

# Koban and the Institutionalization of Community Policing in São Paulo

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## I. Contextualization

### 1. Federal, Civil and Military Police in Brazil

The public security system in Brazil includes three main distinct organizations: the Federal, Civil, and Military Police. Each of them has a specific function, but their objectives coincide on fighting criminality in the country. The Federal Police are responsible for investigation of crimes at the national level, which affect the country as a whole, such as crimes against the financial system, for example. Moreover, the Federal Police exert police functions at ports, airports, and land borders, controlling and impeding the entrance of guns, illicit drugs, or contraband. They are subjected to the Ministry of Justice, indicated by the president of the Republic.

In each state there is a Civil Police. They are responsible for the investigation and elucidation of crimes committed in their territories, the production of incident reports, and the issuance of identity cards, residence certifications, and criminal records. They also supervise some commercial activities and authorize the execution of big events. The Civil Police can, occasionally, carry out missions outside of their own state. For that, it is necessary to ask authorization to the local Civil Police. For instance, if someone committed a crime in São Paulo and escaped to Minas Gerais state, the São Paulo Civil Police should inform Minas Gerais's police that a mission is being carried out at their territory.

The Military Polices – known as “PM”, acronym for *Polícia Militar* – are also

state level organizations. They are responsible for preventive policing, carrying out different modalities of patrol: policing on foot and by car; forestry, urban traffic, and road policing; school, sportive squares, and aerial radio patrol policing. They are organizations following military principles, for what their officers are considered by the federal constitution an auxiliary force and reserve of the Army.

According to the article 144 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, while “it is incumbent upon the civil police, directed by career police commissioners and except for the competence of the Union, to exercise the functions of criminal police and to investigate criminal offenses, with the exception of the military ones” (Brazil Const.), “it is within the competence of the military polices the ostensive policing and the maintenance of the public order; it is incumbent upon the military fire brigades, in addition to the duties defined by law, to carry out activities of civil defense” (Brazil Const., my underlining). Furthermore, “the military polices and military fire brigades, ancillary forces, and reserve of the Army, are subject, together with the civil police, to the Governors of the states, of the Federal District, and of the territories” (Brazil Const.).

In general lines, the main differences among these three polices are the scope of their functions. Federal police officers fight crimes of Federal interest; the civil ones investigate homicides, robbery and kidnapping in their states; and the military ones are responsible for preventing criminal conduct and looking after public order. However, because the military polices have their actions limited to preventive policing and maintenance of public order, their performance might generate frustration among citizens. For instance, if a citizen is victim of an aggravated assault (i.e. his or her car is stolen), and calls the police call center (190 in Brazil), all military police stations in the area will immediately be informed and the closest patrol car (military police) will respond to such call. This citizen is required to fill an incident report, and will be directed to nearest civil police station, which is now part of a separated police. In the case the military police find the victim's car, they will arrest the criminal in flagrant. But if it is not the case, the military police's work finishes at this point. They will leave the case on the hands of civil police's *delegado* (sheriff), who

is now in charge of criminal investigation. Even if military and civil polices dialogue to solve similar cases, for many citizens such duality may cause a sense of dissatisfaction. Because their closest contact has been with military police officers, they might expect the military police to work until the end, solving their case. The koban-like projects, which include preventive uniformed patrol of public spaces, are allocated under the state-level Military Police – remarkably known for their usage of paramilitary force during the dictatorship era, and recently undergoing a reformulation to incorporate features of urban police.

Additionally, the national public security system is contemplating Municipal Guards, under the jurisdiction of the cities. Their attribution, however, is limited to the protection of the cities' natural and cultural heritage and public buildings. It is also incumbent on them the supervision of parks, gardens, public squares, and monuments.

## **2. Community Policing in São Paulo**

On December 10<sup>th</sup> 1997 the general command of the PMESP – *Policia Militar do Estado de São Paulo* – (São Paulo State Military Police) officially adopted community policing as the institution's philosophy and operational strategy. São Paulo was not the only state to adopt community-policing practices. During the 1990s the military police of many Brazilian states launched similar programs; the community policing movement seemed to gain momentum in Brazil (Frühling, 2006). The announced intention was to reform police's current mandate, improving their deteriorated relationships with communities (Kahn, 2003), reducing the alarming police violence (Human Rights Watch, 1997), and gaining greater public acceptance (Frühling, 2006).

Between December 1997 and July 2001 community policing programs were implemented in 199 of the 386 companies that make up the São Paulo state Military Police force,<sup>(1)</sup> what corresponds for more than half of the companies

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(1) Frühling (2006) clarifies that the Military Police is organized in commands, battalions, and companies. The latter are the smallest units. They are headed by a captain and include between one hundred and three hundred individuals.

(Frühling, 2006), and indicates that it started as a considerable movement inside the police institution. From September 1997 to May 2000, additional 239 community-based sub-stations were created, and close to sixteen thousand police officers received training in community policing (Kahn, 2003). But still, even if there has been a lot of enthusiasm about community policing, we should not fail to observe how it was really practiced at the local levels. Difficulties on implementing practical features on daily community policing practices have been observed (Uchida, 2007), even if the institution already had incorporated its philosophy.

