

Danish Event Policing

– Dialogue-Based Policing
of Football Crowds



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*Danish Event Policing - Dialogue-Based Policing of
Football Crowds*

by Jonas Havelund, Morten Anker Jensen, Lise Joern,
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Introduction

On 18 May 1993, Denmark held a referendum on the Europe-wide 'Edinburgh Agreement'.¹ Denmark voted in favour of the referendum. As the result became clear in the evening a protest against the agreement developed in the Nørrebro neighbourhood of Copenhagen, the country's capital and largest city, leading to violent and large scale clashes between protestors and the Danish police. Protestors threw bricks and Molotov cocktails towards the police, and the police responded by firing a total of 113 shots during the riots, resulting in 11 protestors being treated for gunshot wounds. A governmental commission was subsequently set up to investigate the course of events during the protest, and its eventual statement highlighted police tactics as a decisive factor in what had occurred. The commission remarked:

Faster and more flexible tactics from Copenhagen Police could potentially have led to a different sequence of events in Nørrebro on 18-19 May 1993. Since [then], Copenhagen Police have, like other police forces, acquired a new radio

communication system, and Copenhagen Police have similarly acquired new deployment vehicles with the aim of making more flexible use of deployed police units.²

Thus, following the disturbances in Nørrebro, the Danish police developed the 'Mobile Tactical Deployment Concept', later renamed 'Mobile Deployment Concept' (MDC). Inspiration for the concept is widely understood to have come from the Netherlands, which had already developed a deployment concept linked with their techniques of policing abroad as a colonial power. The MDC is, as with approaches in other European nations, focused on improving police capability to control crowds through directing, arresting, dispersing or containing the 'counterpart' with the combined use of vehicles and squads of officers equipped with padding, batons, helmets and tear gas.

MDC is structured hierarchical with four vans containing eight police officers in each (most with special tasks like responsible for gas equipment or sanitation). Every four vans are headed by a squad leader that refers to a platoon

commander. The vehicles are used tactically to block side roads, directing traffic and crowds and as moving shields for the squads if they get out of the vans to intervene in an action that requires police squads on the ground. Otherwise the police officers will more likely stay in the vehicle in order to be able to be transported and used in 'rapid reactions', pincer movements and other tactically maneuvers that involves moving personnel quick from one place to another. There are many tactical moves and they are described and trained down to the smallest detail which gives the MDC the advantage of a common vocabulary and effective command line.

As long as crowds of protestors or football fans act relatively peaceful the most used tactics in the MDC will be to follow the crowd either with vans in front or on the sides of the crowd to guide or simply by following them visually from a distance. Though the MDC can be deployed in a proactively manner by controlling and directing crowds the police officers in riot gear are often used in a reactive and repressive way as response to specific incidents. An arrest action in a crowd can involve rapid movements by

vehicles, fast stop and police officers fast out of the vans with helmets on and batons drawn. Then follows the arrest maneuver with perimeter in order to create space for the arrest team. Incidents like these hold the risk of drawing people into risky situations and reduce the chance for a differentiated and targeted approach.³

Within Denmark the MDC was integrated nationally and is now widely recognised as effective in improving police capability for handling large protests and so-called ‘high risk’ football.⁴ Though a shift in the name of the concept from ‘Mobile Tactical Deployment Concept’ to the ‘Mobile Deployment Concept’ the concept hasn’t undergone any noticeable development but this might be changed due to recent developments in police tactics in Denmark as this article demonstrates.

