

Police performance regimes and police activity: Compstat in Paris and London compared

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Abstract

This paper analyses the implementation of Compstat-like processes in two large European police organizations: the Metropolitan Police Service in London and the *Préfecture de police* in Paris. Compstat-like processes are characterized by processes framed by performance indicators and targets, performance assessment sessions, units dedicated to the collection and analysis of performance data, and information processing requiring the use of crime data. Such processes raise two broad sets of questions. First, do these innovations lead to tighter or more encompassing crime control strategies? Second, does the old command-and-control organizational model of police departments emerge reinforced, or does innovation foster the emergence of a new, more deliberative, problem-solving style of management? The paper analyses the mix of common features (limited geographical decentralization, increasing internal accountability based on the centrality of quantitative data, the prioritizing of crime reduction, and the influence of new technologies on how data is used) and differences (the range of indicators used, broader in London, and the management styles, more in line with a neo-managerial impetus in London). Interpreting these contrasts requires an analytical framework combining both the administrative, political and cultural traditions in the two police forces and the intentional projects carried out by political and professional actors.

Keywords

Comparison, Compstat, managerialism, performance, police, Paris, London

The international diffusion of Compstat¹ epitomizes the combined effects of two broad dynamics impinging on contemporary policing: the diffusion of performance measurement tools inspired by neo-managerial thinking, and a strong push from novel

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information-processing technologies – crime mapping and crime analysis in particular. Most of the debate so far has focused on some of the large US police departments Compstat originated from (Silverman, 2001; Weisburd et al., 2003; Willis et al., 2007). This technical-managerial device, however, turns out to have been imported in some form or other by the Australians (Fleming and Scott, 2008), the English (Neyroud, 2008), the French (Didier, 2011) and the Dutch (Punch, 2007), which makes it necessary to broaden the field of investigation beyond just the US police agencies.

Two main strands of argument may be distinguished in the academic debate on Compstat. The first relates to the extent of the change: Compstat can be seen as triggering a major change by introducing new components (mission clarification, internal accountability, etc.), even though traditional paramilitary characteristics still seem to prevail (Weisburd et al., 2003). On the basis of assumptions derived from institutional theory, Willis et al. (2007) have shown that, in three large police departments, Compstat had been mostly implemented as a way of conferring crime-fighting legitimacy to police organizations. In terms of providing a basis for the rigorous assessment of organizational performance and changing routines, however, its effects have been more limited. The second debate refers to the direction taken by the change. Compstat has been described by some as an effective innovation in US policing, enabling a strategic, problem-solving and data-driven approach to policing. Not only has this position been advocated by Compstat's creators, but it has also been endorsed by a variety of scholars (Silverman, 2001; and, more recently, Zimring, 2012). Conversely, critics have stressed Compstat's tendency to accentuate the military style of police management while offering limited problem-solving and innovative capacities (Moore, 2003; Weisburd et al., 2003; Willis et al., 2007; Sparrow, 2015). Some initial supporters have even changed tack, citing various deviances – such as unethical data-recording practices – and the culture of fear generated by Compstat (Eterno and Silverman, 2012).

This domestic US debate constitutes a bedrock for a more international discussion on the effects of Compstat-like processes within police organizations. By Compstat-like processes, I mean technological and managerial systems drawing on four complementary dimensions: (i) scoreboards, performance indicators and targets; (ii) collective performance sessions, where the activities of units are publicly reviewed; (iii) units in charge of collecting, analysing and disseminating performance data within the organization; (iv) the existence of information-processing schemes requiring the use of crime data. What remains to be seen is how these new processes impact on the organization of police forces, their internal accountability processes, and how they make sense of information processing. This is the objective of the present analysis of Compstat-like processes in two European capitals, Paris and London.

More precisely, this paper will build upon and combine two lines of reasoning. First, do Compstat-like processes lead to an 'old' police strategy, focused solely on crime control (as the main, or even the sole, goal of policing) or to a more global approach that takes into account community-related concerns, underlying causes of crime (disorders, fear) and the quality of the police response (rectitude of police officers, quality of internal processes)? Second, should Compstat-like processes be seen as a reinforcement of the old command-and-control, punitive management style of police departments or as a new, more deliberative, problem-solving and collaborative style?

A note of caution must be introduced here. Although effectiveness is indeed an important issue (see, on New York, the opposing views of Zimring, 2012, and Eterno and Silverman, 2012), it is not the focus of the present paper. I was unable to rigorously test the net effect of Compstat-like processes by collecting and comparing data on crime evolution from other cities that were not using Compstat-like innovations. Moreover, disentangling the various factors explaining criminal trends requires a careful and sophisticated methodology that did not fit within the framework of the paper. Finally, as will be shown, it turns out that official statistics cannot be considered entirely reliable.

To answer these questions, I will examine whether Compstat-like processes have favoured the decentralization of command by reinforcing the role of middle managers and new processes of internal accountability. I will then turn to the substance of police activity, since Compstat is supposed to foster the prioritization of police actions and performance indicator-based monitoring, which implies more data-driven forms of policing. I will finish by summarizing comparative findings and proposing a tentative framework to analyse dissimilarities. I shall start with a detailed introduction to the London and Paris cases, as well as my methodology.

Paris and London performance regimes compared

I have chosen to examine two large police organizations – the Metropolitan Police Service of London (MPS, or the Met) and the Paris Prefecture of Police (PP) – using qualitative research techniques.

