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**A REAPPRAISAL OF THE ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCHES: AN INVESTIGATION OF SELECTED
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCHES IN THE ATHLONE AND MANENBERG AREAS
IN CAPE TOWN**

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This minor dissertation is presented for the approval of the Senate in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Criminology, Law and Society degree programme in approved courses and a minor dissertation.

The other requirement for this qualification was the completion of courses.

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Abstract

The Neighbourhood Watch (NW) is a pervasive phenomenon that has gained footholds in many countries around the world. South Africa is no exception and, in the case of Cape Town in the Western Cape Province, they have proven to be a popular choice among the members of civil society as a method of dealing with crime. In the Cape Flats region of Cape Town, conventional state policing agencies (namely SAPS) have failed to deal with the high rates of crime – one of the reasons for the popularity of NWs. Civil policing structures are by no means a new phenomenon in South Africa, and the concept of the NW has been in existence for decades, yet not much academic research has focused on their evolution over the years – particularly those that exist in the Cape Flats region. Using a nodal governance framework, specifically that of nodal policing, this dissertation explores the evolution of their roles, and the relationships or networks they formed (or lack thereof) over time in the battle to reduce crime and to create safe and secure communities.

Indeed, numerous studies have been conducted on policing in South Africa for many decades, and some have focused on non-state policing structures in the country. In doing so, they have briefly discussed NWs, however there are few comprehensive studies that have focused solely on the NW and discussed how they have evolved over time. This study addresses that particular gap in the literature.

A qualitative study was conducted and members of three different NWs on the Cape Flats located in different areas (two from the Athlone precinct and one from the Manenberg precinct) were interviewed in three separate focus group interviews. The NWs selected for this study were the Bridgetown and Silvertown NWs (Athlone precinct) and the Surrey Estate NW (Manenberg precinct). Importantly, a precinct is a defined district or region of a city which consists of multiple areas (South African National Treasury, 2014:np).

Keywords: Neighbourhood Watch; policing; nodal governance; roles; networks; evolution

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Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
(1.1) Introduction.....	1
(1.2) Background and Context.....	1
(1.3) Rationale.....	4
(1.4) Aims and Objectives.....	4
(1.5) Research Questions.....	4
(1.6) Importance of Study.....	5
(1.7) Conclusion.....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review	6
(2.1) Introduction.....	6
(2.2) The changing face of policing throughout the years.....	6
(2.2.1) The ‘old’ police.....	7
(2.2.2) The ‘new’ police.....	8
(2.2.3) Another great shift in policing.....	9
(2.3) The neighbourhood watch.....	10
(2.4) Narrowing the scope: South Africa, Cape Town, and the Cape Flats.....	13
(2.4.1) The apartheid years – early formations of civil policing structures.....	13
(2.4.2) Policing in the dawn of the “new” South Africa.....	15
(2.4.3) Some more recent evidence of the roles of the NW.....	17
(2.5) Theoretical Framework.....	19
(2.5.1) Nodal Policing.....	19
(2.5.2) Criticisms and potential limitations of the nodal policing framework.....	21
(2.6) Conclusion	22
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	23
(3.1) Introduction.....	23

(3.2) Research Approach and Design.....	23
(3.2.1) Qualitative research and phenomenology.....	23
(3.2.2) Critiquing the research approach and design.....	24
(3.3) Sampling.....	25
(3.4) Data Collection	26
(3.5) Data Analysis.....	27
(3.6) Analytical Strategy.....	28
(3.7) Ethical Considerations	29
(3.8) Reflexive Discussion.....	30
(3.9) Conclusion	31
Chapter 4: Findings.....	32
(4.1) Introduction.....	32
(4.2) The roles of the NW.....	32
(4.2.1) Beyond fighting crime – uplifting the community.....	32
(4.2.2) Building good relationships.....	35
(4.2.3) Expanding policing roles.....	38
(4.3) The policing methods of the NW.....	39
(4.3.1) Strategic patrolling.....	39
(4.3.2) A restrained approach – promoting decency during confrontation.....	40
(4.3.3) Developing intelligence databases and the utilisation of technology.....	41
(4.4) The NW network.....	41
(4.4.1) Collaboration between NWs.....	41
(4.4.2) The NW and SAPS.....	43
(4.4.3) The NW and the CPF.....	44
(4.4.4) The NW and private security companies.....	45
(4.5) Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	47
(5.1) Introduction.....	47
(5.2) The roles of the NW.....	47
(5.2.1) Policing is important, but so is community upliftment.....	47
(5.2.2) Expanding policing functions – the implications for nodal policing.....	49
(5.3) NW relationships (networks).....	51

(5.3.1) A network of NWs.....	52
(5.3.2) The NW and SAPS.....	53
(5.3.3) The NW and the CPF.....	53
(5.3.4) The NW and private security – a complicated relationship	54
(5.4) Methods of policing.....	55
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	57
(6.1) Introduction.....	57
(6.2) Summary.....	57
(6.3) Limitations of the study.....	58
(6.4) Recommendations for further study.....	59
(6.5) Conclusion	59
Table 1.....	32
References.....	60
Appendix A	68
Appendix B	70
Appendix C.....	71

Chapter 1: Introduction

(1.1) Introduction

The neighbourhood watch (NW) – a civil society formation made up of volunteers that has found a foothold and flourished in many communities and societies around the world. They commonly enter discussions when issues of safety and security in communities are raised, yet not much academic literature focusing specifically on this civil policing structure has been written – particularly those NW structures that exist in Cape Town and the Cape Flats where their numbers have proliferated greatly over the last three decades. In fact, so much time has passed since comprehensive studies of the NW phenomenon have been conducted in South Africa and, in a country where matters of safety and security are of utmost importance, NWs must be studied to decipher precisely how they protect and police their communities. What exactly do they do? How have they developed and changed since their early formation in the country? And what partnerships do they form in the battle to keep their communities safe?

These organisations assist in safeguarding the local community and its property, managing crime control initiatives, and preventing and discouraging crime in the area (Western Cape Government, 2020:np). In doing so, they are obligated to assist the state police and partners to control and reduce crime (Western Cape Government, 2020:np).

This study reports on the findings regarding an investigation into the roles and relationships of NWs and to see how these have evolved– specifically those located in the Athlone and Manenberg areas of the Cape Flats located in Cape Town, South Africa.

(1.2) Background and Context

Crime and violence in South Africa has been noted as a serious problem by various literary works - an issue that the country has had to deal with for many years (Schonteich & Louw, 2001:np; De Wet, Somefun & Rambau:1, 2018; Geldenhuys, 2023:10-11). According to the South African Police Crime Statistics for the 2021/2022 financial year, all contact crimes including murder, attempted murder, sexual offences, common robbery, robbery with aggravating circumstances, common assault, and assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm have increased in relation to the previous year's statistics by 13.4% overall. Of particular concern is the country's soaring murder rate, which stood at 42 murders per 100,000 people and is projected to increase further to 44 per 100,000 (South African Police Service [SAPS],

2023; Bruce, 2023:np). The country has one of the highest murder rates in the world as evidenced by the statistics.

Cape Town and the Cape Flats in particular have extreme levels of crime and violence, and it is widely accepted that this is due to the legacy of apartheid which saw the formation of this large expanse of underdeveloped land and subsequent dumping of the ‘coloured’ population here under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Jensen, 1999:76; Martin-Howard, 2023:585). A more detailed description of the Cape Flats is provided in the subsequent chapters of this report. These crime statistics, as stated by Bruce (2023:np), reinforce the beliefs that the government, along with the SAPS (the public policing agency of the country), are unable to effectively police the issue of crime, especially on their own. These concerns regarding policing and the safety of all those living in the country have been reflected in academic literature and are also a prominent feature of various news and social media outlets who, almost daily, reiterate the failure of state policing in the country (Amnesty International, 2023:331; Pillay, 2023:np; Institute for Security Studies, 2021:np).

Importantly, the term ‘policing’ broadly refers to the activities associated with the maintenance or restoration of order in society, the prevention of crime, as well as the utilisation of instruments of coercion to assist in successfully carrying out these activities (Baker, 2002:29). ‘Policing’ is, therefore, an act and is not necessarily limited to the functions of *the police*.

As a democratic country, one of the main priorities of the leadership of South Africa is to ensure that safety and security is provided to *all* of its citizens - a point that was particularly important during the transition to the new democratic South Africa (Ngoveni, Maluleke & Mabasa, 2022:482). It was following this point in time – the years following the fall of apartheid - which saw the pluralisation of policing in the country. This included the rapid expansion of the private security sector, and a growing number of civil policing organisations such as neighbourhood watches - some of which have become increasingly involved in the act of policing societies in South Africa over time.

The neighbourhood watch (NW), particularly in recent years, appears to have become a powerful force in terms of crime their preventative and control functions, where they seem to play a more proactive role in addressing issues of crime (sometimes in collaboration with the public and/or private security sectors). The ‘National Shutdown’ which took place in South Africa on 20 March 2023 showcased the policing roles of the NW. This shutdown was

essentially a nation-wide stayaway orchestrated and led by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) political party in response to various issues present in South African society. These issues included, among others, a political crisis driven by an almost stagnant economy and load-shedding (scheduled blackouts to protect the national electricity grid), derelict infrastructure, crime, poor service delivery, corruption, and the constantly increasing cost of living (Venter, 2023:13). It was during this period of time where the government managed to scramble and coordinate various state agencies in an effort to prevent wide-scale unrest and turmoil – such as that which occurred during an attempted insurrection in July of 2021 in the KwaZulu-Natal Province after the arrest of former president Jacob Zuma (Venter, 2023:13). In that instance, numerous instances of looting and arson had occurred at various locations in the KwaZulu-Natal Province – some of which spread to the Gauteng Province – with the police failing to deal with that situation effectively. 354 people died as a result and millions of Rands worth of damage was recorded. This is what the state feared would occur again with the National Shutdown and prepared and mobilised their resources accordingly. However, perhaps the most interesting mobilisation of policing and security resources came not from the government, but rather from civil society structures and businesses who collaborated with each other and coordinated a variety of prevention measures to ensure the safety and security of their communities (Venter, 2023:13). For example: the day before the planned shutdown saw various NWs, along with Metro, Law Enforcement, SAPS, as well as private security (particularly in the Western Cape Province) patrolling multiple areas and removing tyres (presumably to be burnt during protests) placed at strategic geographical points (Solomons, 2023:np). Additionally, in the early hours of the morning of the planned shutdown, NWs in Cape Town were patrolling major highways and removing rocks and other foreign objects placed on the roads to disable passing vehicles - thereby assisting in ensuring that criminal elements could not use the shutdown to camouflage their activities.

According to the Western Cape Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety (2022:np), the Neighbourhood Watch Model is an approach to crime prevention that promotes and empowers community members to assist in responding to and preventing crime. A formal definition provided by Yarwood (2012:1) states that a neighbourhood watch is a crime prevention scheme that is reliant on the collaborative effort of community members (or neighbours) to reduce or prevent crime. In the case of the Western Cape, it is required that neighbourhood watches apply for accreditation through the Department of Safety to be a ‘recognised’ entity and to receive training, resources and funding from the provincial

government (DoCS, 2022:np). Importantly, for a neighbourhood watch to be accredited, they have to be affiliated with a Community Policing Forum (CPF), while the two are still regarded as separate entities despite this affiliation. Indeed, the CPF and NW are expected to cooperate from the very beginning, with the CPF even playing a role in the registration of the NW through the submission of a “CPF endorsement letter” noting the cooperation of the NW in keeping the community safe – this is a requirement during the application process (Western Cape Government, 2023:np). Indeed, this was supported by Ngoveni (2022:153-154) and Modise (2023:3458) who highlighted the fundamental functions of community policing structures or forums.

(1.3) Rationale

The NW is by no means a concept that has only developed recently in South Africa. Some research has been conducted on the functions of the NW in the past both during and post-apartheid in South Africa (Schärf, 1989:205-223; Schärf, 2001:74-82; Minnaar, 2005:85-114; Fourchard, 2011:607-627). However, these particular academic works were published quite some time ago and, while many recent studies have noted the importance of the NW in crime-fighting initiatives, there does appear to be a gap in the literature. The more recent literature has tended to focus on the concept of policing in its entirety, that is, the various sectors as a whole that make up the entire policing system of the country. While this does include some information on the neighbourhood watch, they do not focus on the specific functions of the NW, how these functions have developed over the years since the earlier works of Schärf (1989:205-223; 2001:74-82) and Minnaar (2005:85-114), and how they fit into the broader policing framework - this is where the gap in the literature is evident.