### **3. Koban in São Paulo**

Along this process, the PMESP leaders started searching for alternative policing models in foreigner countries. From 2000 to 2004, dialogue between Japan and São Paulo's police was intensified, and in January 2005 an international technical cooperation agreement was signed between the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and PMESP. First, it contemplated the implementation of eight pilot-projects based on the koban,<sup>(2)</sup> under the rubric of *Base Comunitária de Segurança* (Portuguese for "Community Security Base," free translation). Then, from early 2007 the number of koban-like locations increased to 20 (second phase), including 2 Kobans in the metropolitan area of São Paulo, 2 in the interior of the state and the remaining 16 in São Paulo city. Finally, the project was expanded to 54 locations over São Paulo state, since early 2008 (third phase).

The change in focus represented by community policing has been gradual in São Paulo. In many respects, police forces are composed by knowledge workers, expert advisers on risk, and compliance-based law enforcers (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997). However these roles were not apparent in São Paulo urban policing because of the organized incapacity of the PMESP to detect and risk-

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(2) Koban system in this project 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).

manage crime and other troubles on their own. In January 2007, the author had a phone interview with a JICA official who harshly criticized the koban experiment in São Paulo. He said that Brazilian and Japanese realities were too different, and that the May 2006 attacks<sup>(3)</sup> on the police significantly affected the delicate trust bonds between the police and community.

Three years later, in January 2010, the author interviewed Colonel Castro, director of the Department of Community Police and Human Rights (*Departamento de Polícia Comunitária e Direitos Humanos – DPCDH*) in the PMESP. He explained the evolution of koban-like practices in São Paulo. First, under the frame of international cooperation, the PMESP had to tune their schedules and agenda with those of JICA, understanding its dynamics and deadlines. Second, in order to inculcate not only the broader philosophy, but also the practice of the koban system on daily policing practices in São Paulo, the institutional leadership of the PMESP felt the necessity of forming a working group to develop the contents of courses to be given to officers that would operate at the koban-like locations. This working group incorporated PMESP officers who were already familiar with the koban model, after passing through a training period in Japan, sponsored by JICA. Third, after discussing the proposed cooperation's terms, goals and objectives, the implementing team designated eight areas in the city of São Paulo where koban-like projects would be established. The working group incorporated higher commanders of these eight locations where koban-like projects would be implemented. This was an important strategy to guarantee the commitment of PMESP commanders with community policing implementation, as such high-rank officials could not eventually argue to not “*be aware of the situation*” (personal interview, 2010).

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(3) His words refer to the “May 2006 Attacks,” when a series of simultaneous riots inside prisons were followed by attacks against public establishments such as police stations, justice forums, buses, etc. Those riots and attacks were organized by the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC), a criminal organization based itself inside prisons around the country. According to the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* (2006), this wave of violence represented the bloodiest assault of its kind in the history of Brazil.

Subsequently, the working group started considering the training and capacitation courses for police officers to be allocated at these eight areas. In the first studies conducted, which happen to be maintained until the present date, they concluded that at least thirteen officers would be required in each *Base Comunitária de Segurança* (BCS): one commander (in this case, a sergeant), with 4 groups of 3 police officers on each shift – one to constantly stay at the post, and two to circulate by either car, motorbike, bicycle or walking, according to the needs of each region. A working shift of twelve hours followed by 36 hours of break was established; this timetable is flexible, adapted to the necessities of each location. In addition, they trained more officers who would not stay at the BCS, taking into consideration officer's vacations and leaves of absence. Colonel Castro suggests that 20 police officers would be the ideal number for each koban-like initiative, with 13 allocated at the BCS and the remaining 7 for substitution in case of vacations and leaves of absence. The criteria of selecting focused on their profiles, predisposition and “*will to work with people*” (personal interview, 2010). They made an analysis of each police officer's life and their historical inside the institution. It was defined that they should have at least 2 years of working experience, so that an analysis could be done. Also the location of their residences were taken into consideration, giving priority to officers living close to koban-like localities, so that they would already be more familiar with such communities.

In total, there were 160 officers trained to work at the eight regions designated to encompass koban-based initiatives (20 officers for each location). Also, the PMESP counted on the consulting of a Japanese expert, Mr. Tokuda, who followed the whole implementation process from the beginning. “*The presence of the Japanese expert, from the very beginning, was of extreme importance,*” emphasizes Colonel Castro (personal interview, 2010). He mentions that many doubts were raised while implementing daily routines and practices of community policing, even among those Brazilian officers who experienced training sessions in Japan. For that reason, the Japanese expert was a key figure, providing advice and guidance to practical procedures on koban-

related activities.