The Prefecture of Police and the Met: Managerial changes

Analysing comparatively the Met and the PP is particularly heuristic because they are often depicted as representing two models of policing. Official history often sets the Met and the PP quite apart, the philosophy underlying the creation of the Met being in direct opposition to the political and intrusive nature of the continental model of policing, of which the French police has always been emblematic – respectively low and high policing, to use Brodeur's categories (2010). However, this chasm has lately been qualified, as historians have underlined both similarities (control of both forces by central governments; Emsley, 1999) and transfers (the development of the *sergents de ville* since 1854, inspired by the London bobbies). Both are highly visible organizations in charge of policing political capitals and boast a similar headcount (see Table 1). The Met is headed by a Commissioner – officially appointed by the Queen, but whose nomination actually derives from an arrangement between the Home Office and the Mayor of London, with a growing influence of the latter – and is divided into 32 boroughs, each led by a chief superintendent known as the borough commander. The Paris PP (which was created by Napoleon; Mouhanna and Easton, 2014), although formally integrated into the National Directorate of the *Police Nationale*, is in practice largely autonomous, headed as it is by the Prefect of Police (*Préfet de Police*), a high-ranking civil servant directly appointed by the President of the Republic. Since 2009, the PP has been in charge of policing not only Paris itself but the three surrounding *départements* as well – about 6 million residents in total. This paper will, however, cover the PP's action only within its traditional

Table 1. The Prefecture of Police vs. the Met (2017): Facts and figures.

	The Met	PP
Number of police officers	31,075 ^a	27,500
Population	8.5 million	6.7 million
Police officers per 100,000 inhabitants	366	410
Area covered	1578 km ²	814 km ²
Organization	- Four main directorates: Territorial policing, Specialist crime & operations, Specialist operations, and six civilian-staffed support departments - Territorial policing: 32 borough operational command units (BOCUs), usually highly autonomous.	- Five main directorates with regard to policing: Directorate of intelligence, Directorate of criminal investigations, Directorate of public order and traffic, Directorate of security of proximity (territorial policing), Technical services and logistics. - Territorial policing: four territorial directorates (Paris, Hauts-de Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne), traditionally firmly controlled by headquarters.

Note:

a. Not including the 1424 police community support officers.

boundaries, that is, the municipality of Paris, because the implementation of Compstat was limited to this jurisdiction. Paris is divided into 20 districts (*arrondissements*), whose force is headed by a district commander (*commissaire d'arrondissement*). Analysing the implementation of Compstat in two police organizations carrying different traditions triggers comparative questions: Have these legacies any impact on contemporary managerial practices? Or do contemporary globalizing trends (diffusion of performance management tools, information-processing technologies) favour a convergence of police organizations and processes?

In 2001, the newly appointed Prefect of Police visited the New York Police Department (NYPD), returning with a novel managerial tool: the aptly named Compstat (Didier, 2011). In Paris as in New York, Compstat was meant to be both a system for collecting and analysing information and a new managerial process, mainly carried out by evaluation meetings. This reform was concomitant with another structural change at the PP: the creation of district stations (*commissariats d'arrondissement*) endowed with a broad patrol and criminal investigation remit that actually took over criminal competences formerly devolved to the criminal directorate of the PP. The process has evolved considerably since then: evaluation meetings were discontinued for a while, then reinstated, and are now held monthly, each one devoted to a given district – meaning that each district commander will be heard every two years. As a preparation for these meetings, a specific unit is tasked with collecting and analysing field information from districts.

At the Met – and every other British force – performance management has been a key component of the reforms introduced since the 1980s (Savage, 2007). In the early 2000s,

pressure from performance indicators was such that resentment began to rise explicitly among the rank and file (Fitzgerald et al., 2002). Since then, performance management has been considered a key development of the 2000s, an era marked by a firm, target-driven management style directly orchestrated by the Home Office. Two major changes took place at the turn of the 2010s. First, the grip of the Home Office on the Met receded as the Mayor of London increasingly assumed strategic planning responsibilities in the field of policing, which culminated in the creation of the MOPAC – the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, headed by a dedicated Deputy Mayor. March 2013 saw the publication by the MOPAC of the first Policing and Crime Plan for London, setting ambitious objectives to the Met in the form of the 20:20:20 challenge: 20 percent reduction in neighbourhood crime, 20 percent increase in confidence, 20 percent reduction in costs (MOPAC, 2015; Edwards and Prins, 2014). In 2012, on the initiative of the then Assistant Commissioner in charge of territorial policing, the Met introduced CrimeFighters, a new framework for performance measurement and management that created an accountability process involving monthly meetings attended by all borough commanders at the All Force level, as well as monthly meetings at the area level and weekly meetings at the borough level.

A note on research methodology

Studying the diffusion of performance management requires an understanding of how this process drives change in police forces: how geographically and functionally different units are affected, accountability managed, performance defined, and data mobilized. The research was mainly based on interviews conducted at headquarters and in police stations.² In Paris, most interviews took place in 2013 and 2014. Half a dozen interviews were conducted at headquarters, especially with senior police officers (including the Prefect of Police) in charge of performance monitoring and management. About 40 interviews were conducted in police stations, at various levels of the hierarchy (from rank-and-file officers to district commanders). I completed my data by specifically interviewing superintendents in a number of districts, and attending one of the evaluation meetings.³ In London, 45 interviews were held in two boroughs at various levels of the hierarchy (from borough commanders to police constables) in 2013–14. As in Paris, I had only limited access to performance meetings. I endeavoured to offset these limitations by resorting to a couple of specific research strategies – first, trying to gain the trust of my interviewees by guaranteeing them anonymity; second, cross-checking and double-checking information by multiplying interviews in each force. In both cases, my data tend to focus on the 2010–2014 period.