(1.4) Aims and Objectives

This study aimed to investigate and uncover the functions (specifically the roles and relationships) of the NW in Cape Town (Cape Flats), South Africa and to note how these have evolved. It is important to uncover these functions as the further development of the roles of the neighbourhood watch could have major implications for the future of policing in the country.

(1.5) Research Questions

The overarching question that this research investigated was: “How have the functions of the neighbourhood watch evolved over time?” Importantly, the term ‘functions’ as used in this case refers to the roles and relationships (or networks) of the Neighbourhood Watch.

Sub-questions included:

1. What roles do the neighbourhood watch play in addressing issues of crime in present-day society compared to the past?
2. How have the relationships between neighbourhood watches and other policing agencies developed over the years?

(1.6) Importance of the study

Neighbourhood Watches are a significant form of non-state security in the case of South Africa – particularly in Cape Town and the Cape Flats where there are high levels of crime and violence that threaten the social stability of communities. The fact of the matter is that NWs play a major role in the policing of communities – Modise (2023:3458-3476) conducted a literature review and found that there was a general reduction in crime wherever they are active (albeit there was no specific reference to Cape Town or South Africa regarding this statement). In the case of South Africa, NWs are often seen patrolling their communities to improve visibility and deter to criminals, and they tend to gather information on illicit activities and pass it on to the police. Despite this, there appears to be little academic research that examines their precise. This study is of importance as it provides a glimpse into the world of the NW (in the local context of areas on the Cape Flats in Cape Town) and highlights the nature of the policing assemblage (Shearing, 2005:58) from their perspective and, in doing so, highlighting their roles, as well as their networks and partnerships with other policing bodies.

(1.7) Conclusion

This section provided an introduction to the study and discussed the rationale, aims, the research question, and the importance of the study. The phenomenon of the NW was also introduced.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

(2.1) Introduction

This chapter deals with the development of policing through the centuries and provides a map of the changes implemented over the course of this development. In doing so, the various role players and providers of security are discussed – thereby highlighting the significance and pervasiveness of the pluralised and multilateral (Bayley & Shearing 2000:1-15) nature of policing in recent years.

In particular, the civil sector's role in security provision – specifically that of the neighbourhood watch is discussed in detail. Their history and roles in policing are also highlighted. Finally, the location of the neighbourhood watch is narrowed down and ultimately placed in the context of the Cape Flats located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa where various legislation, significant events, and key points of the neighbourhood watch will be discussed.

Finally, the theoretical framework that underpins this research, the nodal governance (policing) framework (Burris, Drahos & Shearing, 2005:33-58), is highlighted and discussed.

(2.2) The changing face of policing throughout the years

“Who should the police be?” – the question posed by Shearing and Marks (2011:211) may seem fairly unembellished on the surface but it is, in actual fact, a fairly complex one, especially when accounting for the nature of the term ‘policing’ in its entirety. It is a question that alludes to the fact that there exists a multitude of actors available to conduct these policing activities in society – a point of major significance which will be discussed later. For the time being however, in unpacking the question posed by Shearing and Marks (2011:211), it should be realised that it is contingent on a variety of factors which includes the changing landscape of policing, societal evolution, politics and so on. Specifically, state police are faced with conflicting expectations from their superiors, politicians, and the general public in terms of acting definitively (and sometimes harshly) against instances of crime and disorder, while simultaneously they are expected to be friendly service providers (Shearing & Marks, 2011:211). An example of this paradox is epitomised by the SAPS who adopted a community policing framework, one that promotes minimal use of force by the police, yet the South African Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, continuously pushes for the police to be aggressive

with criminals and uttering phrases such as “Shoot to kill!” This, combined with the fact that the police are confronted with global neo-liberal policies requiring them to meet certain targets and to outsource some of their traditional roles, greatly complicates the very foundations of policing – something that is particularly prevalent in democratic societies (Shearing & Marks, 2011:211). Zedner (2009:4) also discussed the role that neo-liberal rationality plays in altering policing due to its emphasis on the importance of privatising security - hence the rapid rise of non-state actors who are engaging in policing activities. These include, but are not limited to, private security companies who install security systems on your property and respond to emergency calls or alarms, NWS, vigilante groups, and even car guards (in the case of South Africa) as well as many more structures such as Gang Watch that engage in policing activities. With so many different structures to choose from due to this shift in policing – each with its own merits and disadvantages - it becomes clear why it is necessary to ask the question: “Who should the police be?”

As stated previously, Shearing and Marks (2011:211) have made the argument that the policing landscape has been altered dramatically over the past few decades. However, at the same time, if one looks at the available literature regarding the history of policing, then it can be argued that the shift in policing (which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraph) that occurred over the past few decades is not unprecedented (Bayley & Shearing (2001:1).

(2.2.1) The ‘old’ police

The ‘police’ (the institution) of today, that is the public police agency, can be traced back to the late 18th century in England. Initially, an embryonic version of polycentric policing was believed to be in operation due to a lack of a single organising centre (Shearing & Marks, 2011:213), but this later developed into the more familiar centralised agency that exists today. In other words, there was a time when policing was not yet centralised by the state and was performed by a few key agents which included watchmen, constables, and ‘amateur justices’ (Reiner, 1992:14).

According to Shearing and Marks (2011:213) and Reiner (1992:14), there were many challenges and complaints regarding the inadequacy of the arrangement of the police at the time in terms of corruption, accountability, and efficiency which were compounded due to the pressures of the urban and industrial revolution at the time which brought about many issues associated with order. Reiner (1992:14) noted that the constable’s office became so overwhelmed that they were forced to outsource their work (by hiring deputies). However, due

to their unwillingness to spend money, this led to incompetent and untrained individuals being hired to do the job, while the London nightwatchmen, on the other hand, were described as drunkards who walked along the dark streets after dark with their lanterns and staves, talking loudly and alerting criminals of their presence (Reiner, 1992:14). Additionally, it was said that those who were not incompetent were corrupt – they would take full advantage of the rewards and fees offered by their offices. As such, the old system of policing in England was viewed negatively as being uncoordinated, uncertain, and prone to corruption due to its reliance on “private and amateur” groups of police (Reiner, 1992:14; Shearing & Marks, 2011:13). This ultimately led to the thinking that a new and central figure be responsible for policing.

(2.2.2) The ‘new’ police

The process of police reform was largely determined by the notion of ‘modern governmental rationality’ where the state is viewed as the central figure in terms of public service provision (Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1991). As such, from the perspective of Maitland (1885:26-51) who wrote at the end of the 19th century, the history of policing in England is described as a process by which the private and amateur structures were progressively being taken over by, in his words, “a single, inclusive public peace.” The ‘new’ Metropolitan police that emerged from this restructuring was more systematic with high standards of entry and discipline (Reiner, 1992:18). The establishment and spread of this ‘new’ police organisation was a major step in the centralisation process which ultimately signalled its end due to the monopolisation of the entity by the state.

A centralised system of policing, in simple terms, is a police system where the state (national government) is responsible for the enforcement of the law (Mabasa & Olutola, 2021:2). Interestingly, it is also at this point where the notion of social ordering began to take hold (Maitland, 1885:97) – where narratives emerged that the police were there to protect the weak from the powerful in society, to prevent oppression, and deal with danger and crime (Reiner, 1992:18). This was problematic due to the fact that, at the time, the majority of the crime was being committed in the poorer areas of society (Reiner, 1992:18). This later developed into a situation where the police became the protectors of the elite and influential members of society while becoming largely unaccountable to the rest (Akinlabi, 2020:145). It was this form of policing – characterised by centralisation and social ordering – that became pervasive in societies around the world for well over a century.

However, there is another development in the realm of policing regarding its nature as well as its providers and auspices that was made evident by various researchers.

(2.2.3) Another great shift in policing

We are in a new age of policing – not only are we in the age of technology where various advancements in the field such as CCTV, facial recognition, licence plate recognition (LPR) cameras, and fraud detection I.T software can assist in combating and preventing crime to a degree; more importantly we are also in the age of diversity (Shearing, 2005:58). The diversification of mentalities, institutions and technologies has led to the production of a diverse set of policing practices (Shearing, 2005:58). A central component of this transformation and diversification has been the multiplication or ‘multilateralisation’ of the auspices and providers of policing (Shearing, 2005:58).

This pluralisation or multilateralization has been corroborated by many other studies including one conducted by Blaustein (2014:44) where it is concluded that there are situations in society where multiple actors and interests converge to shape the contours of security governance. Importantly, the term ‘security governance’, as discussed by Froestad and Shearing (2012:1-7), refers to how security is provided and regulated in a given society and goes beyond that of the traditional state-centric model of policing - a plurality of actors are technologies and institutions are involved in the production and distribution of security. One of the drivers of this is the fact that (as previously mentioned) both the police and the state are continuously bombarded with global neo-liberal arrangements and policies that coerce them to act in a particular manner and to reach certain targets in terms of crime statistics and service delivery (Shearing & Marks, 2011:214). It is the pressure of aiming to reach these set targets that the state is coerced into outsourcing particular services from other providers – resulting in the outsourcing of certain aspects of their traditional policing roles as noted by Zedner (2009:4).

Indeed, similar sentiments were shared by Ian Loader (2000:334) who, at the time of publication, noted that the security sectors of liberal democracies were transforming in a way that was giving rise to the diversification of policing, resulting in the formation of various organisations tasked with providing policing services. Baker (2002) also noted this pluralisation. Moreover, Shearing and Marks (2011:214), state that there is visible evidence of the growth of non-state actors who are seen engaging in activities generally carried out by the police. And, according to Henderson (2015:11), while the state remains a major provider in terms of policing, it can no longer be regarded as the *sole* provider of security due to the

fragmented nature of the security sector in present-day society. In other words, there exists a complex web of various interconnected actors and institutions which form this network of security provision (Henderson, 2015:11). Indeed, this does appear to reflect in the current state of society, particularly in a country such as South Africa where one tends to see more private security vehicles and security personnel patrolling the streets than the SAPS. The development and proliferation of the private security sector is perhaps the greatest example of how the balance of the provision of security has shifted in society over the past few decades – with those who can afford their services opting for them over the public policing agencies (Singh, 2005:44).

However, private security is not the only sector or entity that contributes to the diversification of policing. According to Marks and Bonnin (2010), there is visible evidence of the global spread of community-based policing practices and initiatives in the form of neighbourhood watches, street patrols, forms of traditional policing bodies, as well as other grassroots democracies that deal with issues of crime and social disorder. Of particular focus here of course is the neighbourhood watch.

(2.3) The neighbourhood watch

The entire concept of the neighbourhood watch was first developed and then later introduced into society by the National Sheriff's Association (NSA) in North America in 1972 as evidenced by their National Neighbourhood Watch Program (Bennett, 1988:241; NSA, 2005:1). Betsy Cantrell (1988:2), the crime prevention director of the NSA at the time, stated the neighbourhood watch programme was built and operated on the belief that effective crime management and prevention required the involvement and cooperation of citizens with their respective law enforcement agencies. As such, it was noted that residential crime, in particular, could be reduced when community members, under instruction from law enforcement, take proactive steps to secure the area through target hardening practices and “being the eyes and ears” for the law enforcement agency (Cantrell, 1988:2). The need for this programme first emerged after a large increase in crime rates during the 1960s (NSA, 2005:1) – with burglaries initially being the main target of the initiative as it accounted for approximately a third of all crimes committed in the country at the time. This subsequently saw crime prevention strategies and initiatives being focused on residential areas in particular, and involving ordinary, local citizens (Cantrell, 1988:2; NSA, 2005:1). According to Cantrell (1988:2) the programme had initially come under criticism due to its failure to reduce crime figures – in fact, it saw an

increase in reported crimes in the areas where the programme was implemented. However, this was indicative of the fact that residents were reporting suspicious activities and crimes more often, indicating that they were being vigilant of their surroundings and were assisting in identifying and addressing crime in their area (Cantrell, 1998:2). Most notably, it was only after the initial sharp increase in reported crimes and suspicious activities that a significant decrease occurred, thereby indicating that the neighbourhood watch initiative was proving to be successful in some instances (Cantrell, 1998:2). It was this success that saw the NSA (2005:1-3) ultimately give the green light to expand the concept of the neighbourhood watch across the country and, over time, it became a globally pervasive phenomenon.