Seeds of Change

In June 2008 the Danish National Police distributed a *National Handbook on Police Work in Association with Football Matches*, which – despite

the title – actually also considers the handling of major crowd events such as protests. The handbook was the outcome of a series of agreements, beginning in November 2006, between the Danish parliament, the Danish National Police and Prosecution Service. It was also a result of the harmonization processes initiated after a structural reformation of Danish Police from 54 to 12 districts with Danish National Police as coordinating part. Security at major sporting events was also prioritised in the coalition platform of the Government, led by current NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, formed following the 2007 elections.⁵

Whilst there had previously been talk of standardised operational plans for policing ‘public order’, the *National Handbook on Police Work in Association with Football Matches* represented the first formal policy statement aimed at actually aligning practice across the country’s police districts. The handbook was essentially a radical shift from the past in that it strongly emphasised tolerance and implicitly proposed dialogue-based practice.⁶ In this respect the handbook represented a significant

development to the MDC since emphasis shifted from a 'deterrence' to a 'dialogue' based approach. Tactically this meant a shift from the large dynamic squads of the MDC to units of two to three officers undertaking '*walking sector patrols*' wearing yellow vests; the concept of 'sector patrols' derived directly from the MDC.

The aim being to shift police officers away from a capability for deterrence toward being approachable and open to dialogue with spectators in order to secure a differentiated and targeted approach. Both the yellow vest and the dialogue-seeking 'sector patrol' contrasted with the police's then-prevailing behaviour relative to football fans at high-risk matches.⁷ From the outset implementation of the handbook met a number of obstacles. There was, for example, significant resistance to the yellow vests, which some police officers regarded as making a mockery of their work (in part due to a resemblance to the vests that older Danish schoolchildren wear when they act as road crossing guards for younger children). Danish police officers also had difficulty being open to dialogue and approachable during public

gatherings.⁸ East Jutland Police recognized the challenges and made the strategic decision to enter into further collaboration with Aarhus University, with whom they had done previous project with to support the development of a new operational unit designed to overcome this limitation called the 'Event Police'.⁹

Below, we describe the Event Policing Training Programme. The course has been held four times since 2010. The training was evaluated by the Danish National Police in 2011 in order to assess whether the programme could serve as a basis for future training strategies related to this work area.

Event Policing Training Programme

Event Policing Training sought to integrate the Elaborated Social Identity Model into practice (ESIM). ESIM is grounded in the idea that a crowd is not a collective unit. Rather, large public gatherings consist of a number of separate groups possessing different norms and values. Individuals feel themselves to be members of that group in which they function and with

which they create a social community. Action thus takes place on the basis of social belonging inasmuch as the individual adapts to the group's norms while the group defines itself in opposition to other – for instance, violent – groups. This identification can transform, however, if the situation changes. Studies have shown that otherwise-peaceful individuals seek support from those proclaimed to be violent in situations in which they believe the police's behaviour to be illegitimate.¹⁰ Research on risk management has thus shown that there is a greater likelihood for disturbances in situations in which the police have established a high profile (i.e., many officers are present, wearing riot gear) while the police's counterpart (the public) does not regard the situation as particularly risky, which often corresponds to the actual riskiness of the situation.¹¹ When the police undertake a confrontational and undifferentiated practice without the counterpart regarding the situation as risky, the police's work is viewed as illegitimate and disproportionate. In contrast, the counterpart regards police work as legitimate when it feels that it is balanced and

adapted to the situation in question. In these cases, it has also been possible to observe an increased incidence of self-policing among participants at large public gatherings, which has been demonstrated to be the case with protestors and football fans.¹² In other words, protestors and football spectators seek to keep things calm when tensions begin to escalate if they feel that dialogue between the public and the police has been good. The police have thus been successful in informing the event's participants of their objectives, and participants, for their part, have been willing to provide the police with the necessary information for the event to take place without incident. If trouble is nevertheless brewing, it is usually possible to use knowledge about the composition of the gathering, garnered from dialogue with the counterpart, to target the police actions toward those who are actually causing the troubles. In this kind of situation, it is also often possible to marginalise individuals with violent intentions, thereby preventing them from allying with self-proclaimed non-violent individuals and significantly reducing the risk of conflict as a result. The above insights from

crowd psychology research have now been incorporated into the *Handbook with Recommendations for International Police Cooperation and Measures to Prevent and Control Violence and Disturbances in Connection with Football Matches with an International Dimension, in which At Least One Member State is Involved*.¹³

