISS, 1971). Mastrofski (1994) recognizes this, and outlines that community-policing proponents try to restructure the police organization in order to make practitioners act in accordance to their leaders' "values" (MASTROFSKI, 1994; in BRODEUR, 2002:211). In the case of the PMESP, this means that the low rankings must possess more liberty to make decisions and, at the same time, the support and ability to make the better choices. Community policing requires a significant cultural change in the very way the PMESP operates. As such "it requires capacity for change and time to achieve" (OECD, 1996:18). In any case, it is an ongoing process and therefore requires acceptance of and understanding by police officers at all hierarchical levels. Officers must receive appropriate training, signals and incentives. As observed in koban-like locations, it seems that the front-line staff – or those having direct contact with citizens: privates, corporals and sergeants – are one of the keys for the successful development of community policing. Especially sergeants, even if trying hard to attain a certain normality, may not find the correct means in which to balance the pressures posed by society, in the one side, and the higher and lower hierarchical levels of the police, on the other. Their skills and status require upgrading to improve how they perform as a group, as explored next.

6. Cultural Aspects from the Japanese Koban

It is interesting to analyze how aspects of the Japanese culture, reflected in the koban organization, affected the ways in which some BCSs perform as a group. Along the implementation of community policing low ranking officers are usually confronted with situational influences that create the identity of "heroes," or "social firefighters" as expressed by an officer (personal interview, 2009). But why would Brazilian officers consider themselves to be social heroes?

Observers might identify "altruistic" features in sergeants, corporals and privates, without taking into consideration that altruism is a less extreme version of heroism; it does not involve that much risk or cost. For instance, providing a consultation service to an old lady is not like extinguishing a fire inside a favela (slum) or, in a rigid hierarchical organizational culture such as the PMESP, standing up against unjust authority when sergeants could lose their jobs. This is what makes some sergeants, in their perceptions, "social firefighters". They feel they became heroes for the society, and, to a certain extent, heroes fighting the evil inside the corporation.

Since the Transitional Phase, from early 1990's, the professionalization of officers has gained space among proposers of police reform in Brazil, and until

today continues to reverberate inside and outside the PMESP. However, an element for professionalization remains effectively underdeveloped: more autonomy for low ranking officers at the front lines of policing – especially sergeants. In these lines, the koban organization seems to soften the blow of contradictions between the old and new orders, making it easier for sergeants to cope with the difficult tasking of implementing community policing and adapting to the new order.



Picture I: An officer extinguishing a fire, responding to an incident that happened during a patrol. *Jardim Ângela*, south of São Paulo city.

Source: Author (2010)

What is unique about the Japanese koban is a combination of deep-rooted cultural values, a collective culture that includes aspects of Buddhism and Shinto religious rituals at large – which are not the focus of this paper¹⁰. And officers in Japan perform under such rationale: cultural values insinuate a devotion to a real communal culture at the local level, which means closer interactions with community members and fellow officers. They are inserted into a pro-social mentality, an ambience where the heart is on the other. As a matter of fact, human

¹⁰ The Japanese people's sense of community and unity, and well-organized behavior, could especially be observed after the big Tohoku earthquake in March 2011. In this moment of difficulties, Japanese people have shown to the world their “heart” (*Kokoro*, in Japanese) and “patient” (*Gaman*). *Kokoro* is more than heart, it means that people are aware of the others, they stay in line to get supplies, they share their blankets inside a shelter... it is a spirit or state of mind. And *Gaman* expresses the endurance and tolerance to deal with harsh times. Moreover, the educational system plays a crucial role, because since childhood kids are educated in schools to act properly in case of earthquakes. But there is something more, which goes beyond. The Japanese population's *kokoro* is trained under the ideas of harmony (*Wa*), patience (*Gaman*) and family (*Ie*). It has to do with a sense of conformity to social harmony, to allow space for others while one's own space is being disputed. Heart and patient, in this case, express Japan's strength and sense of organization.

being (人間 or Ningen, in Japanese) is composed by two characters – 人, hito, and 間 or aida – which signifies between people. Under the Japanese rationale, it seems difficult to exist as a human being without taking into consideration the existence of the others. As an example, an ordinary Japanese citizen would not wear a protective facial mask – commonly noticeable in the big cities – simply to avoid getting a cold, or because “it is safer” to do so. They do it because they are concerned about not spreading the disease to others. Or, mostly important, in their rationale “it feels better” this way. In the same way, officers reproduce such values when pursuing their work.

The koban organization seemed to have developed under a cooperative construction of trust, operating within a rationality that focus on progress and social distribution of risks, similar to what happens in a big family (Ie). In 2009 the author interviewed 6 officers at the Japanese Police Academy, in Fuchu city, west of Tokyo. They commented that one of the most common activities at the koban was to instruct inebriate people to leave their bicycles and take a train or taxi home. These officers were not only concerned about following the law, or about the individual’s safety. There seems to be something more, a certain desire to tune people’s attitudes with societal harmony. Inside the organizational life of a koban, such values are constantly present, even if officers fail to perceive so. They reflect a model of social arrangements that is quite distinctive: Japanese officers are not heroes, but partners sharing with the community risk management responsibilities.