According to Rosenbaum (1987:103), we have entered the “heyday” of community crime prevention – the most popular of which is the neighbourhood watch. Indeed, more recent studies appear to corroborate the popularity of the neighbourhood watch on a global scale with many countries adopting the concept. England (Brunton-Smith & Bullock, 2019:86-90), the Netherlands (Schreurs et al., 2020:687-701), and Australia (Harkness & Larkins, 2019:48-63) are just some examples that, in the grand scheme of things, make up a fraction of the entire image in terms of the countries with neighbourhood watch programmes - each one with its own set of rules and regulations governing their respective functions.

Importantly, there does not appear to be any set agreement in place when it comes to the definition of a neighbourhood watch nor, for that matter, is there even an agreement of what name it should be given – there are multiple names for a neighbourhood watch including “block watch”, “street watch”, and “apartment watch” to name a few. One of the few available academic definitions of the neighbourhood watch was provided by Bennett (1988:242):

“The neighbourhood watch is primarily a network of public-spirited members of the community, who observe what is going on in their neighbourhood and report suspicious activity to the police. In simple terms, the citizen becomes the 'eyes and ears' of the police.”

While all of the points in the above definition are indeed true, it fails to paint the full picture. It is important to keep in mind that Bennett (1988:241:254) writes from a British perspective and (as will be made evident in the following section) therefore it cannot be wholly applied to other regions or contexts. It may be entirely possible that there are neighbourhood watches in other countries who take up the role of the police in their community due to the absence of the public police service in their area. Of course, it is also important to note that many

developments may have taken place over time since the definition provided by Bennett (1988:242). An article by Bernstein (2021:190-207) exquisitely portrayed this change in the behaviour of neighbourhood watches over the years by examining the case of the protests and riots that emerged in the United States of America as a result of the murder of George Floyd. Importantly, George Floyd was a black American citizen who was murdered while being arrested by the police. This sparked nationwide and international protests that aimed to raise awareness about police brutality against black individuals. In Minneapolis, many citizens, frustrated with the damaging and looting of property, decided to bear arms and, with their respective neighbourhood watches in the suburbs, patrolled the streets and threatened to use deadly force to protect the people and properties in their neighbourhood (Bernstein, 2021:206). They were forced to do this as there was virtually no police presence. As is evident here, the neighbourhood watches were no longer simply the “eyes and ears” of the police as described by Bennett (1988) – they had, in fact, effectively replaced the police in their area altogether. Importantly, other studies have found that many neighbourhood watches are involved in acts of vigilantism, and who break the law in attempting to ensure the protection of their neighbourhoods. Obi and Osisioqu (2020:12) found that, in Nigeria, there were variants of neighbourhood watches that would resort to illegal activities (such as refusing to allow certain individuals into the area and using violence) to deter crime. Once again, here it is noted that Nigerian citizens resorted to these civil and informal policing structures due to a lack of service delivery from the police – showing how they have, to some extent, replaced their public police service (Obi & Osisioqu, 2020:12).

This deviation from only “eyes and ears” is an example that showcases the changing roles of the neighbourhood watch – an important point worth investigating when looking at the broader image of policing in its entirety. It is, as previously stated, indicative that the neighbourhood watch has become another provider of security – a node in its own right. This is a particularly important concept to discuss in the case of South Africa, Cape Town, and the Cape Flats in particular where, for the most part, it appears that literature regarding the neighbourhood watch is rather neglected compared to other countries and regions around the world. It is in certain areas of the Cape Flats where crime is rampant, and the service delivery of the public police is poor that there is a need to investigate the role the neighbourhood watch plays in addressing instances of crime in their communities, and to map the development of these roles.

For context provision, the Cape Flats is a flat, low-lying and expansive area found to the southeast of the Cape Town central business district. Its history is riddled with violence and

trauma due to the policies of apartheid where it served as a ‘dumping ground’ for the government at the time. Under the Group Areas Act, black and coloured people were forced to relocate to this region of the city as the government introduced and enforced policies of spatial segregation and separate development along racial lines. Today, the region has still not recovered from its troubled past. The vast majority of the region is underdeveloped and crime-ridden – with poverty, death and violence being endemic.

(2.4) Narrowing the scope: South Africa, Cape Town, and the Cape Flats

In the case of South Africa, there are a multitude of institutions of security provision that come from a variety of arenas and include public services such as the SAPS, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), Metro Police, Law enforcement, the Department of Correctional Services to name a few. The private security industry in the country has proliferated into a goldmine in recent years with international corporations such as Fidelity, G4S and TSU staking claims in the South African market. There are also numerous other locally established security companies that make up the booming private security sector. In the case of Cape Town some of these companies include Security SA, Sniper Security, Shaza Security and Campus Protection Services for example. Then, of course, there are the policing organisations that are rooted in the civil society sector. These can include neighbourhood watches as well as other structures such as Civic Associations, Ratepayers Associations and so on. Of central focus here is the civil policing organisation, particularly that of the neighbourhood watch whose role in terms of policing has appeared to have grown exponentially over the years. It is therefore necessary to first look at the past regarding how civil policing was organised. Importantly, it should be noted that the NW model in South Africa was adopted from that which arose in North America in 1972 by the National Sheriff’s Association (NSA) as previously identified and discussed.

(2.4.1) The apartheid years - Early Formations of civil policing structures

According to Schärf (1989:210) as well as Cawthra (1986:10), there were multiple laws in place, as implemented by the apartheid government, that compelled (white) citizens to police their neighbourhoods in ways that served to uphold the system of apartheid by combatting any opposition to it. It was at this particular time when the government had launched the National Security Management System to deal with both internal and external threats to the apartheid system (Maapesa, 2022:40). The Nationalist Government sought to intensify the oppression of black individuals at the time by strengthening residential segregation (Cawthra, 1986:10). This

included compelling citizens to remove (black) squatters from these areas, as well as acting as informers regarding the movements and activities of the so-called ‘terrorists’ (Schärf, 1989:210). It was at this particular time that the NW scheme was first formally launched by the Minister of Police in 1985 with the core aims of protecting private property and facilitating the creation of neighbourhood networks to promote and take part in crime prevention initiatives (Schärf, 1989:219). As is evident here, this is not too dissimilar from the logic utilised by the NSA in the USA when they established the first NW programme. This new method of policing in South Africa was first evident in the white suburbs of Johannesburg and Cape Town (as well as some other white suburbs in the rest of the country) and would soon be adopted by various populations in South Africa. The Western Cape and Cape Town, in particular, became a stronghold for NWs where there are currently more than 500 registered with the Western Cape Department for Police Oversight and Community Safety. However, it is worth discussing why there is such a massive need for civil policing bodies.

It is widely acknowledged and accepted that the apartheid government, the Group Areas Act and the subsequent extensive forced removals of those belonging to the black and coloured populations from once diverse communities and their relocation to the Cape Flats contributed to the collapse of community networks (in terms of support and control) as well as that of familial networks - resulting in a lack of social control (Schärf, 1989:220; van Wyk & Theron, 2005:53; Goga, 2014:2). This has, among other things, affected the youth in particular, and their marginalisation had resulted in the accelerated formation of gangs, and saw a drastic rise in crime (Schärf, 1989:220). Residents of these areas that were plagued by gangsterism and crime initiated so-called “peacekeeping” structures to deal with the problem (Schärf, 1989:220). According to Fourchard (2011:615) the neighbourhood watch model, particularly that which has gained momentum in various areas on the Cape Flats, was blended from the neighbourhood crime prevention model that was developed in the United States (and first implemented in the white suburbs of South Africa), as well as from the vigilante group known as the Peacemakers.

In 1973 a new group had been established in the area of Manenberg on that Cape Flats in response to increasing levels of gang-activity occurring in the housing flats (these flats were used to house people of colour that were removed from the newly declared ‘white areas’ under apartheid) in the area – however the group had soon expanded to other areas in this region (Kinnes, 2017:77). The Peacemakers was a vigilante group that took the form of a type of “home-guard system” (Kinnes, 2017:78) that patrolled the streets mainly at night and during

weekends and, armed with torches, whistles, and weapons such as baseball bats and pick-axe handles, confronted youths believed to be gangsters, or criminals (Schärf, 1989:220; Fourchard, 2011:615, Kinnes, 2017:78). Besides the use of corporal punishment of delinquents, the Movement was also known to violently clash with gang members and leaders, as well as with other criminals in the community (van Wyk & Theron, 2005:54; Fourchard, 2011:615), which also resulted in innocent individuals being attacked. However, the Peacemakers was not limited to acts of vigilantism alone, in fact, they developed into a social movement that raised awareness about certain issues in their communities and addressed problems relating to education, recreational facilities as well as housing maintenance (Kinnes, 2017:78). Some members also founded local football associations while others initiated food collection clubs in order to support community members who were unemployed (Kinnes, 2017:78).

It is important to note here that members of the community at the time actually preferred non-state forms of policing due to their distrust of the state in general, but specifically the police force at the time due to their oppressive and violent nature. While the police generally did not interfere with the activities of the Peacemakers, issues started arising due to the Riotous Assembly Act and the General Laws Amendment Act that prohibited the congregation of three or more people in public (these Acts were passed due to the uprisings against the Bantu Education Act – an apartheid segregated education system) (Kinnes, 2017:79). This caused an interference of the operations of the Peacemakers and resulted in clashes with the police and many arrests. The Movement was ultimately disbanded in 1979 after the organisation was given an ultimatum by the police force where they could become police reservists (Kinnes, 2017:79). This divided the organisation as some joined the police while others refused. Those who remained formed civic associations such as the Manenberg Residents Movement and the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (Kinnes, 2017:79).

According to van Wyk and Theron (2005:55), it was the resurgence of gangsterism and crime on the Cape Flats in 1985 that saw community attempts to counter it, subsequently leading to the establishment of neighbourhood watches on the Cape Flats. From the above-mentioned literature, it appears evident that neighbourhood watches during this time were more reactive (undoubtedly due to their ‘heavy-handed’ approach in dealing with criminals and deviants) and tended to be viewed as vigilante organisations by the state as well as by other parts of society. This, however, (in general) appears to have changed over the years.

(2.4.2) Policing in the dawn of the “new” South Africa

After the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the policing in the country had to be reinvented to support the transition to the new democratic society. Doing so required changing the police themselves from a force that served only to protect the apartheid state and its laws to the detriment of black citizens, to a service that supported and protected all citizens (Ngoveni, 2022:146). It was in the National Peace Accord of 1991 that identifiers of community policing were first noted in the hope of achieving a fundamental transformation of policing in the country (Brogden, 2002:170; Pelsler, 1999:2). The Interim Constitution, formally enacted in 1994, introduced the concept of Community Policing Forums at all police stations (Brogden, 2002:170) which served to restore relations between the police and the community that were originally broken down by the apartheid system. This is where the notion of serving as the “eye and ears of the police” made its first formal appearance in South Africa – with the idea being that civil policing structures, communities, and other civil organisations such as churches and schools, collaborate with the police. This was confirmed by Minnaar (2005:88) who stated that NWs were only to serve as the “eyes and ears” of the police (although this does appear to have changed since the article was published – as is discussed later). This was followed by the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines of 1997 which identified community policing in South Africa as a “collaborative and partnership-based approach” - between the police and the community - to solving problems related to the issues of crime (Brogden, 2002:170).