Between accountability and control

The first aspect concerns the redistribution of responsibilities within the two organizations. Two processes are key here. One is the rearrangement of levels of responsibility: are middle managers with geographical responsibilities (borough commanders in the Met, district commanders in the PP) empowered and allocated fresh resources? The second one has to do with managerial accountability. In this context, accountability means

'a relationship between an actor and a forum in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct' (Bovens, 2010: 951). Accountability may range from mere compliance with instructions to full information sharing, with a more deliberative dimension.

A moderately decentralized geographical organizational structure

Both in Paris and in London, middle managers are the key players of the new performance regime that was set up. Like New York's precinct commanders, who were explicitly considered by Bratton (Bratton and Knobler, 1998) as the key actors in his 'reengineering', the Met's borough commanders and the PP's district commanders constitute the main level of responsibility affected by the reform. In both forces, performance is assessed and compared at the borough/district level. In Paris, the implementation of Compstat had the effect of raising the visibility and centrality of the newly created district stations. Data that were in the past scattered among various divisions of the PP have since been collected and assembled for each district. Such metrics as the number of monthly patrols conducted by police units, the distribution of arrests among the units of each district, or the evolution of investigative staffing levels for each district became available on a regular basis at the district level. In London, the new impetus given by CrimeFighters explicitly focused on borough commanders, who were at the epicentre of the strategy (De Maillard and Savage, 2017). Benefiting from the assistance of crime analysts and 'local business analysts' (known as 'performance analysts' prior to 2013), they are expected to have an extensive, fine-grained, detailed knowledge of the evolution of crime patterns and police deployment in their borough.

Contrary to what was observed in US police departments (Willis et al., 2007), this central responsibility of middle managers was not accompanied by a reinforcement of their powers over specialized units. In London, for instance, borough commanders facing crime spikes had to negotiate with headquarters to be allocated some additional resources, as was the case in one of our boroughs, which faced a surge in burglaries: the command team of the borough was able to secure support from headquarters only after a long and tough negotiation process, even though they had provided evidence that burglars were coming from other boroughs of London. In Paris, decentralization remains limited as well. Special units have not been decentralized, disciplinary cases are often dealt with beyond district commanders, and headquarters often make urgent requests on specific issues. The introduction of Compstat did not alter this long-standing state of affairs, although in a number of meetings, the Prefect has been known to ask specialized units and directorates to provide some assistance to geographical units:

The pressure was on the district commander... but I won't lie to you, the other directorates were also involved and the Prefect could if necessary say 'we need to work on the drugs – the criminal directorate, what can you do?' (District commander, PP, 2013)

Another aspect was to determine how this empowerment of middle managers translated to the lower levels of both organizations. Whereas the Met's intermediate hierarchy and even the constables were often familiar with CrimeFighters, it was hardly the case at

the PP, where only district commanders and their immediate subordinates were concerned. However, in both cases, the new requirements were not without consequences: commanders had to ensure that crime data were monitored on a regular basis in order to avoid ‘bad surprises’, and thus involved their units in the monitoring of crime and police activity in their area on a regular, more frequent basis. At the Met, CrimeFighters meetings stir up the entire organization on a daily basis, which sometimes generates bitter comments about the ensuing pressuring effects:

The thing that drives is CrimeFighters... Everything comes true from that meeting which feels when it sort of comes down the chain, it feels like it’s just something like a stick: why are you not doing this? Why are you not doing that? It is very... you feel very driven. (Inspector, MPS, 2013)

From this perspective, Compstat-like processes can be seen as a responsabilization of middle managers, who in turn increase their grip on their subordinates through the use of quantitative indicators in order to monitor the activities of various services (patrol units, criminal investigation) on a regular basis.

Reinforcing internal accountability

Once middle managers are responsabilized, how are they held to account? An accountability system may be more or less hierarchical and authoritarian, and leave more or less room for discussion and deliberation.

In both cases, Compstat-like procedures favoured a strong logic of internal accountability, based on two powerful mechanisms. The first one is the rapid collection and publication of performance data by middle managers. This is particularly true at the Met, where information is available on a daily basis, and where information is synthesized weekly as well as monthly (through various CrimeFighters documents which give an overview of performance) using internal crime systems.

The second mechanism is the logic associated with the theatricality of performance meetings. Although not public in the sense of being broadly open to anyone who would like to attend, for commanders these meetings involve having to face an assembly (composed of the assistant commissioners and the advising team as well as the other borough commanders in London, or the Prefect and numerous central directorates in Paris), which clearly reinforces the pressure – so much so in fact that some of the commanders spoke of ‘intimidating’ meetings. Based on indicators, commanders are liable to be quizzed on their activity by headquarters representatives, and of course no one wants to perform poorly in front of their peers. As one of our interviewees stated: ‘You don’t want to be the naughty boy on the steps.’

Meetings at the PP and the Met rest on a mix of result-oriented pressure and an opportunity to justify oneself. They make it possible to explain variations in terms of activity, due to the specific circumstances encountered by a district, even if commanders are held to account for their quantified performance:

The level of debate that we now have is that both corporate and area CrimeFighters are focused on what is your issue, your problem, what is the treatment, if you like to use medical analogies...