Moreover, the working group elaborated a list of material items required for each koban-like location. For example, a computer, a printer and a digital camera were listed as essential to the performance of community policing, in order that officers could work on the modes of Koban: documenting images (registering the state of affairs in their communities) and elaborating newsletters focusing on the problems and concerns of each region. The construction of an external panel, in front of each BCS, was also made necessary to post information and community related news, following the direct example of koban in Japan. They also included a patrol car in the list of requirements. Furthermore, because the koban model specifies residence and commerce visits as daily policing practices, the form of archiving, saving, and controlling information needed to be reviewed.

However, one of the strongest challenges referred on how to teach police officers to talk with citizens, so that they would write down and register events happening on their regions. The old *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977) of performing the figure of tough servants fighting crime was still present in the mindset of officers. Many of them opposed the idea of listening to citizen's demands because of the simple fact that it contradicts their previous images of themselves. A friendly, caring and considerate attitude towards citizens was not in the job profile that many officers had already introjected.

## **II. The São Paulo State Military Police (PMESP)**

### **1. Leadership inside the PMESP**

The institutionalization process of community policing taking place in São Paulo raises a series of questions regarding the ability of the São Paulo State Military Police – *Polícia Militar do Estado de São Paulo*, PMESP – to implement and perform properly the new ideas and norms implicated in such process. The adoption of Koban-like initiatives, since 2005, certainly represents one of them. As much as resistance to reform and the reappearance of old *habitus* – of the dictatorship era – is expected in any *inculcation* of practices

(Bordieu, 1977), a clear understanding of the PMESP and its organizational character, competence, institutional values, and leadership might help us understand not only the basic principles to the success of koban-based projects, but to community policing as a whole in Brazil. Concerning the actual practice of Koban in São Paulo, this paper will not examine in depth to what extent community interests are really being served by this new mode of policing – and how the Japanese technical cooperation specifically contributed to serve the collective interest of public security. Rather, the author will argue that there was an evolution from a vague understanding of community policing practices into a more precise application of effective policing practices inside the São Paulo state Military Police (PMESP), mainly because of their leadership’s decisive role along such process. The decision of searching, adopting and implementing a foreign model of policing – the Japanese koban system – is a consequence of it.<sup>(4)</sup>

However, as much as efficiency is a recurrent question to the analysis of institutional performance, a preoccupation with administrative efficiency might lead us to significant problems in understanding the actual role of leadership in large organizations. If we take the example of the PMESP, and ascend the echelons of their militaristic structure to arrive at the figure of colonel (highest possible ranking in the administrative structure), his or her role as a decision-maker becomes substantially more difficult. This is not merely because the decisions are more important or more complex, but because a new “logic” emerges. For a colonel, the logic of efficiency loses force because his or her role

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(4) Selznick (1957) suggests that a deep understanding of leadership in both private and public organizations and the study of “organizational character” must occupy a central role on the agenda of social inquiry and institutional analysis. In this paper I will use Selznick’s concept of “dynamic adaptation” to analyze community policing as a dynamic process, involving more than just routines, alteration, or expansion of BCSs. Character is an organic product of the historical, integrated, functional, and dynamic combination generated in the PMESP. Because community policing represents the re-construction of needs inside the PMESP, it also requires a change in attitude and commitment by their leaders, towards new strategies and forms to generate internal and external satisfaction.



as an institutional leader implies a reassessment of his or her own tasks and of the needs of the PMESP. Consequently, it can be inferred that the institutional leadership of the PMESP is concerned with the evolution of the police as a whole, including their “evolving aspirations and competences,” as a mean to legitimate the institution's existence.

## 2. External Social Pressures

The theory of organizations distinguishes between technical environments – where organizations are acknowledged by their efficiency in performing certain activities – and institutional environments – in which recognition happens mainly when practices coincide with norms and beliefs taken as appropriate or legitimate (Scott & Meyer, 1991). An organization can operate in a more technical or institutional environment, depending on its activities. There are highly institutionalized organizations – such as schools, universities and churches – that are more concerned with their legitimacy rather than efficiency. The police forces are part of this group (Crank & Langworthy, 1992). They operate in social environments that pose more institutional pressure and less technical demands.

The PMESP, performing in an institutional environment, is no exception. In the search for legitimacy and stability, they have recently undertaken a series of efforts towards the re-formulation of their mandate. At this point, the author will distinguish the *philosophy of community policing* from the *broader philosophy of re-democratization*, and focus attention into the former's adoption of (few) koban-based police posts within the (majority of) “regular” community policing posts. The smallest unit performing community policing practices in São Paulo is the aforementioned **BCS**. As all koban-based BCS derived from an amalgam of previous Brazilian practices and the “original American concept” of community policing, this paper intends to distinguish not only the technical aspects incorporated from the Japanese model, but also the institutional motivations and implications behind such adoption.

Many scholars believe that community policing models mystify or cover

up police use of coercive force, regarded by many as the essence of police anywhere (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997). Some critics might argue that community policing has a public relations function for the police, conveying a friendly image to the population and not changing the core of police work (Waddington, 1984; Klockars, 1988). However, instead of analyzing community policing as a rhetoric or reality, we should understand that it combines both of them to constitute a discourse expressed through institutional communication (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997). Thus, the external social pressures exerted over institutions and their implications cannot be ignored. Koban-like initiatives are technical in the sense that police officers must employ routine procedures to their practices. But, at the same time, in organizations, ‘dynamic adaptation’ takes place in the moment administration and policy meet. For this reason community policing as a dynamic process, involving more than just routines, changes or expansion of BCSs. It connotes the re-construction of needs by the PMESP, a change in attitude and commitment to new strategies and forms of internal and external satisfaction.