A primary aim of the programme was to offer participants an understanding of the importance of viewing situations from the 'counterpart's' perspective. This was achieved through a combination of teaching and group work. The teaching was based primarily on cases illustrative of core themes within the research; they were not based on participants' reading of articles, *etc.* Experience has shown that Danish police officers are not accustomed to reading texts relevant for teaching.¹⁴

The teaching introduced the key findings in the research mentioned in this text and demonstrated positive experiences from countries that have taken similar approaches to handling large public gatherings associated with major events (for instance, the Euro2000 in the Netherlands/Belgium, the Euro2004 in Portugal). It also draws

upon the experiences from the Swedish dialogue police who has also been giving lectures during the event policing training course.¹⁵

The experiences garnered from the training courses have been very positive. The programme led to a higher degree of reflection among police officers regarding their own practice. Discussions developed from a focus on the MDC to a more differentiated conception of dialogue and its benefits as a standalone tool for handling large public gatherings and as an integral component of the MDC. Fans themselves have provided extremely positive feedback resulting from their first encounter with the new concept. High-risk matches have been handled without significant problems and no dialogue police officers have been injured while being on duty since the development of the new operational dialogue unit.

The word 'counterpart' has been used throughout this text. This is the police's usual way of discussing a group of individuals that they have been tasked to handle. As the dialogue between event police officers and participants in large public gatherings becomes more intensive,

however, the concept of a 'counterpart' ceases to have meaning. During the evaluations, we noted that the concept of 'us' versus 'them' receded into the background, beneficially replaced by a nuanced understanding of large groups that the police have been tasked to handle in such a way as to avoid infringing upon citizens' civil rights.

Event Policing in Practice

The event policing concept is integrated in the overall operation deployed at high risk football matches in East Jutland, Denmark. The concept has also been deployed at a political demonstration with success.

Where a Danish Mobile Deployment Unit (MDU) consist of a van with eight people, whereas most of them have special tasks (e.g. responsible gas equipment or sanitation), the event police unit (EPU) is flexible in size. It can vary from a few event police officers to up till 12-16 persons depending on the event and its nature. The unit is headed by a commander. If it is a small scale deployment, the head of the EPU might serve as the head of the operation.

Otherwise the event police commander is under the command of the head of the operation that can include mobile deployment units, dogs, arrests transport etc. The head of the EPU has the primary responsibility for the dialogue based part of the operation and as long as he/she (with reference to and in accordance with the head of the operation) hasn't requested help, the mobile deployment units are kept deliberately out of sight of the supporters/demonstrators and held as backup in the side streets.

The educated personnel derive from quite different sections, where they have their principal place of employment. Some work as crime investigators, some as administrative case-workers, others with community policing in suburbs with high percentages of unemployed and immigrants and yet others have their duties as community policing in smaller towns in the countryside. However they are all characterized by their dialogue skills. The ability to facilitate, communicate and find interest in other people's way of living without losing integrity as a police man is the balancing act of the event police officer. There has been considerable resistance to

the imposition of dialogue tactics in the Danish police.¹⁶ The resistance has primarily been seen from those police men who have been part of the MDC and thus those people who have been dealing with football supporters and have experienced disorder and troubles from time to time. Most of the recruited event police officers haven't been part of the MDC for years (some never) and thus haven't been part of the concept that hasn't promoted dialogue and hasn't been driven by an insightful understanding of the supporters. A concept that to a large extent didn't gave the police officers with dialogue skills the opportunity to use it.