While these policies and frameworks were being introduced and discussed in the early 1990s to mid-2000s, the Western Cape government was also introducing policies as a reaction to vigilante operations (such as People Against Gangsterism and Drugs [PAGAD]) as well as the distrust in the police, particularly on the Cape Flats. According to van der Spuy (2021:300), by 1997 there were already approximately 3000 NW volunteers active in the Western Cape Province, and these individuals were already being trained at this point due to the fact that SAPS recognised they could not curb crime on their own. The Western Cape Provincial Constitution and Code of Conduct for Neighbourhood Watch Structures (DoCS, 2003:np) was introduced in an attempt to ensure that neighbourhood watches act within the law and that the community works in close collaboration with SAPS to create stable and safe environments. Importantly, this called for the registration of neighbourhood watches in the province which would see them being held accountable for their actions to the SAPS, through their affiliation with the CPF – this was done to exert some form of regulation in an attempt to reduce instances of vigilantism (Department of Community Safety, 1999:np). One of the biggest issues here,

however, is that there are still some unregistered groups (labelled as NWs) who are in operation and, as such, they may not be held accountable for their actions which could result in acts of vigilantism occurring in the future.

In 2013, the Western Cape Community Safety Act was passed. This Act served to improve the monitoring and evaluation of police performance in the province, improving the oversight thereof, while also attempting to maintain community-police relations (*Western Cape Community Safety Act, No. 3 of 2013, 2013:s2*). Importantly, directives for the establishment and registration of neighbourhood watches were also included in the Act. In terms of the regulation of NWs, some important points were noted: the Provincial Minister may provide funding and other resources to neighbourhood watches; NWs must renew their accreditation every two years; and they must report crime and safety issues, as well as the activities of the NW to the Provincial Minister (*Western Cape Community Safety Act, No. 3 of 2013, 2013*). Failure to abide by the ideals listed in the Western Cape Constitution and Code of Conduct for Neighbourhood Watches as well as the Western Cape Community Safety Act would see NWs lose their accreditation and, subsequently, the support from the provincial government.

Based on all of the information above, it is evident that policing in general in South Africa has undergone many changes over the years. The sections in the provincial legislation and constitution regarding the neighbourhood watch have also indicated a drastic shift in their roles since the beginning of the democratic era. This legislation, however, does not necessarily paint the full picture. South Africa has a reputation for being “implementation poor” when it comes to the carrying out of legislation, acts and so on (Botha, 2022:np). As such, it is necessary to examine academic literature inclusive of the NW in the post-apartheid era.

(2.4.3) Some more recent evidence of the roles of the NW

From the more recent and limited literature which have included NWs, it would appear that there has been a shift from a reactive role (vigilantism in the past) to a more proactive one. For example, Visser (2009:75) noted that the Kylemore NW focused on uplifting those in the community - especially the youth where so-called ‘problem children’ were identified, taken to a camp, and taught skills. Similar recordings, in terms of the proactive nature of the NW, were made by Meyer and van Graan (2011:137) who found that NW members were raising awareness about crime in the area, forming positive relationships between the police and between neighbours, distributing newsletters regarding crime and possible risks in the area regularly, and numbering houses clearly so that responders can identify houses in the event of

an emergency. As is evident from this literature, NWs appear to be taking proactive steps to prevent crime - this includes the activities they perform, as well as forming relationships with other role-players.

A more recent study by van Graan (2016) focused on the specific roles and contributions of communities themselves as a catalyst for crime prevention in their respective areas. Contrary to the work of Marks, Shearing and Wood (2009) who believed that the police hold on to the idea of a policing monopoly in the country, this study found that the case Roodekrans NW exhibited features of an excellent partnership with the police, as well as with private security companies who all shared the responsibility of preventing crime. In this regard, it hints that connections may have been formed between different policing sectors (although more research is needed to verify this). Unfortunately, the findings of this study are limited to the case of one particular neighbourhood watch. As such, there is not enough evidence to suggest that this is occurring in other areas.

Additionally, it is important to note that there are not only necessarily positive relations that may emerge between the NW and other policing organisations. A meeting held in the Western Cape by members of SAPS, members of Parliament as well as CPF members in 2019 appears to provide some insight into the relationships between neighbourhood watches and other organisations and sectors. Specifically, this meeting highlighted the fact political interference was at play – thereby contributing to strained relations between neighbourhood watches, CPFs, and the Department for Police Oversight and Community Safety in the province (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG], 2019:1). Interestingly, it was mentioned that conflict arose as a result of funding, where the provincial government favoured the funding of NWs over CPFs resulting in artificial divisions between the different structures. Fennell (2020:182) states that the Western Cape Community Safety Act (No. 3 of 2013) makes provision for and promotes partnering with community organisations to create safer communities. This follows a ‘systems-thinking’ and an inclusive, holistic approach (features of the neo-liberal concept of collaborative governance) to address safety concerns. The Western Cape government stated that the NW model is aligned to the Western Cape Community Safety Act (No. 3 of 2013), and that NWs are more representative of the community structures. Therefore, NWs are seen as the more beneficial structure of the two (Safer Spaces, 2021). Additionally, the Western Cape government has another political agenda – that of the devolution of policing powers to the province. In other words, the Democratic Alliance wishes to be in control of the police in the province instead of the national government. As such, the reduction of funds to CPFs (who are

responsible for overseeing the functioning of the SAPS) can be seen as a politically motivated plan to move away from the SAPS. These points can be seen as contributing to the breakdown in relations between the NWs and CPFs.

While other non-academic articles appear to highlight the roles of the NW in the present day and their relationship with various policing sectors such as Solomons (2023), in general, there is a clear lack of academic literature regarding this. A study conducted by van der Spuy (2021) did indeed follow the anti-crime mobilisation of various organisations on the Cape Flats, which included NWs, but it did so from the perspective of one broad-based structure – the Western Cape Anti-Crime Forum. In doing so, the study mapped the evolution of the Forum over the years, investigating their activities and networks – and this briefly touched on their work with NWs. Unfortunately, not enough information was gathered about NWs specifically. Literature specifically focusing on NWs in Cape Town specifically is limited – that which is available is either limited to those studies conducted decades ago or is limited to a few studies conducted in other parts of South Africa. As such, more research is needed to fill this gap - hence the carrying out of this research.

(2.5) Theoretical framework

(2.5.1) Nodal Policing

The theoretical framework selected for this research is that of Nodal Policing due to the fact that an investigation is being carried out to determine exactly how the NW fits into what is being termed as the policing ‘assemblage’ - that is the set of nodes and their connections (in the form of a network) involved in policing. As is evident throughout the literature review, it is clear that policing, or ‘security governance’, is made up of various characters that all play a role in policing their particular areas on the assemblage. This is precisely what nodal policing deals with. According to Quéro and Dupont (2019:283), nodal governance is based on the notion that there is a non-monopolistic production of security by a network of interrelated entities. This study aimed to identify what the roles and relationships of the neighbourhood watch are, and how they may have developed on this assemblage over time. Thus, it is believed that the nodal policing framework is best suited for this particular investigation.

Perhaps the most interesting component or characteristic of this particular paradigm is that it introduces into the realm of possibility the consideration of diverse heterogeneous and interconnected organisations under one big umbrella (Quéro & Dupont, 2019:283). As such,

security can thus be understood to be created not solely, or even largely, through the traditional top-to-bottom system of government that many of us are accustomed to, but rather through a much more horizontal type of governance mechanism that instead has the capacity to regulate nodes within a network (Quéro & Dupont, 2019:283). While it is generally accepted the idea of security governance involves a diverse set of stakeholders, the way such governance mechanisms operate within the network is still unclear (Quéro & Dupont, 2019:283). This is precisely what this study aims to investigate with a specific focus on neighbourhood watches.

Importantly, nodal policing forms part of the overarching theoretical framework of Nodal Governance which, as noted by Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2005:31), is the notion that governance is not only the burden of the independent state and its subdivisions. This is simply insufficient and inadequate to deal with the many tasks - both practical and conceptual - associated with what is termed as “good governance.” According to this theory, present-day governance is characterised by multiple actors which include - but are not limited to - the state, large corporations, institutions of civil society such as neighbourhood watches, churches, and schools, as well as criminals who form (to different extents) interconnected governance networks (Burris, Drahos & Shearing, 2005:31). Nodal governance is a theory that was developed to explain how multiple actors operate within particular social systems, and how they interact with each other through networks to govern the systems they inhabit (Burris, Drahos & Shearing, 2005:33). In further building on this theory, Johnston and Shearing (2002:146) note the concept of a “new morphology” in terms of security governance where the phenomenon of “private governance” overthrows the traditional state visions on domestic ordering functions, as well as visions on the promotion of security (Shearing, 2006).

One of the greatest strengths of the nodal governance framework, as highlighted by Holley and Shearing (2015:170), is that it makes clear the complexity of governing processes while simultaneously establishing new avenues and paths for explanatory and normative thinking. As such, through its ability to map the interactions and capacities of different nodes, both as sites of continuity and of contestation, the nodal framework brings about opportunities to first describe, and then transform, the networked relations that produce governance outcomes.

Importantly, according to Boutellier and van Steden (2011:4) “nodes” (or “organisational sides of security”) are representations of institutions which possess sets of technologies, resources, and mentalities that mobilise knowledge and capacity of its members to exert control or manage a particular course of events. Nodes are usually points on an assemblage, and it is through

networks (relationships or connections with other nodes) that they exert power and influence (Burris, Drahos & Shearing, 2005: 33). As such, nodes tend to occupy and operate within territories and also tend to form relationships with other nodes and have the ability to exert influence on other nodes in a network, with some able to exert more influence than others (Wood and Shearing 2007: 26).

This pluralisation of governance can be attributed to deliberate state policies that aim to devolve governance functions to various other agencies, structures, and agents. The result of this pluralisation or ‘multilateralisation’, as Bayley and Shearing (2000) have termed it, is the separation of governance into a great variety of governmental nodes. However, these developments are not simply limited to the devolution of state functions under the influence of neo-liberal reform initiatives and policies. Instead, what is occurring in society at the moment is an extension of the existing functions and activities of non-state agencies to encompass some of those activities traditionally provided by the state, as well as the emergence of new forms of governmental activity beyond the state (Shearing & Wood, 2003:403).

Shearing and Wood (2003:402) even go on to credit the private sector for its role in security governance and, in particular, in driving the emergence of preventative, risk-oriented policing. Here they state that “this shift in policing can be seen as a 'belated recognition' of what the corporate sector has been doing for years in the promotion of order and security” (Shearing & Wood, 2003:403). The growth of non-state security governance, both with and without state action, has made it increasingly difficult to maintain an argument for a state-centric model and view of governance to allow for effective governance. As such, the existence of a sovereign state – the one that can provide for all of the needs of its citizens without external interventions (that is, without non-state interventions) has been revealed to be a myth (Shearing & Wood, 2003:403).

These points of nodal governance, which will be further elaborated in the following paragraph, are why this framework has been selected - the neighbourhood watch is the institution or node in focus, and their respective roles, as well as their relationships with other nodes (in the issue of policing), will be explored.

(2.5.2) Criticisms and potential limitations of the nodal framework

An argument made by Cook (2013: 456) states that the nodal governance framework focuses too much on what he calls “excessive localism” where the portrayal of these horizontal

networks (as previously discussed) tends to overshadow or altogether ignore the vertical networks connecting the nodes. In other words, the criticism here is that the framework does not place enough emphasis on hierarchical structures that ultimately govern the networks (even though the framework does concede that some nodes may exert more influence than others) where, for example, the national government may be at the top of the structure and influences the other nodes below. Boutellier and van Steden (2011) expressed similar claims that the nodal governance framework essentially treats the state as an incompetent structure and, in so doing, loses sight of the state's importance in 'civilising' governance processes – seeing as most activities (if not all) are to be cleared by the state first. It is therefore argued that the state should be seen as more than simply a single node among multiple others because the role of states is of great significance in terms of both symbolic power and its regulatory capacity.

In summary, the points in the paragraph above essentially argue that the nodal governance framework undermines the authority, capability, and power of the state. These criticisms have been noted here because they do appear to be valid concerns that should be considered when utilising such a framework. Indeed, in the case of this study, having identified that there are multiple actors involved in security provision, it does appear that there is conflict between the Western Cape government (DA) and the National government (ANC) with the former undermining the power and capabilities of the latter. This research, however, does not attempt to minimise the importance of the state in any manner.

While there is a possible limitation in terms of the minimisation of the influence that the state has in terms of providing security, the significance of the state in this regard is not eradicated entirely – they are just simply not regarded as the central figure in security governance (as this dissertation highlights, there appears to be an implicit dependence on NWs).