Putnam (1993) outlines, in his classic experiment with local Italian governments, we agree that responsiveness to the social setting produces institutional reactions. This paper agrees with Putnam and notes that the context of escalation of violence and increasing murderer rates in São Paulo, during 1990’s, has produced in the PMESP a more profound awareness about its inter-dependence with stakeholders and outside forces. More than suggesting practices that leave the PMESP intact, and thus perform a “public relations” function, community policing may have arrived to change the very conception of the PMESP themselves, influencing their policy, philosophy, and administrative organization. Because the PMESP become more receptive to citizens’ demands within the broader context of a democratic society, that requires effective responses to public security, the community policing effort can be understood as a consolidated, not superficial, institutional reaction.

### 3. Internal Social Pressures

On the other hand, the relation of an organization to the external environment is only one source of institutional experience. There is also an internal world to be considered. If we turn to the institutionalization of community policing in São Paulo, we can contemplate leadership, character, and critical decision-making as key factors that constitute the organizational life of the PMESP. In these terms, koban-like initiatives can be understood as an opportunity to embody a new point of view within PMESP's character.

However, even if accepted in good faith, koban-like practices may be hampered by personnel or budgetary procedures, and by many other operating routines that make part of it. Because the PMESP is composed by a group of different human beings, it eventually opens up space for what is called "informal structure," which comes out as policemen and policewomen bring their own individualities, traits, and concerns to the institution and its practices. Throughout the police posts, where sergeants, corporals and soldiers coexist, formal nomenclatures act on roles or specialized activities – i.e. foots patrols are performed by corporals and soldiers, management of staff by sergeants – but not on the persons themselves.

During the author's visits to several *Bases Comunitárias de Segurança* (BCS) from January to March 2009, and then between January and February 2010, the author could observe that police officers somehow work on their own discretion, worried about their own self-protection or self-fulfillment. In one of the BCSs, for example, a sergeant confirmed that his main motivation to work on community policing was personal, moved by an inner satisfaction of helping impoverished kids vulnerable to drugs. However, he complained about the rigidity of police structures and lack of institutional support, suggesting that he could better perform his work "*without the vanity and grid*" of his superiors (personal interview, 2009). His words reflect a clear struggle for place (or maybe promotion) inside the organization, in rivalry with the hierarchy of the police. These personal needs – a universal aspect and a persistent dilemma of any organization – can either sustain or undermine the community policing programs

currently in practice. It is up to the leaders of PMESP to identify and control such internal social pressures, in order to make good use of this “great reservoir of energy” and propose constructive ways towards desired ends.

Analyzing the previous exposed external and internal social pressures, a reasonable question might emerge: Where does the community policing program *fit*? Can koban-like projects fulfill citizens’ demands (external pressures)? Can they undermine the unity of the PMESP by creating organizational rivalry (internal pressures)? Furthermore, what arrangements would best protect legitimate competition a) among community policing practices – performed by the PMESP – and b) other Brazilian police forces – Civil Police, Federal Police, and Local Municipal Guards – yet maintaining the needed integration of strategic and tactical planning? Police organizations work on highly institutionalized environments, in which legitimacy matters more than efficiency. One of my questions here is not if eventually community policing will reduce crime rates, but to what extent it will increase PMESP’s legitimacy to the eyes of those who must legitimize it. In the next chapters this paper will explore some concepts of organizational theory, including isomorphic processes, institutional fields and socially integrating myths, to finally tackle the role of its leadership on steering the PMESP.

### **III. Isomorphic Processes and Organizational Change**

#### **1. Coercive, Mimetic and Normative Forces**

Organizational theorists suggest that organizations operating in the same field frequently change to become alike, whether in form or in practice (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). DiMaggio and Powell (1991) define this phenomenon as institutional, outlining three isomorphic forces to explain it: coercive, mimetic, and normative ones, as follows.

Coercive isomorphism is the result of formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations – on which they depend – and by cultural expectations of the societies in which they operate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p.67). These pressures can occur directly, in the form of force

or persuasion or as invitations to take part in coalitions or associations, or indirectly, in subtle ways such as the adjustments in an organization's structure to satisfy donors (Milofsky, 1981; in DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p.68). As for the police, a clear example of coercive isomorphism occurs if there is a change in the law. The police respond to (and work on) a legal framework – the enforcement of law. Therefore, alterations on such environment affect many aspects of their organization's behavior and culture.