The EPU is primarily used to receive and accompany the visiting supporters. Prior to a match day the head of the operation or the commander of the EPU seeks to establish contact with key persons from the visiting supporters both from official and unofficial, including known violent, supporter groups (often with help from the police department's 'football contact person' and the police department where the supporters derive from). The police often help finding a suitable bar for pre-match

drinking as well as collaborate on the organization of marches. The police use this 'first contact' to communicate and to some extent negotiate conditions of the day and deliver clear messages about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In most situations the head of the operation and the EPU commander has contact information (mobile number) on key persons from the visiting supporters - optimally both from official and unofficial supporter groups.

The supporters often arrive by train or by bus several hours before kick-off. As soon as they arrive they are met by the EPU. The commander and the head of the operation will take contact to the key persons they have been in contact with prior to the match. The agreements settled before the match are reconfirmed and expectations repeated.

The EPU will follow the supporters to the agreed destination (e.g. a pub or the stadium). Their main focus will be on establishing contact with supporters and be open to engage in dialogue. This is in order to get a better understanding of who is in the group and their plan for the day. After having done this a few

times the supporters recognize the policemen by name and vice versa and our research team has observed several friendly hugs been exchanged as the supporters meet the policemen. A few of the policemen even receive tribute songs (sic!). During this first contact of the day the main task is to gather information on the group and feeding the information into the overall operation in order to update the risk assessment and maybe do some adjustments depending on the mood of the supporters and intelligence from other parts of the operation. If there needs to be changes in the agreements or the supporters come up with wishes or demands, it is the head of the EPU that negotiate with reference to his leader.

During an event it might be necessary to either reprimanding or calming somebody. This will be done by the EPU in a balanced way depending on the situation. Sometimes they do it themselves. Sometimes they do it by stimulating self-policing among the group by approaching one of the persons friends and say "will you please help calming down your friend? Your chance for success is better than ours and then he will avoid being taking into custody by our

colleagues". They do this on an individual level but can also do it on a group level, where they use key persons, could be the capo (the person who has a leading role at the stadium and often has a megaphone) to deliver messages to the supporters as it has shown, that there is much greater responsiveness to messages coming from well known key persons than messages coming from the police.

If the supporters behave well all day and no incidents require assistance from the Mobile Deployment Units, the EPU's handle the supporters from the time they arrive until they enter the stadium (Danish police do not normally operate within stadium wearing uniforms unless it is urgent) and then escort them back to the train or their busses without meeting mobile deployment units as they are kept deliberately out of sight of the supporters and held as backup in the side streets. The Mobile Deployment Units may be used to segregate supporters nearby the stadium but without helmets and other equipment that supporters might find provocative.

The supporters are fully aware of the presence of the Mobile Deployment Units in the

side streets. They are also aware that the event police officers are – and work as – policemen with the right to give fines and arrest people if they find it necessary. We have observed arrests and people being fined without any escalation because the actions have been done in a balanced and smooth way. To let the event police officers do arrest was a strategic decision made by East Jutland Police and the philosophy behind the decision was that they didn't want to relinquish the police men's integrity and compromise their possibilities to act in accordance with the power giving through their education and job. The idea is also that it would undermine the relation and mutual respect between the EPU and the supporters if the EPU were reduced to jovial 'tour guides' and thus suspend the natural power balance. However often, in real time settings, if a person must be arrested, the EPU will consider the possibility of letting the Mobile Deployment Units do the arrest while the EPU will intensify the dialogue with bystanders to give them the necessary background information for the arrest in order to obtain the feeling of legitimacy from the supporters.

The introduction of EPU's has had a significant impact on the work of the mobile deployment units. From being in the front line their main task is now mainly to work as backup. The shift hasn't been without problems. During a debriefing, that two of the authors attended, a person from a MDU said "What is the incentive for being part of the MDU after the introduction of the EPU?". The question was clearly pointed at the fact, that police officers in the mobile deployment units hadn't been in action at all which meant being backup and sitting in the van for eight hours. High risk matches tended to be a day for police where batons were likely to be drawn and there were likely to be some action. This reveals some important challenges for the commanders 1) they need to keep the mobile deployment units motivated by giving them an understanding of the importance of their function; 2) They need to pay attention when the mobile deployment units are put into action. It is very important that the deployment is balanced and graded and there is a risk that the police men are too keen to get into action and therefore too

aggressive which again can result in escalation rather than de-escalation.