(2.6) Conclusion

Upon concluding the literature review it became apparent that there is indeed a clear lack of academic literature regarding the functions of the neighbourhood watches in South Africa as a whole, but particularly those located on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape Province. Those studies that have been conducted appear to be rather outdated as they were carried out decades ago. This therefore reiterates a need for a study of this nature. The next chapter discusses the research methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

(3.1) Introduction

The following chapter provides information regarding the research methodology of the study, as well as the justification for such methods. The research design and approach of the study (qualitative and phenomenological) are discussed. In addition, a critique of the research approach is given in which the possible limitations of the chosen methods, as well as possible solutions to them, are discussed. The chapter also moves on to clarify the population and sampling, and data collection methods, and offers a detailed description of the data analysis that took place, followed by the ethical considerations and a reflexive discussion that highlights my position as researcher in this study.

(3.2) Research Approach and Design

(3.2.1) Qualitative research and phenomenology

For this study, a qualitative research approach was utilised to gather a rich and more in-depth set of information and knowledge regarding the specific functions of NWs in terms of their roles and relationships, and how these have developed and changed over time. The key motive behind conducting qualitative research for this study was that not much academic research has specifically targeted NWs in Cape Town. This logic was reinforced and supported by Morse (2003:833) who noted that, while qualitative research can be utilised in many investigative situations, it is especially useful when the phenomenon being investigated cannot be quantified, when the nature of the problem is unclear, or when there is a lack of literature on the topic so that new ideas or arguments are brought to the surface. In the case of this research, there was indeed a lack of recent academic literature focusing specifically on the NW - that is, their roles and relationships, and how these have evolved. Consequently, the experiences and knowledge of NW members regarding the development of their organisation were investigated. Hence the use of the qualitative method. According to Creswell et al. (2007), qualitative research provides researchers and readers alike with detailed insights into specific issues, phenomena or inquiries by focusing on and allowing human experience, knowledge and interpretations to be brought to the fore of investigations, while also allowing greater flexibility in research.

A phenomenological research design was adopted for this research. According to Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019:91), phenomenology essentially endeavours to describe the essence

of a particular phenomenon by traversing it from the perspective of those who have experience with the phenomenon in question - this can be broken down further in terms of *what* was experienced and *how* it was experienced. In other words, phenomenology focuses on human experience when investigating a phenomenon. This study focused on the phenomenon of the NW and subsequently relied on the experiences of its members to gather information regarding the functions thereof. In summary, the ontological assumption of this design is that reality is subjective and 'internal' to the individual, while the epistemological assumption is that the researcher must "remove themselves from the world" by dismissing any preconceived ideas regarding the phenomenon being investigated (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019:92).

(3.2.2) Critiquing the research approach and design

It is important to realise that, as with all other research approaches and designs, some fundamental strengths and weaknesses affect the quality, relevance and impact of the study.

Qualitative research is extremely useful in situations where rich accounts of data are needed and are to be simplified and managed without sacrificing the detail, complexity and context of that data. In other words, qualitative research places human experience and knowledge at the fore in a way where discovery and methods of generating new data are rooted in the complexity of the meanings and interpretations ascribed to certain phenomena (Atieno, 2009:16). Since very little academic information is available on the nature of NWs in Cape Town, the methods of discovery encapsulated in the qualitative research method is the only viable option.

There are also disadvantages to qualitative research that restrict the method. Perhaps the greatest limitation of this method is the fact that it does not test to see whether the findings of qualitative research are statistically significant (Atieno, 2009:17). In fact, due to the focus on detailed subjective experiences and an emphasis on 'quality over quantity' in terms of data collection, findings of qualitative research often cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty as with quantitative research. The only way to reduce the impact of this would be to increase the sample size. However, that is not always a viable option due to resource and time constraints. Additionally, the provision of a detailed description of the object of inquiry is the aim of qualitative analysis (Atieno, 2009:17). Consequently, no attempt is made to assign codes or frequencies to the linguistic features identified in the data, and rare phenomena do not receive the same amount of attention as more frequent phenomena – just because an issue or point of concern does not appear as often in the data as other points does

not mean that it is any less relevant or important (Atieno, 2009:17). Unfortunately, these points are often omitted from the research. To mitigate this in some meaningful way, the researcher should recommend that these points be researched in the future.

(3.3) Sampling

The non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling was utilised to gather participants for this study. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of particular participants due to the specific qualities they possess that are relevant to the study (Etikan et al., 2015:2). In other words, this sampling method involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that had experience in or were well-informed about the NW. Logically, since this study focused on the specific functions of NW and their developments over time, it was necessary to first select NW groups that have been in operation for some time. Specifically, NWs located in the Athlone and Manenberg precincts were selected (two NWs in Athlone and one in Manenberg) since, based on the literature, the roots of this particular civil policing organisation can be traced back to the vigilante group of the Peacemakers in this region of the Cape Flats.

To identify the NWs in the Athlone and Manenberg precincts, a document request was made at the Western Cape Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety for a particular document they possess that lists all the registered NWs in the province. Those who met the criteria of being active in the Athlone and Manenberg precincts were selected. The Chairman of each NW was contacted and asked for permission to conduct the study. It was also determined that the sample size would consist of three NWs and that each focus group would be made up of the various role players within the particular NW. Importantly, two NWs were selected from the Athlone precinct while one was selected from the Manenberg precinct. Under the Athlone precinct, the two NWs selected were Bridgetown Neighbourhood Watch and Silvertown Neighbourhood Watch. Surrey Estate Neighbourhood Watch was selected from the Manenberg precinct. While an odd number of focus groups was not ideal, this total was necessary due to the resource and time constraints associated with this minor dissertation. As such, since the Athlone precinct was much more vast compared to the Manenberg precinct, it was decided that a two-one split between the respective areas would take place. In terms of each separate focus group, a combination of the executive committee members, as well as other individuals such as patrollers and members of the NW responsible for various other activities such as community projects and so on were selected. The reason for selecting individuals from

all areas of the NW (and not limiting it exclusively to the executive committee for example) was to obtain a variety of perspectives from each NW organisation regarding their roles and relationships – it was purely to obtain a variety of perspectives and views to increase the richness of the data. This is because different people oversee different aspects of the organisation, and each of their input was viewed to be vital in obtaining the overall picture of the functioning of the organisation as a whole. This specification was important as some members had overlapping roles (for example the secretary may have been a patroller, and also in charge of community events). Each focus group interview consisted of a group of 7 participants. This number was selected allowed me to collect enough detailed data while simultaneously not being overwhelmed by the amount of data collected. This number was also selected based on the literature by Krueger (2015:68), who found that the ideal focus group size (for non-commercial topics) is between 5 and 8 participants - particularly if these participants have more expertise on the topic, or if they have strong feelings about the topic.

In the interest of transparency, some of the biographical details of the NWs are listed below. Importantly, I was asked to leave out certain details of the NWs such as the number of members and patrollers they have, as well as other important information such as the times they often patrol and so on. As such, I will present vague biographical details of each NW as follows: Surrey Estate NW was established in 1988, they have more men than women that are part of the organisation, and they have a large range in terms of age with members ranging from 20 years old to members in their 70s; Silvertown NW was established in 2018, they have more women than men active in the organisation and all of their members are older than 35; Finally, Bridgetown NW was established in 1994, they do have a few younger members who are in their 20s, however the vast majority of their members are 50 years and older and there more men than women active in the NW.

In terms of the focus group interviews, the Surrey Estate NW group was made up of seven men, Silvertown had four women and three men present, while Bridgetown had three women and four men present.

(3.4) Data collection

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to gather the necessary information from participants (see Appendix C). Focus group are essentially group interviews where, instead of alternating between a researcher's question and a participant's response, the focus lies on intra-

group interaction where the researcher acts as a facilitator or moderator who controls the direction of the discussion (Morgan, 1997:2). This method was used for a variety of reasons. Firstly, perhaps the greatest advantage of the focus group interview was that it allowed me to gather large amounts of information in a limited amount of time (Morgan, 1997:2). Another strength of focus group interviews is that they provided the researcher with the opportunity to directly observe the differences in the opinions and experiences of the participants immediately as opposed to only reaching these conclusions after an analysis of each individual participant transcript (Morgan, 1997:2). In other words, focus group interviews provide the researcher with a variety of perspectives which helps to provide rich and detailed accounts regarding the object of inquiry. In particular, large amounts of data had to be obtained in a relatively short period due to the time and resource constraints associated with the completion of this master's thesis. Additionally, it is important to remember that the members of the organisation work together regularly. As such it was important to allow them to engage in a discussion with one another to allow the conversation to flow and to allow for any details that may have been missed in individual interviews to be brought forth here. The focus group interview allowed for this to happen by facilitating conversation between the NW members which provided the researcher with rich accounts of precisely how these changes in roles as well as the establishment of new relationships (as well as the breakdown thereof) have occurred over time. For example: when one point was made by a participant, the same point was agreed upon and elaborated upon by other participants, while some points that were brought up were disagreed on by others. This provided the researcher with data that was of great importance to the study.

In terms of data recording, the researcher utilised an audio-recording device to capture the information provided by the participants. This method of data recording was selected due to the challenging nature of writing field notes when in conversation with multiple people. This allowed me to fully immerse myself in the conversation with the participants, while also assisting in preventing me from missing any important points of information.

(3.5) Data Analysis

For this study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic data analysis method was utilised to make sense of the data. The thematic analysis identifies and analyses patterns of meaning (themes) in the dataset to illustrate the important points of information that inform the phenomenon that is being studied (Joffe, 2012:209). Thematic analysis is also stated to be a flexible method which can be modified to meet the needs of most research, while simultaneously providing

rich, detailed and complex accounts of the recorded data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence it is suitable for the novice researcher - one of the reasons why this method of analysis was selected. It is necessary to specify precisely how the coding of the data took place. According to Joffe (2012:211), the demarcation of a theme can arise from a theoretical idea (deductive), the raw data (inductive), or both. Theoretical (or deductive) themes allow the researcher to replicate, refute or extend existing theoretical works, while inductive themes allow the researcher to generate new concepts (Joffe, 2012:211). Since studies regarding the roles and relationships of the NW were conducted decades ago (there is existing literature on the topic), yet many studies in recent history neglected this particular topic, this analysis used both deductive and inductive themes.

(3.6) Analytical Strategy

In analysing the data, the NVivo software package was used. NVivo is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (or CAQDAS) that assists in the collection, organisation, visualisation, and analysis of data – these functions are however still reliant on the input of the researcher (Dhakal, 2022:270).

After reading through and immersing myself in the data, I then coded the data. Similar codes were grouped to form themes that ultimately provided the answers to the research question of this study. Below are the six steps involved in the process of conducting the thematic analysis along with a very brief description of what they entailed. The following six-step guide by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used as the foundation for conducting the analysis.

Step 1: “Familiarisation with the data” – this process entailed simply reading and re-reading the data and making notes of initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In ensuring the completion of this step, I read the transcripts of each focus group twice to make sure that I fully understood the information that was provided. This was followed by the noting down of any initial patterns that became evident in the data.

Step 2: “Generating initial codes” – This is the step where data reduction took place and where the initial codes were produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here, the initial patterns that were identified were transformed into the initial codes and ultimately reduced all of the data into more meaningful and manageable groupings of text that were relevant in terms of answering the research question – the most basic level of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 3: “Locating themes” which means to develop initial or potential themes utilising the codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this step, I organised the data in such a way that the matching codes (those with similar or the same type of information) were grouped to form these initial themes.

Step 4: “Reviewing the themes” (Data verification) – This checking the themes to ensure that they work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1), as well as the dataset (level 2) in its entirety (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, a twofold analysis of the data took place during this particular step. The Level 1 analysis entailed examining the codes to ensure that each theme was indeed born out of those codes (double-checking to see if the theme reflects the codes) and determining if a pattern has or has not developed in the first place. Where a pattern was identified, a level 2 analysis occurred where the entire dataset was analysed to confirm that the themes indeed fit (or made logical sense) in terms of the data. In other words, a confirmatory check was done to see if the themes that were developed reflected the information that was contained in the transcripts. This twofold analysis also provided me with the opportunity to return to the transcripts to check if any additional data (worth coding) was missed initially.