In turn, mimetic isomorphism occurs when organizations replicate those other organizations considered as more legitimate or appropriate. In other words, it represents an imitation of another's practices to face environmental insecurities “when organizational technologies are poorly understood” (March & Olsen, 1976; in DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p.69); “when goals are ambiguous; or when the environmental creates symbolic uncertainty” (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p.69). In the author's interviews with PMESP officials – including Colonel Mariano, former president in the commission for the implementation of community policing in São Paulo – they mentioned that, after investigating police systems in many nations, Brazilians chose the Japanese system because they perceive the koban-model as a more legitimate and appropriate policing system to generate lower crime rates and stronger police-community bonds. Their words, to some extent, insinuate that the adoption of Japanese koban-like practices is a result of mimetic isomorphic forces.

Finally, the third isomorphic force is the normative one. Normative isomorphism derives, mostly, from processes of professionalization. By professionalization the authors understand “the collective struggle of members of an occupation, to define the conditions and methods of their work, and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy” (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p.70). Under this light the adoption of community policing by PMESP represents a normative isomorphic force; it affects their professionalization process because not only didactical modules were incorporated in their curriculum, but also because such training is now a requirement for becoming a police officer in São Paulo.

## **2. Institutional Fields and Institutionalizing Organizations**

Lin (2001) proposes that an institutional field exists when organizations respect and recognize a specific group of institutions; they adjust their internal structures and patterns of behavior to reduce transaction costs with other organizations ordered by the same institutions (Lin, 2001, p.188). The author outlines that “institutionalizing organizations” operate on an institutional field, accredited to “socialize” their members (Lin, 2001, p.191). A classical example would be the universities, where students learn technical aspects at the same time they socialize and discuss topics related to a certain field of interest.

There are many institutionalizing organizations operating in the field of policing. They include “champions of innovation, proposing change and institutional innovation” (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). In our case, JICA and Japan’s National Policy Agency – with the technical training provided to Brazilian police officers – represent examples of “champions of innovation,” as they open up space for dialogue and exchange of ideas and resources within the PMESP. Social networks – such as the commission for the implementation of community policing in São Paulo, composed by people and groups who share concerns about the future of the PMESP – also contribute to the debate and promotion of community policing in São Paulo. Actors that are in principle allocated in the periphery of the field – such as *Sou da Paz* Institute, a NGO – can combine efforts and penetrate it, incorporating alternative myths or creating new institutionalizing organizations – such as their Citizenship Police Prize, an annual award aimed to recognize good police practices in the city of São Paulo.

In many parts of the world, however, there are diverse police forces in a same geographic area. Do they necessarily constitute an institutional field? If so, which are the organizations that compromise it? Moreover, is there a *clear* institutional field of policing in Brazil?

## **3. Brazil: an incomplete institutional field of police**

A comparative study of police organizations by Bayley (1975) reveals that the police undergo three basic activities: i) criminal investigation; ii) the

use of paramilitary force, against members of the same political community, when necessary (riots, etc.); iii) uniformed patrol of public spaces, with the attribution of force. Medeiros (2004) uses Bayley's observations and states that, for the institutional field of policing, we encounter organizations exerting the functions of (a) criminal police, (b) police of order and (c) urban police. He points out that the re-democratization process in Brazil, supported by the new "citizen" Constitution of 1988, increased the qualitative and quantitative sources of legitimacy of the police and implied a transformation in their role of social control (Medeiros, 2004). While in Brazil the former two were performed by organizations connected to the justice system (state-level Civil Police) and the army (state-level Military Police), respectively, the last is remarkably modern and rely on the consensual insertion of the police into social control. Medeiros (2004) points out that as the Brazilian polices became responsible for a wider political universe, they also had to abandon old social control functions and focus on the control of criminality, activity for which the structure of two separated polices is seen as inadequate (Dallari, 1993; Bicudo, 2000; in Medeiros, 2004).

As we mentioned earlier, in Brazil there are two polices for each of the 26 federative states and the Federal District (Brasília), three at the federal level and a series of municipal guards. Brazil is no exception regarding the elevated number of police forces, when compared to England, Germany, or the US (Bayley, 1975; McKenzie & Gallagher, 1989). However, Medeiros (2004) points out a peculiarity: while in many countries there are diverse special paramilitary units, in general each organization performs the three policing activities outlined by Bayley (1975) – crime, order, and urban policing. Their differentiation occurs by geographic criteria, not functioning. Just like the National Police of Japan, specialization happens on the interior of prefectural police departments (Parker, 2001). In other words, it is "intra-organizational" (Medeiros, 2004, p.278): while there are *omawarisan* (friendly term for policemen) patrolling the streets and occupying posts at the koban, *detectives* are responsible for investigating crimes. But both belong to the same organizational umbrella. In Brazil, the specialization

is “extra-organizational” (Medeiros, 2004, p.278): criminal investigation and community policing are performed by two different police forces, both at the state level.

As for Brazil, this extra-organizational specialization generates consequences to the institutional field of policing; it hampers the exchange of personnel between both Civil and Military police because, differently from Japan, police officers have substantially different “professions” (normative force). The militaristic structure is not perceived as adequate to civil police tasks, and vice-versa (mimetic force). Also, during great part of their history, both police forces were completely separated in terms of command (coercive force). In spite of daily contact between these two organizations, there is little exchange of technical and institutional resources (Medeiros, 2004, p.279).