Observing the Tama Police Station, in Kanagawa Prefecture, the author noticed that each morning Japanese low ranking officers meet daily at the police station, before heading to their local police boxes. It is much more the idea that we are all here together, whether someone is an ordinary officer or the police chief. At least, this mentality is part of the philosophy permeating police work. Concurrently, it seems to be one of the ideas that the koban system has brought to Brazil. To some extent, it is empowering the small police officer to assume his or her responsibility for his or her part of the town, of the community, and respond to people’s needs.

This happens because, in the front lines of the PMESP, low ranking officers are critically affected by the BCS internal dynamics and culture, which emanate from fellow officers – sergeants, being the leaders, are crucial along this process – and also middle and upper ranking officials, who would either support or undermine the implementation of community policing activities. Essentially officers undergo routine activities by interacting with their counter-parts, under the belief that they are doing the right thing. The confrontation of the old (repressive) and new (democratic) orders, certainly, affected their perceptions of this “right thing.” What is interesting about PMESP’s recent history, is that it has passed through important disorganizations and reorganizations. Along such

process, as the organizational culture progressively changes, incorporating democratic values, officers naturally review their own principles and roles inside the group. For low ranking officers at pilot locations this movement – or change – is expressed throughout the performance of koban-related activities, such as visits to residences and commerce, gatherings inside the police post, publication of monthly journals, among others, that supplied officers with “practical tools” or “concrete actions necessary to play in the real game of daily life” (personal interview, 2009; 2010).

But the most important point is that the koban organization seems to have introduced the feeling of belonging to a group, providing a sense of purpose¹¹. The characteristic function of the BCS, or in other words, its core spirit, moved towards more openness in relation to their team, or “inside world”. Because a sense of cohesion increases inside the BCS, officers become afraid to let their colleagues down. As a result, sergeants, corporals and privates develop the audacity to confront “the outside world.”

Since the PMESP started implementing community policing, from late 1990’s, one of the problems is that, at the BCS organizational life, the “outside world” has been posing deep-rooted social inequalities. Such imbalances – poverty, unemployment, and drug addiction, among others – have been tackled by the delivery of social service activities, many times incorporating social demands from other fields, such as health or education (FERRAGI, 2010; 2011). Because the front liners are expected to battle these intractable problems by their own means, one of their perceptions is that community policing is risky and unrealistic. In their imaginary, the interactions between the internal and external world require a “heroic” status. It extrapolates the idea of mere altruism; they become heroes, or social firefighters, responsible for eradicating societal problems. And an obstacle is that not all officers have the courage, or audacity, to face such challenge.

Concomitantly, this feeling is accentuated because the PMESP has two internal worlds – the commissioned and non-commissioned ones. For the micro cosmos of a BCS, therefore, the “outside world” also includes the commissioned world (middle and upper echelon officers). They impose incongruent policies, “popping up” from administrative and academic pathways that are away from the reality of the streets. In part it explains why sergeants feel unhappy and demotivated when their companies’ commanders are not aware and supportive of koban-related BCS efforts. This was the case at most locations during the Pre-Koban phase. The BCS Ranieri (greatly affected by the koban), on the contrary, represents a case where such contradictions were decreased by intense

¹¹ To some extent purposiveness facilitates the elaboration of police authority, because it calls for inquiry into (1) substantive outcomes and (2) what is factually needed for effective discharge of institutional responsibilities (NONET & SELZNICK, 2001). In other words, the PMESP started becoming more result-oriented, thus departing sharply from the classic image of justice blind to consequence.

information flows between the different hierarchical levels. Such considerations are vital for the PMESP, as they are still searching for the right tunes to balance hierarchy and decentralized decisive power along the institution.

Throughout this process, the inner dynamics of the BCS are extremely important. There are many norms and standards that are constantly evolving in a BCS's internal world. With the introduction of democratic values, elder officers loose the standard on how to follow the rules, because the core spirit of the organization has been disorganized. They feel that others perform in ways that might push them out of the scene, lacking enough discernment to participate in the ongoing reorganization process. Indeed, Colonel Mariano commented that many officers were disengaged during the transitional and pre-koban phases. Others, the great majority who stayed, had to cope with the heavy burden of "forgetting their past" and what was considered "right". This represents an inner battle, in which officers question their individualistic traits. The problem, particularly, is that the focus of institutional change is directed on the individual officers. This is true for the PMESP, as for many other social organizations. Officers are the actors, the "malefactors", or judged as the guilty party who committed the Favela Naval incident in 1997, for example. This explains why the PMESP reviewed the institution's selection and training processes, looking on forms to "correct" officers' personality traits or thinking styles. Particularly with the introduction of the community policing, PMESP leaders focused on a new profile of officers, who presented leadership skills and "the will to work with people" (personal interview, 2010). However, they were catching a glimpse of the actors alone on the scene, with no spectators, no other players or no uniforms. In fact, an interactive environment always surrounds officers. The organizational life of a BCS counts with different audiences, other actors, and the contradictions emerged from the confluence of the old repressive and the newly democratic order, which essentially imply that low ranking officers become like new persons.