Is it working? If not, what's plan B? If that's not working very well, what is plan C? (Borough commander, MPS, 2014)

I was very disadvantaged on some of our arrests. As we used simplified procedures on a number of crimes, individuals are taken to the station and therefore you cannot register them, this was especially the case for street peddling. And, necessarily, it worked against my numbers. Then we had to enter into explanations, but you could do it in these meetings. (District commander, PP, 2014)

Meetings have varied in style over time. In Paris, although taking his inspiration from New York, the Prefect who introduced Compstat was keen to get district commanders on board and as such tried to make it 'pleasant (for) the troops' (Didier, 2011: 12). Although Compstat meetings were initially supposed to be 'gentle', they probably started to get somewhat rougher when some police commanders ultimately gained the impression that they were merely being grilled about their 'numbers' – in a rather authoritarian manner to boot:

It was very unilateral, a very top-down manner, very negative and pejorative if you hadn't got enough results in green. You had to justify yourself... and above all, you had to adjust the tactics... by any means possible. (District commander, PP, 2013)

At the Met, the new Assistant Commissioner (AC) appointed in 2012 turned out to have an intrusive leadership style, yet over time he actually eased accountability pressure on the borough commanders. At the beginning, meetings were quite abrasive and punitive, commanders being very seriously challenged on the various components of their activity. A borough commander commented:

The meeting is not quite as aggressive as it was. I don't mind that, I'm not scared of that sort of thing. You never really were keeping your head down hoping that they won't ask you the question that you knew they should be asking you [uhm] because of the way that they asked it, I never felt that it was an opportunity to share a good practice or but...

Beyond performance pressure and the theatrical dimension, in terms of career prospects, little evidence exists that this performance evaluation process can be linked to any clear system of promotion and sanction. Rather, most commanders referred to a 'reputational effect' within the force. Although the system did not exhibit the brutal characteristics of its New York counterpart, where commanders were liable to be removed overnight, the ability to demonstrate 'performance' was clearly seen by some commanders as a way of climbing the career ladder, especially in London. This point should, however, be qualified by taking into account individual career paths: in one of the boroughs, the commander was reaching the last stages of his career and obviously felt less concerned by this reward system.

Diverging management styles: Old school vs. neo-managerial

Internal accountability mechanisms, however, diverged on several dimensions between the two organizations: the publicization of the managerial process within the organization; the challenging of the commanders' authority during meetings; the uncertainty

associated with the evaluation process; and the nature of comparisons between territorial units.

In London, a central component of the managerial process during the 2012–14 period was that the AC publicly expressed mistrust towards commanders, especially regarding their alleged tendency to conceal what was really going in their borough. The theatricality offered by CrimeFighters meetings tended to make it fairly conspicuous within the organization:

You hear the story of a chief superintendent being asked ‘who does that for you?’, ‘oh inspector x does it’, so he rings up inspector x there in the meeting. He answers the phone and says ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about’. (Chief inspector, MPS, 2014)

Commanders could therefore be explicitly questioned on their internal management. In Paris, the ceremonial dimension is more pervasive: meetings are chaired by the Prefect of Police – whereas in London the Commissioner typically does not attend – and the many central directorates (intelligence, public order, criminal investigation, etc.) sit around the table even though their participation in the assessment is very limited. The kind of intrusive supervision and expression of mistrust that could be seen in London rarely occurs in Paris: for a district commander to be publicly challenged through a call made to one of his subordinates is inconceivable, since this would be considered as seriously undermining his internal credibility.

The second dimension is the uncertainty associated with this managerial style. In London, performance management is linked to an evaluation process that in turn is perceived as rather unpredictable – and this unpredictability may be construed as a way of constantly challenging borough commanders. As one of them told me:

They pick on different bits each time and you go ‘what the hell is that’ and stuff you’ve not seen before and we don’t know... You are then given this thing and you think where has this come from and if he figures that you don’t recognize them...

As a consequence, commanders devote a considerable amount of time to the preparation of these meetings, knowing that they may be challenged on the tiniest details and cannot therefore be over-prepared. In Paris, these meetings used to involve a preparatory pre-meeting between the chief of staff (*chef d’état major*) and the commander before the official evaluation meeting, in order to avoid unexpected, embarrassing situations – the official meeting being attended by the Prefect himself. Whereas the London version looks more like a game at which top leaders try to ‘catch out’ borough commanders who cannot offer a good answer to their questions, the Paris method involves careful preparation and established conventions. The level of questioning is also less fine-grained in Paris and does not require any lengthy preparation based on the broad assimilation of various data. One of the commanders significantly told us: ‘I used to go there with my guts and my knife.’

Thirdly, the Met tends to rely much more heavily than the PP on data comparison between boroughs. In London, meetings involve all 32 borough commanders and the evaluation derives from a comparison of data sets over time (against the previous 6 or 12

months), but also among boroughs. Ranking is a key aspect of the process and is used to benchmark both the Met against other forces and internal Met divisions/boroughs against each other. Data sets are regularly displayed in such a way as to make the ranking of the different boroughs clearly visible. Borough commanders are not only accountable for their performance over time, but also made to compete against each other through the ranking system and to think of their performance in comparative terms.