In the author’s interviews with Mr. Ishii, at the Police Department in Kanagawa Prefecture, he confirms a clear uneasiness regarding such differentiation. After working for one year and a half at the PMESP as the second Japanese expert guiding the implementation of koban-like practices, he suggests that the work of community policing in Brazil is much more disconnected from criminal investigation than it is in Japan. In Kanagawa prefecture, he mentions, all police officers start their careers at the Community Policing Affairs Department (*chiikika*) and then experience one or more of the other departments: Traffic Safety (*koutsuka*), Community Safety (*seikatsuanzenka*), and Criminal Investigation (*keijika*). Even though it is rare for an officer to experience all departments, in their earlier careers, Japanese policemen and policewomen can migrate among different areas (based on personal skills and promotion) and define which is the one that best suits their aspirations. It also indicates that, among all departments of the Japanese police – including criminal investigation –, community policing is experienced in practice. In São Paulo, on the other hand, it is expected that koban-based initiatives will develop stronger isomorphic relations with other states’ Military Polices, rather than with São Paulo state’s criminal police. These considerations are important to understand the isomorphic forces been exerted into koban-like practices in Brazil and the



implications and challenges of their institutionalization process.

Under this light, the following questions can be raised for further discussions: (a) Could the current community policing program, even if not proposing unification of forces, generate debates within the Civil Police and other Brazilian polices, recognizing, stimulating and incorporating them as actors on the process of adopting and expanding koban-like practices in São Paulo? Community policing in Japan works closely to other spheres of policing, including criminal investigation. Considering the incompleteness of a proper institutional field of police in Brazil, (b) could the Brazilian counter-parts respond properly to such demand? And (c) what are the implications of the extra-organization specialization to the institutional performance of community policing in São Paulo?

## **IV. The Institutionalization of Community Policing in São Paulo**

### **1. Legitimizing the “*Brazilian Koban*”**

In 2008 the author interviewed a higher commander of the PMESP, responsible for the implementation of community policing in São Paulo. He mentioned that the adoption of the Japanese koban system originated a “*legitimate scientific model*” of community policing for Brazil (personal interview, 2008). Such scientific model combines previous practices of the PMESP, features of American “original” community policing, and practices proposed from Japan. It gave birth to a *new style of koban*, a Brazilian one. But why did he stress the *legitimate* aspect of this new practice, classifying it as a scientific model?

Legitimacy is a recurrent concept in institutional research (Selznick, 1957; Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). As outlined by Suchman (1995), legitimacy is “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p.574). In order to understand the process and the necessity of legitimating koban-like practices, we can turn to Tolbert and Zucker’s (1996) review of institutional

theory. They propose that a new set of practices is neither legitimate nor illegitimate. First of all, the modality of koban had to be invented or, as in the case of Brazil, *re-invented* by a small group of individuals and organizations, most probably concerned with PMESP's institutional performance. Then, after undergoing sufficient formalization, it needed to be spread to other organizations or members in the organization who were not familiar with its practice yet.

At a second moment, relevant actors on the decision-making process started accepting the *Brazilian koban* as valid. From this point, an increasing number of organizations embark on the process of adopting the new practices. Such organizations can attribute values to community policing, based on what they experience or acquire from other actors – known as the “champions of innovation” (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Examples of champions include the media, specialists, NGOs, and agencies, among others. Likewise, it is expected that the higher the number of police locations adopting koban-based practices, the more knowledge is detained and circulated in the field of policing, as a result reducing the cost of adoption by the PMESP and other Military Police forces in Brazil.

Furthermore Tolbert and Zucker (1996) highlight that, frequently, teams of institutional entrepreneurs are the ones who create fields for innovation. Professional groups, special interest groups and specialists, among others, compose these groups of proponents who head the institutionalization precisely because it facilitates and legitimize their action. For the case of the PMESP these professional groups can be considered “elites,” whose existence propose a broader, more democratic, socially oriented perspective within the organization. In order to create a certain field, these elites concurrently define, the problems to be solved and the practices to solve them. In order to do so, they can add meanings that will be widely applied to the innovation and to their multiple social environments. As a matter of fact, they count on “creative leadership” that has the will and the insight to see the necessity of “a socially integrating myth.” When connected to legitimate spheres, the practices attain normative legitimacy (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). In our case, if BCSs (including koban-like initiatives)

establish their position in the field of policing and public security, and there are meanings that can be directly associated to these new practices, then they will be rapidly institutionalized.

## **2. Organizational Inertia and Resistance to Change**

Powell and DiMaggio (1991) and Meyer and Rowan (1991) argue that inertia results from institutional needs, seated on the relationship between stability and legitimacy in the organizational field. Under these terms an organization can extend its stability only if those on the same institutional field assume its practices as legitimate. On the other hand, Selznick's (1953) study on the establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the implementation of its grassroots development policy suggests that organizational leadership tends to respond to changes in terms of "organizational character," and that there is resistance against changes that may jeopardize individual interests (Selznick, 1953; 1957). Under these terms, this paper assumes that resistance to community policing might occur when vested interests are threatened, as it imposes organizational inertia.