Step 5: “Defining and naming themes” – This step entailed the refinement of the particulars of each theme – thereby clearly labelling and defining each theme in the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the proper completion of this step, each theme was defined and linked back to the research question.

Step 6: “Producing the report” – The final step in the thematic analysis process is noted to be the opportunity for analysis whereby a report containing all of the extracts, and the analysis thereof is drafted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This report was utilised to answer the research question.

Step 7: In order to verify the results of the analysis, respondent validation took place in that the participants were provided with the results of the analysis to identify any errors or misunderstanding that may have occurred.

(3.7) Ethical Considerations

There were numerous ethical considerations, as with any research project dealing with human participants, that had to be abided by to produce ethically sound research.

Firstly, in general, is worth noting that the nature of this study was deemed to be ‘low risk’ both for the participants as well as for the researcher from the very beginning because no vulnerable populations were being studied, nor was there a specific and prolonged focus on the study of traumatic events – although the researcher monitored the situation closely regarding the wellbeing of the participant.

There were, however, multiple other ethical concerns and principles that were to be addressed and abided by. One of the biggest ethical principles to be abided by was that of obtaining informed consent (in line with the University of Cape Town’s code of ethics) from the participants to participate in the study (see Appendix A for the information sheet and Appendix B for consent form). In doing so, participants were briefed and were made fully aware of the consequences that could have possibly arisen due to their participation in the study - this included briefing them on the benefits and risks of their participation. In this case, participants were not rewarded in any meaningful way for their participation in the study, nor were there any foreseeable risks associated with their participation. In terms of the possible benefits of the study as a whole, they were informed that their participation would add to the academic knowledge regarding the specific roles the NW play in terms of policing - something that has been lacking in recent literature. This, in turn, may contribute greatly to the future of policing in South Africa. Additionally, while it was a difficult task to ensure confidentiality and anonymity in group interviews (in making sure that members of the group do not share information with anyone else once the interviews have concluded), this was ensured on the part of the researcher where pseudonyms were used to replace the actual names of the NWs. In other words, while the names of the NWs were given above in the interest of transparency for this research paper, the names were removed in the instances where their quotes were used. Participants were also made aware that, should they feel uncomfortable at any stage during the interview, they were able to leave at any time without facing any consequences - their (incomplete) transcript may still have been used for the study if they granted permission for the researcher to do so. However, this was not an issue as no participants withdrew from the interview.

Importantly, all data collected from this study was stored on an encrypted cloud server which is password-protected.

(3.8) Reflexive Discussion

As the researcher, am a coloured male who was raised in the Crawford community of Cape Town – the area in which I reside to this day. Crawford is located on the edge of the Cape Flats and it has allowed me to experience the difference in living conditions on all points of the spectrum – from the relatively safe, secure and leafy upper-class suburbs, to the middle-class community, to the plight of the working-class communities where crime and violence runs rampant. I am by no means saying that crime and violence does not occur elsewhere, I am just acknowledging the unequal nature of the society we live in. I share the view of the majority of South Africans who experience crime to be a massive problem plaguing the country and I have always respected the efforts of those who have attempted to combat it (within the bounds of the law). In particular, I have always admired the attempts by my community to assist in creating an environment that is safe and secure for all of our members. The neighbourhood watch in particular was a group that I found particularly interesting – they would often share news on the community WhatsApp group of the activities they were partaking in, as well as sharing news of the criminals that were apprehended in the area, or of crime that was occurring. This is how the inspiration for this research came about – to investigate precisely what the functions (roles and relationships) of the NW are, and how these functions evolved.

While researching this topic I acknowledge that my own lived experiences can influence the outcome of the study – be it through the interview process or the data analysis process. Importantly, while I do have my views of crime and violence, as well as safety and security, I have endeavoured to remain neutral during the data collection process, as well as during the interpretation and analysis of the data, and throughout the entire process of writing the research report.

(3.9) Conclusion

In summary, this section highlighted the fact that a qualitative, phenomenological approach to researching the NW took place. Purposive sampling was utilised to select three neighbourhood watches from the Athlone and Manenberg areas. Three separate focus group interviews were utilised as the form of data collection, with each focus group consisting of seven members of the NW. An audio-recording device was utilised to record the interviews to capture all of the information that was provided. All ethical principles in line with the UCT code of ethics were followed for the conducting of a study on human participants. The next section presents the findings of the research.

Chapter 4: Findings

(4.1) Introduction

The following section provides a narrative of the themes that were identified and constructed as a result of the data analysis. The identified themes were grouped into three main sections: (1) the roles of the NW; (2) the NW network (which includes their relationships – or lack thereof - with other agencies and structures); and (3) the policing methods of the NW. Importantly, as previously stated, pseudonyms have replaced the names of the NWs to ensure that no identifying information can be used to trace the members who have participated in the study. F1, F2, and F3 indicate the focus group while P1, P2, P3 and so on represent the participant that provided the information. Importantly, all of the findings in this chapter are a result of correlations in statements both within each focus group, as well as between focus groups. Due to word limit constraints, a statement from one person in a focus group represents the views of most or all members of that particular group. Below is a table representing the results of the analysis:

Themes	The roles of the NW	Policing methods of the NW	The NW Network
Categories	Beyond fighting crime – uplifting the community	Strategic patrolling	Collaboration between NWs
	Building good relationships	A restrained approach	The NW and SAPS
	Expanding policing roles	Intelligence and the utilisation of technology	The NW and the CPF
			The NW and private security

Table 1.

(4.2) The roles of the NW

(4.2.1) Beyond fighting crime – uplifting the community

From the interviews, the NW members of each focus group made it very clear that, while ensuring the safety and security of their community is the foremost priority of the NW, it is also about ensuring the overall well-being of the community and the people who live in it.

F1P1: Let me start off by saying that- when you consider a NW, right, our mandate as a NW is safety. Safety comes first. So we will respond to any incident that happens, right... But it is much broader than just community safety- also community wellbeing... there's also some projects that we do - outreach projects.

F2P1: We created an opportunity for our community and our residents to become a little bit more visible and vigilant. Obviously a deterrent against crime - I think that is the first priority... but we've always redefined and reinvented the word "Watch" as being more... We like to think we do a little bit more and go beyond that.

In further elaborating upon the point of "community wellbeing" members of the NWs discussed they would try their best to assist community members with various issues not always related to that of crime. Some of the statements are as follows:

F1P1: We responded to calls where there's an elderly lady who lives with her husband who's fallen over... We the assist with the community feeding scheme...

F2P3: We run a feeding scheme to help alleviate poverty... it's about assisting especially with regards to rehabilitation with drug centres. We have a bit of a foot-in at some of these centres.

F3P2: Yes, we have a feeding scheme. The NW is for the community-helping where we can. We also try and develop the youth through sports...

The participants also discussed how they obtained the resources required to carry out the tasks to ensure the well-being of their respective communities. Importantly, the NW receives a stipend from the DPOCS (formerly DOCS) when they are registered in their database (and to be registered they need to be affiliated to a CPF).

F1P3: We have a community fund that feeds people...

F2P1: We raise funds and we pay a stipend. Because we subscribe to DOCs and the CPF- we do annual events- there's one coming up now- so they are providing a stipend for us.

According to the participants, the logic behind the need for the prioritisation of overall community upliftment and development is that it is ultimately underdevelopment and certain negative influences in their communities that are responsible for high crime levels. As such, they do not limit their objective purely to dealing with criminals and deviants directly. Instead, they are attempting to address the root of the problem. This was highlighted in the statement below:

F3P2: Another part of that shift is not just looking at crime but having a more holistic view of community development. How do you create an environment that is conducive to development and the lifting up of the community which immediately eliminates to a great extent issues around crime.

Surprisingly, this move to a more holistic view of community upliftment was noted to be a relatively new phenomenon for these NWs, with it being stated that they only started looking at it from this perspective a “few years ago” with it becoming a bigger part of their philosophy when the Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on the members of their respective communities due to loss of income, and the consequent increase in desperation and criminal activity.

F3P4: Obviously we had Covid, and just before Covid – I think a year or two - we started community upliftment. During Covid that was our big focus because a lot of the crime is born out of the social and economic situations of the community and we can blame a lot of things on that.

Additionally, the NWs appear to become increasingly involved in duties related to the maintenance of infrastructure in their respective communities. This includes overseeing and ensuring the general maintenance of City property is carried out by the relevant authorities, and reporting any other issues that are a threat to the wellbeing of community members – and these

include matters relating to safety.

F2P1: Broken lights, missing manhole covers, bushes that must be removed, cut grass and trees that must be removed - those are civic related issues but the NW is dealing with it. So one of us always reports it and gets a reference number to keep everybody happy.

Interestingly, when discussing the matter of ensuring the maintenance of community infrastructure by the relevant government officials, it was made evident that not one of the NWs being interviewed had a Civic association responsible for overseeing these particular issues – it was the NWs that were dealing with those concerns. This appears to be indicative of a changing function – one where NWs are taking over the responsibilities generally associated with civic associations. While there is no formal structure in terms of monitoring and evaluations of the performance in the carrying out of these duties, it was stated that some members of the executive committee were given these responsibilities, and it was their duty to report any feedback back to the community.

(4.2.2) Building good relationships

Based on all of the information provided by the participants, there are multiple parts to the notion of building good relationships. Firstly, they endeavour to build good relationships with their respective communities. Secondly, they note that there is a need to restore and build the relationship between the community and SAPS. While there are plans underway to improve these relations, progress is slow for a variety of reasons – not excluding the reluctance of other structures to engage with one another (for example: Bridgetown NW attempted to organise an event where the police and community leaders would meet and get to know each other but little interest was shown on the part of SAPS). Additionally, while there is an existing network between the CPF and the NW which was made evident in this study (and is discussed in greater detail in the following section), the goal of the NW to build good relationships also includes the relationship between themselves and the CPF as there does appear to be a breakdown in this regard.

In terms of their own communities, NW members have noted that there are members of the community who look down upon the organisation – where there is a stigma attached to being part of the NW which has resulted in some hostile behaviours being directed at them in the past. When reading the quotation below (F2P3), it is important to keep in mind that the police,

as noted by Beiser (2020:12), do not have a good reputation among many communities on the Cape Flats due to their oppressive and violent nature towards coloured and black people under apartheid. While precise figures for the Cape Flats are not available, a survey by the Human Sciences Research Council (2022) showed that, as of the year 2021, public trust in the police in the Western Cape stood at 22%.

F2P3: I just think a lot of people are uninformed. I think there's a bad stigma attached to being part of a NW as well. People are under the impression that the NW is the police. They think, "If I join the NW I will become a target." That's also why they don't want to join us.

The above quote is significant as some members of the community (some of whom are criminals) tend to push back against the activities of the NW especially since, as per the quote, some view the NW as the police. In fact, it was discussed how conflict would break out between the community and the NW when community members would defend criminals. As such, NWs tend to make enemies in the community (especially from those who are known criminals). However, the NWs are determined to build these relationships and bridge the divides between their communities so that they can work together to achieve a safe and secure environment for all of their members. In fact, on many occasions, they mobilise the community in pursuit of a common goal – safety and security – and organise protests and marches. Interestingly, this is similar to the modus operandi of the vigilante group PAGAD where its members would march to the homes of suspected criminals and hand over memoranda demanding them to cease their illegal activities, however, violence would often ensue (Bangstad, 2005:199). The difference is that the NWs mobilise the community as a 'show-of-force' but they do not advocate for violence. In other words, while some members of the community do not want to join the NW, they will still rally together to address certain issues.

F2P3: It's difficult to convince people that what you are trying to do is the right thing. It is definitely still a work in progress.

F3P1: But our main thing is to call upon the community. We can call a march tonight and get people to come. Our last march was I think three weeks ago where we marched to houses where we got information that they were potentially

a problem and we will shut them down - whatever they think they're gonna start.