Meanwhile, at the PP, most meetings are bilateral, involving one or several district commander(s) on the one hand and central command on the other. Very limited comparative data are made available. The various districts have limited knowledge of what their neighbours do. Most comparisons result from lateral, often unofficial exchanges between borough commanders rather than from any set policy:

Sometimes, we do get some information... my boss transmits me figures from the other districts but we rarely have them... Management guards them jealously and does not strive to communicate them. (Deputy district commander, PP, 2015).

Whereas central managers at the PP fear that sharing information among districts entails the risk of loosening their grip on them, the Met leadership considers that the combined effects of transparency and competition will increase effectiveness at the borough level. Whereas in Paris, the hierarchical pyramid model continues to prevail, competition between boroughs is favoured at the Met – by means of a systematic comparison of their respective performance.

According to Manning, ‘any evaluation will be seen as an effort to punish, not reward; to assert flimsy managerial authority’ (2008: 290); this is clearly a recurring aspect, mentioned by commanders in both organizations – which suggests that these meetings were used by senior leadership to pinpoint deficiencies and highlight weaknesses. As was the case in the US (Willis et al., 2007), Compstat-like processes may be interpreted as an attempt at top management dominance, a way of powerfully and unambiguously conveying the notion that they are in full command of their organizations. Symbolic gestures may be important to make a striking impression within an organization: hence, questioning an inspector about a spike in robberies or expressing mistrust towards a chief superintendent are ways of sending a message of distrust to the entire organization. However, even though this leaves little room for discussion, these meetings can also serve as places where managers may justify themselves and send (limited) messages to top management. In other words, although internal accountability turned out to serve mainly as a reinforcement of information-based control by top management, some more lateral effects have been observed.

Between data-driven strategies and business as usual

In principle, Compstat should amount to a clarification of the police mandate, because the monitoring of police activities through performance indicators should help focus resources on clear objectives. Supported by technological advances, Compstat-like processes should lead to increasingly data-driven forms of policing. This increasing reliance on data, however, raises the question of how crime data are collected and recorded, an

issue that has proved quite controversial in several police departments that came under pressure to demonstrate results.

Crime-focused?

The determination to dramatically cut down on crime was the main driver behind NYPD's resorting to Compstat. Hence the enduring question: do Compstat-like processes enlarge the police mandate to encompass all disorders, including the perceived underlying causes of crime, or do they restrict police activity to a simple crime control mandate?

In both organizations, crime may be said to be the core concern. In London as in Paris, boroughs are clearly assigned yearly crime control objectives. In both cases, crime becomes an even stronger concern when spikes are being recorded and/or specific criminal behaviours are being prioritized – the seven crimes prioritized by the MOPAC are a prime example of this. This pressure from numbers may become pretty explicit, expressed either in bilateral exchanges or during evaluation meetings:

One day, the general director for public security called me: 'You know crime is under control in Paris. Everywhere. But not in your district. I have only one problem and it is you. Thus, I want you to do something about your crime. Do whatever but do something.' (District commander, Paris, PP, 2013)

Let me quote the DAC: 'I would expect you to know my point about the robber.' Because it's a MOPAC 7 crime, because we don't charge robbers every day, because it's hard to bloody catch them and charge them [uhm]. Yeah so I think it's pretty explicit. (Borough commander, MPS, 2013).

Each of these quotes revolves around crime reduction and detection. What was emphasized at CrimeFighters meetings and/or at the PP was crime reduction only – with the occasional mention of confidence in the MPS (see below). It doesn't follow, however, that policing organizations are interested only in carrying out a strict crime control mandate. In both cities, fighting disorder and maintaining a positive relationship with the community remain a constant concern, even though these objectives may not be explicitly stated:

I have to deliver on the partnership part from the beginning... you know, we may not talk about that very much, but that still exists. I still have to do all the other strategic partnership stuff and the community disability stuff you know... it is implicit in my role, but it doesn't go away, (Borough commander, MPS, 2012)

There are two explanations for the fact that community interests, although not reflected in police statistics, remain an enduring concern. Firstly, police managers consider that crime statistics do not always speak to the public. According to a borough commander operating in a deprived district of Paris, the idea of 'raw' crime was often seen as such nonsense in community meetings that he had to spend significant time explaining police behaviour and why complaints from residents were taken extremely

seriously. Even though statistics fail to reflect this activity, and this commander's refusal to fiddle with numbers (see below) put him at odds with his management, his local problem-solving, community-oriented strategy was nevertheless supported by this management. Over time, in an effort to appraise this community-oriented performance, Compstat meetings ended up being partly devoted to discussing local problems beyond the strict boundaries of statistical monitoring. Secondly, for commanders, maintaining good local relationships is a way of potentially counterbalancing top-down internal pressure. In one or two London boroughs, the strong relationship with local officials could even be seen as a form of counter-power against attempts at centralization by the Met's top management, because the borough commander was able to derive some local political support from his positive relationship with the local council.