In one of the author's interviews with a community-policing sergeant (who asked not to be identified), he mentioned the difficulty of dealing with corruption at the higher echelons of the police. He explained that after arresting two drug traffickers, due to information his BCS gathered from the community, he received a visit from a higher-ranking official. This visit was not to congratulate his action, but to unofficially suggest him and his staff to "not touch" the drug traffickers in their area. As far as the author understood, there are arrangements between some corrupted police commanders and chiefs of drug trafficking, in which they settle "harmony" by not intervening in each other's territories.

Such arrangements certainly impose great challenges and resistance to the adoption of lawful context-responsive policing practices, and may indicate another source of inertia known as ceremonialism (Meyer & Rowan, 1991). Meyer and Rowan (1991) argue that, in order to deal with environmental pressures, an organization can create mechanisms that simulate - by means of

ceremony - the adoption of processes regarded as legitimate in an institutional field. As a result their legitimacy might increase in the eyes of other actors, just as the possibility to secure resources and maintain its practices. In reality, considering the diverse social contexts in Brazil, we can expect a wide range of ceremonialism posing resistance to the institutionalization of community policing, from “facade” koban into the “proper” ones. However, what might connect all of them is the integrating function of a Brazilian koban system, as this paper will explore next.

### **3. Koban as a Socially Integrating Myth?**

One of the most important techniques to create an institution is to elaborate a socially integrating myth; moreover, some of the main instruments for the protection of highly institutionalized organizations are the institutional myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1991; Medeiros, 2004). They represent “social interpretations of reality, rationalized and impersonal prescriptions – whose acceptance are beyond the judgment of individual actors – that provide technical characteristics to social objects, specifying in a normative way the means to reach technical purpose” (Medeiros, 2004, p.273). Moreover, “creative leadership” relies on the spirit and the insight to perceive the “necessity of a myth,” to discover a successful formulation, and above all to create the organizational conditions that will uphold the ideals expressed (Selznick, 1957). To what extent does the adoption of koban by the PMESP fit into these authors’ descriptions about socially integrating myths?

During this author’s interviews and observations for this paper, the author noticed that the adoption of the koban model represents an institutional attempt to construct distinctive aims and methods inside the PMESP. Does it represent, therefore, an effort to elaborate a socially integrating tool for the consolidation of community policing in São Paulo? In other words, to what extent does the koban-model, applied to BCS, represent *one more* institutional move to reinforce the legitimization of the PMESP?

#### 4. The origins of Myths

Meyer and Rowan (1991) outline three processes to explain the origin of myths. First, the elaboration of network relations – among organizations that coexist in a same institutional environment – creates structures, procedures, and policies. As long as these transactions persist, “mythic status” can be forged (Crank & Langworthy, 1992, p.350). Good examples in the case of the police are the “call centers,” know as *hyakutoban – 110* – in Japan, *190* in Brazil, or *911* in US. Even if previous studies have shown that the technique has little impact over crime rates (Bayley, 1994, p.3), people and organizations tend to associate rapid service to police efficiency (Medeiros, 2004, p.273). This is an institutional myth.

A second process occurs on the legal ordination of institutional environments. The creation of legal mandates, the regulation of practices by laws and administrative rules, and the establishment of requirements to the exercise of a profession are all processes that construct institutional myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1991, p.48). Medeiros (2004) outlines: “the greater the legal-rational order, the greater the extent in which rules and procedures are transformed into institutionalized requirements” (p.274). In the case of the police, the author notices, whose profession is intensively regulated, many myths are related to their professional formation, such as the notion that the applicability of disciplinary laws represent an adequate answer to the problem of public order in Brazil (Silva, 2001, p.73; in Medeiros, 2004, p.274), or that community policing practices represent the *right path* towards the establishment of good police-community relationships.

Finally, the third myth-making process rests on the reactions by organizations themselves, through their institutional leadership, to the challenges imposed by the institutional environment (Selznick, 1957). Organizations are not passive – on the contrary, leadership and professional associations are actively engaged in the construction and elaboration of institutional myths (Medeiros, 2004). Here we can turn back to the evolution of community policing in São Paulo, to unravel backwards the adoption of koban in São Paulo: To what extent

does it represent an effort, organized by PMESP's institutional leadership, to justify community policing practices and therefore justify the PMESP's own existence? What is the real contribution of the so-called koban system to the institutionalization process of community policing in São Paulo and, later, to Brazil?

## **5. Koban as an institutional move**

This paper argues that the employment of the nomenclature koban – applied to some of the community policing projects current in place – has implications that extend beyond the mere adoption of technical policing practices from Japan. It exerts the function of a socially integrating tool – or myth – that represents *one more* institutional “move” towards the legitimation of community policing in São Paulo. Because the PMESP and other actors in the field of policing start undergoing coercive and normative pressures derived from the adoption of the koban model, they start to become more similar to each other, contributing, thus, to the institutionalization of community policing practices in São Paulo as a whole. As a consequence, a deeper analysis about the extent in which relevant actors accept the koban as legitimate and appropriate becomes necessary.