East Jutland Police is aware of these challenges. In 2012 they arranged two day trainings programmes for the people deployed in the mobile deployment units who got an introduction to the event policing concept with an emphasis on the integration between the two concepts. Commanders from the mobile deployment units have been introduced to the event policing concepts as they attended the first training programme. Already at that point the commanders from the mobile deployment units started thinking about ways to integrate the concepts and move towards a more graded tactical profile where the concepts supplemented each other. The authors have since then observed a more reflexive and graded tactical approach by the commanders from the mobile deployment units and after some time the negative and skeptic statements from policemen working in the mobile deployment units have slowly been reduced and given place for more sympathetic statements about the qualities of the event policing concept.

Conclusion

Event Policing in Denmark is part of a European development from primarily mobile crowd control tactics with a focus on riot control to a more graded and differentiated approach with dialogue as impetus. The training programme seeks to produce a dialogue-based approach to handling large public gatherings as a means of reducing risk situations and saving East Jutland Police resources in the long term. The programme has implications for the police's other concepts, presenting a challenge in terms of integrating the dialogue concept into wider police practice. There is likewise a challenge in adapting and developing the project on the basis of the reactions the police encounter. When the police break significantly from previous behaviour, there is the chance of it provoking a degree of skepticism. Similarly, there has been some criticism from football fans that the police activities feel overly clingy and pedagogical.

Adam Diderichsen of the Danish National Police's Knowledge Centre participated in evaluating the training programme and

emphasises the following (translated) quote from *Etik for politifolk* (trans. *Ethics for Police Men*) book:

By possessing specially trained police who can undertake dialogue or exertion of physical force respectively, one can both minimise the use of physical force and make it more effective because it is possible to target it at those individuals representing the core of the problem, rather than taking a scattergun approach and ending up in a confrontation with the whole of the crowd.¹⁷

The training programme has also attracted international interest. At the Under-21 European Championship in four cities in Jutland in June 2011, East Jutland Police coordinated policing in line with the event police officer concept. This practice was noted by UEFA, which expressed great satisfaction with the approachable and with dialogue-seeking policing.

Following the evaluation, Danish National Police decided to create a three-day course based on the experiences gained from the Event Policing Training programme. The training programme is nationwide and builds upon the

research that forms the basis for Event Policing Training.

Notes

¹ The Edinburgh Agreement (December 1992) was reached at a European Council meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, which granted Denmark four exceptions to the Maastricht Treaty so that it could be ratified by Denmark.

² Report Pursuant to Act No. 389 of 22 May 1996 on the Investigation of the Nørrebro Case, p. 170.

³ Rasmussen, Havelund & Tranegaard Andersen 2009.

⁴ Rasmussen & Havelund 2010.

⁵ *Mulighedernes samfund – Regeringsgrundlag* (The society of opportunities) (2007, p. 45).

⁶ Rasmussen & Havelund 2010

⁷ Rasmussen, Havelund & Tranegaard Andersen 2009.

⁸ Rasmussen & Havelund 2010.

⁹ Rasmussen, Havelund & Tranegaard Andersen 2009; Rasmussen & Havelund 2010.

¹⁰ Reicher et al. 2004, Stott & Reicher 1998; Reicher 2011.

¹¹ Stott & Adang 2009.

¹² Stott & Pearson 2007.

¹³ EU Council 2010.

¹⁴ Rasmussen & Havelund 2010.

¹⁵ Read more about Swedish Dialogue policing in Holgersson & Knuttson (2011); Holgersson (2010).

¹⁶ Rasmussen & Havelund 2010.

¹⁷ Diderichsen 2011: 138.

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