A major difference may, however, be noted concerning the scope of performance evaluation. In Paris, there is no such thing as data measuring the satisfaction and confidence of the public. Relations with the public are assessed indirectly, through such indicators as the ratio of police presence in public places (number of police officers on the streets divided by the total available workforce), the number of 'contacts' made by police officers, or waiting times at police stations. Compared with the Met, two indicators are missing: confidence and victim satisfaction. Satisfaction surveys are statutory requirements for all English and Welsh forces, and the Met also commissions its own public attitude survey to examine the public's experience of policing. Confidence is one of the key objectives of the MOPAC challenge ('boost confidence by 20 percent').⁴ Confidence and victim satisfaction are therefore organizational objectives: boroughs are assessed and ranked according to them. The MPS has identified drivers (effectiveness in dealing with crime, engagement with community, fair treatment, lessening anti-social behaviour; see Stanko and Bradford, 2011) and a central support team was created to guide boroughs in their strategies to increase the level of confidence. Although the methodology may be subject to discussion (samples being quite limited), police managers use confidence and victim satisfaction indicators to monitor, diagnose and redress the way police deal with citizens. For instance, dedicated software is used to flag up crime records whenever detectives fail to update victim records, and supervisors are expected to double-check the quality of their subordinates' work through personal phone calls to victims. This marks an important difference from police performance assessment in France, where such measures simply do not exist. In other words, the choice of performance indicators reveals a broader conception of policing in London, based not only on crime reduction but also on confidence in the police.

A limited data-driven process

Up-to-date information and crime mapping should enable police managers to deploy their units more effectively, and follow-up should be facilitated by the immediate release of data. These meetings offer an opportunity for district commanders to think about their activity in a more reflexive way:

For a manager, it was not uninteresting as it forced us to have some indicators that we were not always capable – at the level of the district as it existed at that time – of creating by ourselves.

These compulsory meetings were an opportunity to think about the basis of a number of figures, quantified indicators, and management tools. (District commander, PP, 2013)

Interestingly, one much-discussed aspect of Compstat is the opportunity it offers to link crime issues with other data available (Human Resources figures but also socio-demographic data). In both forces, the mobilization of crime data is, however, restricted by the abilities of police managers (see, for the US, Willis et al., 2007), who were recruited on the basis of other skill sets and thus have limited technological knowledge regarding activities they have not been trained for in the first place. They face two other obstacles in designing police strategies based on data-driven processes. The first is the need to respond to crisis situations: crime spikes generate short-term pressure, which tends to thwart innovation. In such cases, knee-jerk or ‘whack-a-mole’ reactions prevail. Whatever the case may be, the use of data (combined with reinforced accountability) entails a shortening of the time horizon: data that were rather loosely analysed in the recent past now have to be monitored on a weekly basis – even daily in the case of such sensitive topics as neighbourhood crime. The second limitation is that the processes rely almost exclusively on internal police data, since precious little input comes from external sources.

Although both forces tend to exhibit similar limitations, they diverge in terms of their degree of sophistication in several areas. London has developed an IT system that allows the automatic recording of crime data and police deployment within a geographical mapping scheme. Moreover, managers receive support in trend analysis from crime analysts and performance managers:

So the local business analyst should be looking at the internal factors, the processes that we know should operate in a certain way in order to drive the most effective outcomes. Then, as result of this discussion, we bring in the intelligence analyst for the external factors, I mean we put in the parts: what’s the issue, what’s the current processes and treatment that we are using? Is it having an impact? If not, is it because it has not been applied like you think it is? (Superintendent, MPS, 2012)

In Paris, the IT system is robust but not sophisticated. Geographical mapping is almost non-existent because data updates are few and far between (monthly), and the whole system is perceived by superintendents as unwieldy and complicated to use. None of those I interviewed mentioned using geographical mapping in any way, shape or form, some of them criticizing it as extremely user-unfriendly: ‘As always, we bought the cheapest version available... and it doesn’t work,’ lamented a district commander. Significantly enough, I noted that low-tech, traditional maps and pins were still in use in some stations. The system was even riven by internal contradictions: practices of under-recording (or postponed recording, see below) led to inadequate updating of the crime database, which considerably restricted its potential. In Paris, the system lacks geographical precision, and the quality of the data is suspect.

In other words, despite differences in tone in Paris and London, in neither case were promises of data-driven crime analysis in police stations fulfilled, as in US police departments (Willis et al., 2007): Compstat has not succeeded in making academic evidence relying on place-based information a staple of police service.

Gaming practices

Performance pressure may be powerfully linked to gaming practices (Bevan and Hood, 2006). Police are assessed on the basis of the numbers they produce, which are thus a source of considerable ambiguity: the police may be tempted to record acts of criminal behaviour in a dishonest way, to improve their formal performance. Pressure to curb criminal behaviour may in turn trigger unofficial practices of under-recording, thus generating a fundamental bias in how crime statistics are produced, the NYPD in the 2000s being a case in point (Eterno and Silverman, 2012).

In Paris, some of my sources described very precisely how they were told by their hierarchy (generally senior managers) to find ways of reducing criminal behaviour. The wording was typically firm but implicit: 'Do whatever you want, but reduce crime.' Commanders were not explicitly instructed to achieve crime reduction by manipulating the data (using fraudulent and/or misleading methods of data gathering, coding and analysis), but the management's willingness not to examine too closely how commanders achieved reductions left little doubt as to the underlying goals to be reached. Although not broadcast, pressure not to record crime data was very pervasive. More than one of my interviewees mentioned an almost institutionalized network for the fiddling of figures. Several audits conducted since then by general inspectorates have substantiated these manipulations over the 2006–12 period: the downgrading of certain offences (burglaries becoming physical damage), postponement of the recording (such that a month may 'evaporate' by the end of the year), and even simple non-recording of certain crimes (Inspection générale de l'administration–Inspection générale de la police nationale, 2014). Districts were thus assessed on the basis of seriously flawed crime data, which takes us back to the point made above about evaluation meetings. The ceremonial nature of these meetings becomes all the more obvious when the presence of an unofficial system for massaging the figures- is asserted.