## **V. Conclusions**

This paper highlights how the PMESP leadership articulates actions in order to implement community-policing practices and maintain their institutional integrity. The protection of integrity, more than an aesthetic or expressive exercise, is also the defense of the PMESP's “distinctive competence.” As the institutionalization of community policing and koban-like practices progress, a special character develops and the organization becomes more competent to perform its role. This is important for the PMESP, which are struggling to develop and display their distinctive competency in providing and maintaining public security.

However, in Brazil community policing is inserted into an institutional field influenced by diverse demands, in which military legacy and extra-organizational

specialization pose peculiar institutional challenges to its legitimacy. Rather than focusing on efficiency strategies in terms of crime control, their main concerns rest on their legitimacy, responding to internal and external demands posed by the institutional field of policing. Such understanding clarifies the dynamics into which koban-like initiatives are inserted. As community policing insinuates the proposition of preventive urban police, rather than paramilitary force-oriented functions connected to the army, it eventually contradicts the previous conception of social control predominant in Brazil. Hence, it will have to compete with other institutional myths and conceptions as it re-frames the way the PMESP understand their role as a social institution.

Finally, the author observes that koban-like initiatives provide an integrated sense of mission, working consequently as institution builders. It is argued that the adoption of the koban model ignited institutional support of community policing on the higher hierarchy levels of the PMESP, contributing to the consolidation of new practices related to community policing. There were coercive forces affecting the whole organization, because written orders were given by the command to specify what was understood about community policing inside the organization. Moreover, normative and mimetic forces also affected the PMESP, as seminars were created by their leaders to explain the necessity of adopting these new practices based on the Japanese model. Therefore, under the umbrella of koban, PMESP's institutional leadership had a fundamental role on the implementation process of community policing in São Paulo. Without such institutional support, it is more difficult to expect successful results on community policing in São Paulo. In the end, the koban myth-making certainly has origins in a sensed need to improve institutional performance and the morale of PMESP; but its main contribution, rather than technical, is to assist building this new integrated social organism: community policing in Brazil.

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## **Koban and the Institutionalization of Community Policing in São Paulo**

<Summary>

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The institutionalization process of community policing taking place in São Paulo raises a series of questions regarding the ability of the São Paulo State Military Police – *Policia Militar do Estado de São Paulo*, or PMESP – to implement and perform properly the new ideas and norms implicated in such process. The adoption of Koban-like initiatives, since 2005, is one of them. As much as resistance to reform and the reappearance of old “habitus” – of the dictatorship era – is expected in any “inculcation” of practices (Bordieu, 1977), a clear understanding of the PMESP and its organizational character, competence, institutional values, and leadership might help us understand not only the basic principles to the success of koban-based projects, but also community policing as a whole in Brazil.

As Selznick (1957) explores the meaning of institutional leadership, suggesting that its main responsibility is the maintenance of institutional integrity, we explore how the PMESP leadership articulates actions towards these ends. By integrity, we refer to Selznick’s (1957) combination of organization – forms, procedures and group cohesion – and policy. As the institutionalization of community policing and koban-like practices progress, a special character develops and the organization becomes more competent to perform its role. This is important for the PMESP, which is struggling to develop and display its distinctive competency in providing and maintaining public

security.

Furthermore, community policing is inserted into an institutional field influenced by diverse demands, in which military legacy and extra-organizational specialization pose peculiar institutional challenges to its legitimacy. Rather than focusing on efficiency strategies in terms of crime control, we agree with Medeiros (2004) and Selznick (1957) that the main concern should be on its legitimacy, under the concept of *institutional fields* proposed by Lin (2001). This allows us to clarify the dynamics into which koban-like initiatives are inserted. As community policing insinuates the proposition of preventive urban police, rather than paramilitary force-oriented functions connected to the army, it eventually contradicts the previous conception of social control predominant in Brazil. Hence, it will have to compete with other institutional myths and conceptions as it re-frames the way the PMESP understand its role as a social institution.

As we explore the process of institutional building (Selznick, 1957) of community policing in São Paulo, we observe that koban-like initiatives can provide an integrated sense of mission, working consequently as institution builders. To be effective, then, the recently created *myth of koban* cannot be restricted to verbal statements; it needs to occupy many aspects of the PMESP policy, affecting the training of police officers, strategies on community approach, and the designed routine of daily practices. It also should respond to inner needs – providing motivation and satisfaction among police officers – and outer demands – bringing a sense of conformity to citizens, who must see it as legitimate and appropriate. Whether one likes it or not, making the koban a true myth implies particular objectives and capabilities, although these may not be the ones that originally motivated the sponsors of the Japanese model. In the end, the koban myth-making certainly has origins in a sensed need to improve institutional performance and the morale of PMESP; but its main contribution, rather than technical, is to assist building this new integrated social organism: community policing in Brazil.