To a certain extent, PMESP's leaders have turned a deaf ear to the front line voices of the corporation, especially during the Pre-koban phase. The main focus of what they been doing up to now, is to try to spread "spores of heroism" around their BCSs and develop explicit social service projects that cultivate officers to act heroically. And that is a problem. If we unravel backwards to the adoption of the koban, on the one hand, it introjected a socially integrating tool, or myth, that fits well in such imaginary: community policing implies the transformation of police egocentrism into socio-centrism. When inserted in a diverse context such as São Paulo, koban-related practices have intensified such process – for instance, a public library was built adjacent to BCS Ranieri, promoting among officers the idea that they are champions of education and literacy promotion. On the other, and this is the koban's greatest contribution, it served as a socially compatible tool, inside PMESP's organizational life, that

allowed the development and reinforcement of community policing practices at many hierarchical levels. Especially, it empowered the front lines to work towards a collective construction of trust, similar to what happens in Japan. The Japanese ideals of family (Ie) and harmony (Wa) seem to be translated into the centrality of the BCS as a community police-based structure, favoring the decentralization of decisive power.

At koban pilot-project locations, low ranking officers seem to establish a routine work that empowers them to understand reality and the meanings of risk in everyday communal life. There is an ongoing collective re-construction of their roles as risk communicators. Officers start to understand the importance of their physical space – the police post – as a place where risk management happens. Consequently, the BCSs gain much more significance inside the PMESP and inside the communities, because they start to serve as the core base for urban policing related activities, similar to what happens in Japan. Part of the responsibility of responding to societal demands is transferred from the tactical level (call centers) to the operational level, empowering low ranking officers to observe and understand their localities.

In other words, the cultural features of the koban offer a tool for the reorganization of the PMESP, demystifying the fight between good and evil. It provided the idea that officers are partners sharing risk management responsibilities, overcoming the barriers posed by the confrontation of different institutional cultures – the new and the old orders are still present, as much as internal social disparities between the commissioned and non-commissioned tracks. Such cultural attributes seem to be teaching officers how to become “partners” with the community and among themselves, without losing or dissipating their energies in the continuum of heroic social responses, so that the perception of social firefighters is not built in these small steps.

7. Final Remarks

Observing community-policing locations, low ranking officers have been struggling to learn the new norms and rules imposed by a new (democratic) order, without completely comprehending its logics and rationale. Essentially, they lack the adaptive capability necessary to endure PMESP’s changing organizational culture. Sergeant’s survival strategy, as mentioned earlier, was to (a) merely reproduce orders from above, as a mean to avoid conflicts with higher hierarchical levels, and (b) to perform social service related activities, as a mean to respond to urgent social demands. Such obstacle, sat by the confluence of the old and new orders, has also been reflected on elder corporals and privates’ thoughts and attitudes (UCHIDA, 2007). The renovation process of staff is recent and slow, and so are the organizational cultural changes at the lower levels. However, with the advent of the koban system, throughout the pilot projects, PMESP gained by

enhancing sergeants' role of institutional interpreters. Indeed, an important lesson from the Koban-phase, since 2005, is that the PMESP must deposit considerable efforts to educate and train sergeants, empowering them with technical skills and a sense of purpose for the completion of their daily activities, otherwise a crucial expertise will be lost on the continuum of policing – and vagueness about community policing will persist. Because of their leadership role inside the BCS micro cosmos, sergeants especially embody acute contradictions and, thus, represent a strategic consideration for the institutionalization of community policing in São Paulo.

Finally, the idea of being a “social firefighter” or a “remedy for the diseases of the society”, searching for the solution of general problems, seems to contain in itself a promise that many sergeants cannot accomplish. In spite of the institutional significance of the koban as a social integrating tool, the PMESP's knowledge and infrastructure on community policing are still insufficient to produce the required technical success on a regular basis throughout São Paulo state. Given the small scope of koban pilot projects, a huge challenge to overcome the vagueness and misunderstanding about community policing rests not on sergeants themselves but on the institution's ability to conduct a rigorous evaluation of what works and why it works. If such knowledge is not properly managed, the PMESP will not have the conditions to reorganize its organizational life and search for the better paths that combine both technical and institutional improvements.

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