In London, evidence is less clear-cut. None of my interviewees informed me of extensive mechanisms of under-recording of criminal behaviour.⁵ There are, however, signs that practices of under-recording were not absent in London. Nationally, the British Crime Statistics lost their 'national statistical' status (a sort of gold-standard status accorded by the UK Statistics Authority) in January 2014. An inquiry led by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC, 2014a: 49) found evidence of many unrecorded crimes: about 19 percent from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, especially for violence against the person (under-recording rate of 33 percent) and sexual offences (26 percent). In an online survey of police officers, 39 percent said they had experienced performance pressure over the previous two years (HMIC, 2014a: 83–7), even though the link between performance pressure and falsification remains unproven. The HMIC also conducted a more specific inquiry into the Met (2014b): although HMIC results are less reliable (the sample being smaller), non-recording was also identified for the same types of crimes (sexual offences and violence against the person). A parallel internal audit of the Met also concluded, in the words of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, that 'governance arrangements for crime recording needed to be more clearly defined'.⁶ However, London's rules were tighter: in Paris, until 2015, crime recording was a two-step process conducted under the aegis of the middle management, which was notorious for allowing leeway in the recording of data, whereas the London system was much more constraining.⁷

Explaining differences and similarities

The similarities and differences in Paris and London's respective Compstat-like processes are listed in Table 2. Shared features include limited geographical decentralization, increasing internal accountability based on the centrality of quantitative data, the prioritizing of crime reduction, and the influence of new technologies on how data is used.

The situation, however, remains sharply opposed on at least two levels. The first issue is the scope of performance in each organization. Firstly, an enduring dissimilarity remains in terms of the range of performance indicators used: London police, in contrast to their Parisian colleagues, continue to be assessed on such criteria as confidence and victim satisfaction: subjective perceptions are deemed legitimate to assess police activity in London, but not in Paris – and the same applies to England vs. France more generally. The second contrast pertains to police management styles. On many of the various themes associated with the new public management – transparency, use of performance indicators, benchmarking – the Met and the PP tend to diverge quite radically: the Met prioritizes data transparency (both internal and external) and relies on a benchmark-based approach to performance evaluation (letting units compare themselves), and data

Table 2. Paris and London compared: A summary.

COMPSTAT features	Paris	London
Geographical organization	Specialized units not decentralized, centralized structure preserved, limited pressure down to the rank of superintendent.	Specialized units not decentralized, negotiations between boroughs and headquarters, pressure going down through the ranks.
Internal accountability	Meetings to evaluate performance (but rather infrequent), top-down logic but room for discussion, limited punitive nature.	Meetings to evaluate performance on a regular basis, top-down logic but room for discussion, limited punitive nature.
Management style	Ceremonial dimension, more bilateral meetings, segmentation of information.	Variations: relative mistrust expressed by top management, widespread diffusion of information, benchmarking.
Police priorities (crime vs. community confidence)	Heavy pressure to cut down on crime, continuing community-related concerns but weakly integrated into Compstat.	Strong pressure to cut down on MOPAC 7 crimes, satisfaction and confidence as priority targets.
Data-driven process	Territorial approach by cross-checking data on crime activities in specific areas, limited skills of managers, rudimentary software.	Existence of geographical mapping, systematic retrieval of data, limited skills of managers but existence of performance and intelligence analysts.
Gaming practices	Evidence of crime-recording manipulation, leeway given to police for crime recording.	Doubts on crime recording, relatively tight recording system and counting rules.

retrieval tends to be automated. London's underlying logic suggests a reinvention of police bureaucracy infused with neo-managerial thinking.

To explain these two major contrasts, I propose to follow a line of interpretation put forward by Jones and Newburn in their analysis of sentencing policies, that is, a comparative analysis of policing as 'being shaped by the strategic choices of political actors, mediated by the constraints of contrasting political institutions and cultures' (2006: 792). On the one hand, institutional rules, political cultures and socio-economic conditions contribute to defining the policing process. On the other, intentional policy projects may or may not activate these structural components (see, for an attempt, De Maillard and Roché, 2016). I will use this analytical framework to explain my two main differences: police priorities as reflected by the indicators, and the meaning of performance management.

With regard to the indicators used by each force, the contrast (the Met uses 'soft' indicators such as confidence and victim satisfaction) reflects a tradition that has long set the French and the English models of policing apart (accountability towards the state vs. towards the people; see, for instance, Brodeur, 2010: 152). The PP is heir to the Napoleonic *préfecture de police*, which served the interests of the state first and foremost (Mouhanna and Easton, 2014), whereas the Met embodies the 'policing by consent' model. In a Durkheimian way, these indicators could be interpreted as the epitome of certain political values (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003), 'a set of cognitive constraints' (Stokes and Hewitt, 1976; Hamilton, 2013): accountability to the community differs in London and Paris insofar as Met officers are constantly reminded by several institutional and managerial mechanisms that their primary duty is to serve the public.