In terms of the building of good relationships, the NWs are actively attempting to restore and build a positive relationship between SAPS and their respective communities as they know that their mission of creating safe and secure environments is unsustainable without effective collaboration between these entities – something that was highlighted when Community Policing was adopted in South Africa. The NW recognises that the community in its entirety (not only the NW) has a role to play. In the case of this community-SAPS relationship, NW members were working on a meet-and-greet type of initiative where SAPS officials were to be introduced to community leaders, activists and organisations in the community to establish some rapport.

F2P7: It was apparent that they [SAPS] don't know us. We were treated with absolute disdain previously...The cooperation is atrocious. I remember one time us trying to arrange for a month to get SAPS - and we would provide meals on a Saturday morning - and we wanted to introduce all of our community activists, our street reps, our NW people, everybody who was in charge of a sector... for them to get to know our community members so that, if they need help or information, they can contact this person.

It is important to note that the NW is attempting to change a certain narrative in their community – one where community members are ‘conditioned’ to disfavour the police to an extent due to historical trauma – to improve policing operations in the area.

In terms of the CPF, the NW recognised that they as community members selected the CPF and as such they take responsibility for their failure. This is because the CPF does not appear to be working with the NW and instead siding with SAPS. It is important to note that due to the constraints associated with this research and the subsequent limitations, this is only the view of the NW which brings into question the validity of such statements (this is elaborated upon in the later sections). They are now resolving to remove the current members of the CPF, replacing them and building the relationship between the CPF and the NW from the ground up and stated below:

F1P4: The thing is... we haven't really been getting on but we are trying to fix things and work together – that's in everyone's best interest.

(4.2.3) Expanding policing roles

All three of the NWs in this study have reiterated on numerous occasions that they are not *the police* – and this is true. The police have access to certain powers that civilians do not. However, there appears to be a blurring of the lines in terms of the roles of the NW where they are performing some of the functions of the police. The different NWs shared how, if a crime such as a murder took place, they had to cordon off the crime scene and perform crowd control measures in cases where police lacked the resources (no vehicles available, or a shortage of staff on duty) to respond immediately. In some cases, as discussed below, the police even asked the NW to secure crime scenes if they could not get officers to the scene immediately. Van der Spuy (2021:300) noted a complaint from an interview that NWs were “running around as if they were the police”, however, in the same article, it was also discussed that the government had failed their duty to keep people safe – this is precisely why the NWs have resorted to taking over some of the duties of the police.

F1P1: We are basically doing work that the police is supposed to do. They shot three of those guys... The NW took charge of that entire scene until the police came to the scene. We cordoned that area off... kept everybody out and blocked off the streets. How long after that did SAPS arrive? More than an hour. Three bodies in the middle of the road. They are so under-resourced that the NW had to take control of the scene.

F2P1: A few years ago, there were two guys that were shot here in front of the cemetery. SAPS had the audacity to call us- the cops! “Can we go and secure the area?” They don't have a van.

In other past cases, community members who fell victim to crimes such as robberies would turn to the NW instead of SAPS to avoid the lengthy legal processes involved. In such instances, they would get the NW to track the perpetrator down, retrieve the stolen goods, and then take them to the police station.

F3P4: I think 80% of our people, if a phone gets stolen, they post it on our crime chat, not just phones but anything, which they manage to get back. And when I say, it's literally tell the NW, "oh it's by his house, let's go". And ideally that's the police's job but we are doing it.

All of these functions that have been mentioned by the participants appear to be that of the police, and the fact that these are being carried out by NWs has implications for nodal policing (where the influence of the NWs that participated in this study appears to be growing – but it would be reckless to claim that they are becoming as or more powerful than the police themselves), as well as the chain of evidence regarding the investigation of crime scenes. It also has implications for the safety of their members – while this point was not discussed in depth, the overall theme noted was that the NW members will always “back up one another.”

Finally, the NW knows that certain rules are to be followed if they patrol their area. They were able to tell me that they are not allowed to patrol the area without a police officer present if they are carrying firearms – the same applied to searching individuals they come across while on patrol because they don't have the same powers as the police. However, there are rarely any police officers available to patrol with them. They acknowledge that they are essentially taking over the roles of the police in this regard, but they believe that they have no other option. The following of the rules in this regard is a difficult matter to deal with, however, the NW members appeared to have weighed the advantages and limitations of their actions, and determined that it is the best course of action in order to keep their community safe.

F1P1: If a clever criminal should walk on the streets and go to the Constitutional Court and all of that, we will lose that case hands down. Because we are unlawfully infringing on his freedom of movement. We are not allowed to stop and search anyone in the street - you're a civilian, not a cop.

(4.3) The policing methods of the NW

(4.3.1) Strategic Patrolling

The participants highlighted the fact that they are organised and disciplined during patrols. Before the patrol begins, a brief meeting is held and the designated patrol coordinator assigns the patrollers to certain vehicles, maps the route to be taken during the patrol, and assigns duties to the patrollers such as who will be searching an individual, and who will be providing cover for the individual that is searching. Below is a statement from the patrol coordinator of one of the NWs:

F2P3: Before we go out on patrol there will be a quick meeting- a quick thing to say this one is going to be searching females and this one is going to be searching males. Obviously depending on certain scenarios, not everyone will just jump out of their cars. So it's done in a strategic way... One car at the front, one car at the back and two people will get out but the drivers stay in position.

This is very different to the narrative listed in previous academic literature conducted in the past where NWs were depicted as going around and confronting people suspected of being criminals randomly and aggressively. It does appear that there is a structure to patrols and that planning is involved in the process.

(4.3.2) A restrained approach – promoting decency during confrontation

One of the key findings of this research was how the NWs of this study dealt with suspected criminals and deviants – they treat people they come across with respect, only escalating their methods if they need to. The key statement was made by the participants of focus group 1 (but similar sentiments were shared by the other NWs as well).

F1P1: We get out, we greet you. We identify, we treat you with respect, humanity, dignity- all those fancy words. We never get heavy-handed. But if you escalate, we will have to escalate as well. They know what we're doing, we know what they're doing. And they know if we get them with anything on them- they're gonna sit [in jail]. We don't physically harm them, we don't physically abuse them. The purpose is to build a good relationship with these people to make them understand that this is our space, respect our space and we will respect you.

(4.3.3) Developing intelligence databases and the utilisation of technology

The final significant point that was discussed by the NWs was how they developed databases that contained various types of information including the names and images of suspects that have been found in the area, a record of the types of crimes being committed and their exact locations in the area to detect any emerging crime patterns, and also the utilisation of license plate recognition (LPR) cameras that is connected to a database of car license plate numbers that have been involved in crimes. Interestingly, the LPR systems are managed by private security companies. The NWs can utilise these databases and technologies to mobilise resources to address any issues that are made visible by these technologies. In addition, they use radios to communicate and coordinate with one another while on patrol or when responding to an incident, and they also make use of social media and messaging apps to connect members of the community to share information, or to report an incident that has occurred.

F1P4: The intelligence is there but we- that's why I was saying like, we have access to technology and resources...We have LPR cameras, right. It's like those one's you see at the hospital booms. It flags stolen vehicles or vehicles involved in crimes... We make our own database as well – we track the crimes and people committing them- suspicious people as well...

F2P1: Yes we have radios where we talk to each other while on patrol – its important that we keep in contact obviously... We have a community group where we share news and updates on our Facebook page and we also have a community chat on WhatsApp.

F3P6: We have WhatsApp groups. All someone has to do is send a message and we will respond.

(4.4) The NW Network

(4.4.1) Collaboration between NWs

Based on the information made available by participants from each focus group meeting, it became apparent that NWs do not operate in isolation of one another – they maintain regular communications with one another and assist wherever possible, be it the sharing of information,

or if reinforcements are needed to deal with a particular issue or crime. This is perhaps one of the more significant pieces of information to have arisen out of the interviews. This behaviour or modus operandi, however, has been exhibited before in the case of the Peacemakers (as previously discussed) but it does not appear to have been mentioned in previous any academic literature regarding NWs. The notion of a ‘network’ of NWs that work together in addressing issues of safety and security in Cape Town and on the Cape Flats in particular introduces another level of complexity to the NW node. Each of the NWs that were interviewed in this particular study indicated that they have strong relationships with other NWs not only in their surrounding areas but across the entirety of Cape Town – where, at the press of a button, rapid response and mobilisation from members of other NWs would ensue. The participants indicated that they share information, offer advice, and also provide necessary assistance or support when called upon by various NWs – and this is also true in the case of receiving the assistance.

Similarly, it was also indicated that, regularly, ‘joint neighbourhood watching’ or joint neighbourhood patrols would occur at set times and in set areas. In other words, members would organise for a specific day to be set aside during which a certain number of members from different NWs in the surrounding areas would join in patrolling the area where a fellow NW requested the patrol to occur.

Below are the statements that reflect the relationship between NWs:

F1P4: If we need assistance or anything it will be assistance from other neighbourhood watches... If, if something happens, it will always be surrounding NWs that we will call for assistance... Often other NW’ would call us for assistance. But it will always be a matter of neighbourhood watch supporting neighbourhood watch.

F2P1: Very well. Very well with neighbourhood watches. We have a lot of good relationships. We have a lot of joint patrols... We do a lot of projects together. If we need something or we need a few of their members, they are just a phone call away. Moreso in our immediate vicinity- those NWs but ja, we help and assist one another.

F3P1: I'm telling you now that... joint neighbourhood watching comes from us. We sat in a meeting about 15 years ago right, where the Department sent people in to say, "This is how neighbourhood watches function - every neighbourhood watch functions on its own." So, in other words, us and another NW cannot operate together on one evening - it's not allowed according to their rules - was not allowed. We said to them, and I'm going to say it like it is, "Go to hell!"

From the statements above, it is apparent that collaboration between different neighbourhood watches is of great importance in the functioning of this node. The passion with which these points were shared, particularly in the case of Focus Group 3, is a testament to this. The logic behind the need for this collaboration is based on the high crime levels due to the sheer number of criminals and gangsters in operation in the surrounding areas compared to the much smaller numbers of NW members who were tasked with addressing these issues.

Additionally, it is important to note that collaboration between NWs was not a regular occurrence in the past. Based on the information gathered, it appears that this has only developed approximately 15 years ago after discussions between members of the provincial government and neighbourhood watches took place.

(4.4.2) The NW and SAPS

From the available data, it was clear that the NWs of this study are having considerable issues in terms of their relationship with SAPS due of a lack of cooperation when it comes to policing their communities. There were a few reasons provided for this lack of cooperation which included the fact that (1) the police are under-resourced and therefore struggle to do their job; (2) there are incompetent staff working for the police; and (3) that there are corrupt officials that work with the criminals in the area.

F1P4: To come back to your question, if you really want to know how much trust we put into SAPS - if something is happening now we'll find someone to help deal with it - it's not going to be SAPS... And SAPS and our neighbourhood watch actually used to work well together in the past but it's different now.

F1P2: It's like nowadays they just don't want to work anymore... they are lazy and corrupt.

F2P2: It's almost as if the relationship is strained. We are supposed to work together. I just think that they are maybe- there should be a better understanding and relationship... We try our best to make things work. When we started, we had a very good relationship. We were newbies on the road, they used to come and patrol with us. We used to patrol sitting in the back of the van with them. When we were on foot patrol they would come sign our OB book and that all just died down.

F3P5: I would say the relationship is very poor actually. There's too much police officers that are involved with bad elements in the area. One or two even sit at the drug houses. It's no use complaining or confiscating anything. You take him into the station and 10 minutes later he's walking in the area again.

When looking at the NW Code of Conduct, there is a clear indication that the NW and SAPS are meant to work together in order to keep their communities safe. While the previous section indicated that there was a disconnect between SAPS and the community at large, this section indicates that there is a disconnect between SAPS and the NW. This is elaborated upon and discussed in the next section.

(4.4.3) The NW and the CPF

The next pattern that emerged was the fact that there were tensions both within the CPF, as well as between the CPF and the NW. Interestingly, focus group 1 appeared to avoid this topic and continuously brushed it aside in a dismissive fashion (it appeared that tension emerged when this topic was introduced) whereas focus groups 2 and 3 were very open about this particular inquiry. Specifically, it was noted that the CPF responsible for the oversight of the SAPS was underperforming and was deemed to be taking the side of the police as opposed to the community. The following statements reflect the tensions between the CPF and the NW:

F2P1: There's a lot of issues in the CPF as well. I think, across the board, people take this too personally. It is not personal when

people ask a question or challenge a decision. It is everybody thinking the same thing, wanting the same thing. So we mustn't take it personally and that is where relationships break down

F3P1: Here we are moving in the direction of getting rid of our CPF. And we are the ones that put them there. They are getting to close to SAPS. They are not doing what is best - they are not focusing on how to help us. They are just telling us what we can and cannot do. There's big splits in the CPF at the moment that need to be fixed.