Political strategies, however, must be taken into account to refine this diagnosis. In England, the decision to include confidence indicators in the performance framework was taken at the turn of the 2000s, at a time when policing organizations (especially the Association of Chiefs of Police) were advocating a more comprehensive range of measures and New Labour was seeking to increase the legitimacy of public services (McLaughlin and Fleming, 2012; Savage, 2007). When, in 2011, public confidence targets were removed at the national level, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime chose to keep them. London benefited from its own survey (the Public Attitudes Survey) and had strong internal analytical expertise provided by the Strategy Research and Analysis unit (Stanko and Bradford, 2011).⁸ Conversely, at the PP, the measurement of police performance through confidence or satisfaction is seen by the dominant professional and political discourse as – depending on the interviewee – 'too expensive', 'unreliable' or 'populist' (see Roché, 2005).

The second contrast relates to discrepancies in the very meaning of what is understood by performance management in each force. The timing of reforms differed starkly: performance management was introduced in the English police – and more specifically in the MPS – under Commissioner Kenneth Newman in the 1980s (Savage, 2007), whereas in France, performance management was not really applied until the early 2000s, with the adoption of the Budget Act of 2001 (De Maillard and Savage, 2012). This mirrors divergences in the general categorization of network performance management (NPM) reforms in each country ('modernizer' for France, 'core NPM state' for England; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). In London, such notions as competition,

benchmarking, ranking, systematic measuring, targets or transparency are familiar features for senior management. Within the PP, rankings are never official, transparency is limited and targets tend to be complied with rather than accepted.

These long-standing professional ideas form a set of stable and coherent norms and instruments. Although they provide the main explanations for the differences observed, variations may appear within each paradigm depending on political or professional initiatives. Such was the case for the arrival at the Met of a new AC, a newcomer whose style was initially more abrasive and challenging for commanders within the force. From this point of view, the personal style of the AC, with its overt defiance of the MPS middle hierarchy, clearly had a distinctive impact that goes beyond the set of shared ideas and norms. The intent of the AC – a newcomer at the Met – was clear: to create an internal shock (what he called in an interview with me ‘shock and awe’). As a borough commander put it: ‘the AC wanted to give us a kick in the pants.’

Conclusion

Paris and London performance management regimes are ultimately local translations of broader structural dynamics impacting on policing institutions on a global scale. Technological change, new management trends and political demands combine to increase ‘crime-figure’ pressure in the management of police forces (Reiner, 2013). Internal accountability mechanisms have been reinforced by the collection and publication of crime data within police departments, as induced by Compstat-like processes. Middle managers are held accountable for ensuring a continuing reduction in crime. Results-oriented evaluation methods create a pressure that in turn feeds internal organizational processes by setting up more or less explicit objectives. The theatrical dimension of meetings fosters a climate in which territorial commanders are under pressure to demonstrate results. One aspect of these managerial demands that has been consistently criticized is the level of uncertainty that shrouds the integrity of crime data. This is clearly related to what Malcolm Sparrow (2015: 28–30) calls a ‘narrow’ option of Compstat implementation – characterized by a performance focus on driving down the numbers and an adversarial management style.

These processes are deeply ambivalent as far as managerial accountability is concerned. On the one hand, they tend to foster an ability to account for one’s actions, share information and explain strategies; on the other, they generate tremendous results-oriented top-down pressure. More generally, policing often tends to be split by conflicting trends: forward thinking is encouraged yet short-term results are expected; deliberation and problem-solving are supported but top-down pressure is pervasive; quantitative targets become crucial, even though qualitative and informal relations with external partners need to be maintained. Performance management appears to be a moving target, which only reinforces this ambivalence: in London, the initially abrasive style of the AC ultimately receded; in Paris, evaluation meetings have come to take place on a rather regular basis.

These convergent trends impacting on policing organizations should not be overestimated, however. Striking examples of differences can be found in management styles and the scope of performance in each force, echoing cognitive and ideological

divergences between political elites and police professionals regarding the evaluation of police activity (De Maillard and Mouhanna, 2016; De Maillard and Savage, 2012). Comparing my findings on two European forces with the patterns noted in the US (Willis et al., 2007) is also interesting. London is clearly closest in terms of appraisal and monitoring, while the Parisian model would be rather a sham. However, one enduring difference is that community-related concerns remain part and parcel of the London performance management system through the continuing use of confidence and satisfaction surveys. However, a lot needs to be done to compare variations more systematically. My paper aims to pave the way for future comparative research on policing and criminal justice in general, emphasizing the many configurations of cultural, political, socio-economic and professional factors that may resist the reframing effect of global trends.

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Notes

1. Compstat can be defined as ‘a combined technical and managerial system that seeks to develop a certain kind of focused internal accountability in a police department’ (Moore, 2003: 471).
2. The research was part of a project funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche as a Refmanpol grant.
3. I was not allowed to attend more meetings.
4. Confidence is measured by the number of people who think ‘police do a good (or excellent) job in their area’ (in The Crime Survey for England and Wales and in the Public Attitude Survey for London). The score was 61.6 percent for the April 2011–March 2012 period and 67 percent in September 2015.
5. The fact that I did not have – as I did in Paris – any insiders able to transmit unofficial information may be an explanation.
6. Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime’s response to ‘Crime data integrity force reports’, 11 November 2014. URL (accessed 11 December 2017): <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/crime-data-integrity-force-reports/>.
7. The first step was performed on the spot by street-level officers. The second one – which consisted of entering the crime record in the statistical system – was completely dissociated both chronologically (could be executed months later) and materially (with large leeway to code the crime) from the initial step. This old system has now been replaced by a more stringent one (called *Logiciel de rédaction des procédures de la police nationale*, LRPPN, implemented in 2014).
8. This unit was absorbed by MOPAC in April 2014.

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