From the statements above, it becomes apparent that there is a clear divide between the CPF and the NW. These tensions were previously highlighted by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee in their meeting where they discussed the challenges of CPFs and NWs in the Western Cape (PMG, 2019). In terms of the NW-CPF relationship, it was made clear that they are not necessarily doing what is best for the community and are instead “too close to SAPS” and are too focused on managing the actions of the NW instead of addressing concerns about SAPS.

(4.4.4) The NW and private security companies

One of the more significant findings of this study is that, while there does appear to be an emerging relationship between NWs and private security, there is apprehension and reluctance to do so on the part of the NW. However, it does appear that the building of such a relationship is necessary due to the number of resources the private security industry has at their disposal. Interestingly, a statement was made claiming that private security is probably the greatest threat to NWs due to business interest of the security companies outweighing the interests of the community – a threat greater than any criminal network or government institution. This statement stood out as there are NWs in the Western Cape (as well as other parts of South Africa) who work with private security to assist in keeping their communities safe. This is discussed in more detail in the analysis section. Below are the views shared by the participants:

F1P3: The biggest threat to our existence is private security... bigger than any gangs that could be on our neighbouring borders, right... They don't push their clients to open cases. Because if

you are catching fish - catch and release is a tactic where if you catch them today, you can catch them tomorrow so you stay busy in the area... It's a marketing ploy... So that's the issue we have with private security - they are more after the money than anything else.

F2P1: We prefer not to work with them often... They don't have our best interests as a priority... Some of our neighbours do have private security and we have worked with them in the past when assistance was needed but other than that... ja.

F3P3: In terms of security companies, we don't work with outside security companies, but we've got people that got security companies within our own communities.

(4.5) Conclusion

This chapter provided the text, quoted verbatim, by the participants to reveal the data generated from the focus group interviews. The data was grouped into three main themes which covered the roles, relationships, and methods of the NWs. These findings are discussed and placed into conversation with previous literature in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

(5.1) Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles and relationships of the neighbourhood watch in an attempt to uncover how their node in the policing assemblage has evolved over time. To reiterate, the research question was as follows: “How have the functions of the neighbourhood watch evolved over time?”

In this section, the roles of the NW – what exactly they do and how they go about doing it; and what are their relationships with other role-players in the policing assemblage – were made evident. This was compared to what was known about their previous functions in the past to determine just how much the node of the NW has developed over time. The following section discusses the findings of this study and places them in relation to previous literature, including the theory of nodal policing, to provide a full description and explanation regarding the evolution of the functions of the NW.

(5.2) The roles of the NW

(5.2.1) Policing is important, but so is community upliftment and building relations

A node is a point or site where knowledge, resources and capacity are mobilised to govern a particular social system (Burris, Drahos & Shearing, 2005: 33). In this case, the main aim of the NW, as mentioned by the participants, is to provide security for their community (their system) by addressing issues of crime through policing (patrolling the area and searching individuals) and, in doing so, mobilise their resources (NW members and technologies) and use their knowledge of the area to police in a strategic manner. This is unquestionably their main role - based on the information provided by the participants of this study – and this is an aim of the NW that was outlined in the older version Provincial Constitution and Code of Conduct for Neighbourhood Watch Structures (1999) where they were to “serve as a watchdog over the community and safeguard the community against criminal activities.” Interestingly, the wording of the code of conduct has changed over the years, with the most recent version of the Code of Conduct (2020) emphasising an “eyes and ears” approach where the NW must serve to inform SAPS of any criminal activities and work closely with them to manage and control crime in the area. As is discussed later on, this is not necessarily the case. It appears that not much has changed over the years in this regard from the information collected as, while

community safety is and most likely will always be the main aim of the NW (through the act of policing), they tend to do so in their own capacity without much emphasis on the need for close collaboration with SAPS. This is in line with previous literature that notes the entire reason for their establishment in the country in the first place was to protect their communities from crime – this has been noted by Schärf (1989). NWs continue to play this role presently as it is their mandate.

However, other roles are being played by the NW in governing their system. An interesting discovery was that the NWs in this study have moved beyond only fighting crime in the way of policing their area. They have expanded their operations to include methods of community upliftment and development to create an environment that is not conducive to criminal activities. In doing so, these NWs have prioritised the functioning of community feeding schemes, introducing sports into the community for the youth to keep them away from bad influences, supporting the functioning of rehabilitation facilities as well as other initiatives such as feeding schemes. In other words, their role has become, in their words, more ‘holistic’. Additionally, the NWs in this study were also involved in ensuring the maintenance of infrastructure by the relevant officials to address threats to community well-being and safety. Similar findings were noted by Visser (2009:75) where it was stated that the Kylemore NW, located in the Cape Winelands region of the Western Cape, focused on uplifting the youth in the community - where the ‘problem children’ of the area were taken to a development camp and were taught life skills.

As was noted in the literature review section, similar initiatives were being conducted by the vigilante organisation known as the Peacemakers (in operation from 1937 – 1979 on the Cape Flats) who, while using violent methods to reduce crime, also focused on community upliftment and development projects and addressed issues relating to education, recreational facilities, housing maintenance, feeding schemes and many more (Kinnes, 2017). As such, community upliftment and development initiatives being introduced and managed by civil policing organisations do not necessarily appear to be a new phenomenon. However, this does appear to be relatively new for the NWs that have participated in this study who appear to be taking over the standard roles of civic associations. Supporting this point is the fact that previous academic literature - with the exception of the Kylemore NW (Visser, 2009:5) – and government documents such as the Western Cape Community Safety Act (2013), the Western Cape Constitution and Code of Conduct for Neighbourhood Watches (1999:np) and the Code

of Conduct (2020) does not refer to any other aims, objectives or mandates of the NW other than that of policing, or working with the police to deal with crime. There have been no references to the NW adopting a “holistic” approach to dealing with crime in their communities. These points, in combination with the literature of Visser (2009) regarding the Kylemore NW, appears to highlight that there has been a development over time in terms of the roles of the NW – from focusing only on policing to moving in a direction that also promotes upliftment. In addition, those who have participated in this study have noted that they wish to continue these community upliftment initiatives and expand them in the future.

Community upliftment and development initiatives are undoubtedly monumental tasks and multiple criminological theories such as the Ecology of crime (Stark, 1987) and Differential Association Theory (Cressey, 1964), for example, both highlight the theme of development and upliftment as a method of controlling and preventing crime. This is something that the NWs recognise needs to occur. A study by Lane and Henry (2004) concludes that more community development initiatives should be undertaken to reduce the deep social issues that give rise to crime – the main issue with this approach is that it is expensive and takes time before results are seen. While the NWs do their best to raise funds for these initiatives, sustainable income needs to be secured for the success of such initiatives.

(5.2.2) Expanding policing functions – The implications for nodal policing

Another important finding was that of the expanding policing roles of the NW. From this study, it became apparent that the NWs are taking on board more roles that are meant to be carried out by the police themselves. In fact, from the information provided by the participants, they explicitly stated that they were doing the work of the police. This is something that they are not necessarily happy with, but they recognise that it has to be done due to the lack of response from the SAPS. A similar sentiment was shared in the work of van der Spuy (2021) who noted that there were complaints of NWs “running around and doing the work of the police” – yet it was also stated that the government failed its obligation to ensure the safety of its citizens. As such, the reach and influence of the NWs in this study appear to be growing. For example: NWs in this study have tracked down criminals, retrieved stolen property from them, and transported these criminals to the police station. In other cases, NWs have been tasked with cordoning off crime scenes when the police were unable to respond immediately. It was also reported that even members of the community would rather request the services of the NW over that of the police. This is because the police take too long to respond (if at all), and also

because community members are increasingly reluctant to report their crimes to the police in an attempt to avoid the lengthy criminal procedures involved – they would rather just have the NW address the situation. While their capacity and resources is far less than that of the other policing agencies such as SAPS and private security companies, they do tend to have a better understanding of their community and its people compared to other policing agencies (this was the reason for the Western Cape government increasing funding to NWs at the expense of CPFs as previously discussed) – in fact, this was the logic utilised when the concept of community policing was first adopted in South Africa..

These points appear to be indicative of the fact that the NW node is, through the expansion of its roles, beginning to grow its influence over its networks in the assemblage – or at least that appears to be the case in terms of the NWs in the Athlone and Manenberg precincts. As pointed out by Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2005:33) nodes are points on an assemblage, and it is through the networks (relationships or connections with other nodes) that they exert power and influence (Burris, Drahos & Shearing, 2005: 33). Importantly, this power and influence is not necessarily equally distributed among the nodes and, as such, some have greater levels of power and influence over others in the network (Wood & Shearing 2007: 26). With the roles of the NW expanding and changing over time it would seem that their establishment as a node on the policing assemblage has grown stronger due to an increasing need for policing from non-state structures. Zedner (2009:4) discussed the neoliberalist notion of outsourcing traditional policing activities to the non-state sphere – and this has happened in South Africa. However, with SAPS being unable to deal with crime for a variety of reasons, they are relying on the NW to carry out some of their duties, and this can have major implications for nodal policing since the state positions itself as the key provider of security (Marks et al., 2011:47). This point is also reinforced by the Western Cape Government's support of NWs in the province, where they even withdrew some of their financial support from CPFs (who serve to link the community to the SAPS) in favour of providing more resources to NWs. While this may be a political ploy in order for the province to rely less of the poorly functioning SAPS, one thing is clear: it is allowing the influence of the NW to grow.

The participants in the study knew that some of the methods they used when patrolling (policing) their area are wrong. For example: one participant said that they are not allowed to stop and search people on the street, nor are they allowed to infringe on their freedom of movement by escorting them out of the area. This is true as NW members are private citizens

and not peace officers. Peace officers are appointed under law and consist of SAPS and Metro police officers, as well as magistrates and some correctional officials (Western Cape Government, 2018:np). These officers have the authority to seize goods, search people and premises, enter properties to collect evidence and arrest people (Western Cape Government, 2018:np). NW members are not even allowed to carry weapons while on patrol, they are only allowed to carry those meant for self-defence purposes so long as they inform SAPS beforehand (Western Cape Government, 2018:np). The issue is that, due to poor service delivery on the part of the police, they are unable to fulfil these duties – leaving the NWs to do so. One participant mentioned that if a “clever criminal” were to go to court, the NW would lose because they are not allowed to search them and infringe on their right to freedom of movement – yet they have to do it due to the inefficiency of the state police. It is precisely for this reason that nodal policing has proliferated in South Africa – and why the NW in particular has become a popular alternative method of policing. This is supported by Singh (2005:44) who found that members of the public seek alternate recourses to ensure their protection due to the inability of the state police to contain crime in the country – and these alternatives are found in the civil sector (such as the NW) as well as the private security sector.

The expanding roles of the NW are showcased by their evolution over time. At their point of introduction, their main purpose was to protect their community (as is the case to this day) by directly confronting criminals, gangsters and troubled youth - often acting outside the bounds of the law (Schärf, 1989). Then being more a proactive policing structure by developing troubled youth in the area (Visser, 2009), and ultimately ending up as a civil society organisation that deals with crime in the holistic sense in that they uplift and develop many aspects of the community to prevent crime, while also using appropriate force if necessary to deal with instances of crime that occurs. Additionally, at this point, this research has uncovered that they are even taking over some of the functions of the police themselves. This is evidence of how their roles have developed over time and shows how their influence has increased.

(5.3) NW relationships (networks)

In terms of the relationships of the NW, four major partnerships were discussed, and they involved relationships with (1) other neighbourhood watches; (2) SAPS, (3) the CPF and (4) private security. As previously stated, rather surprisingly, some information on Metro police was provided in that there were very limited interactions between them and the NWs in the past (and that they were positive interactions) however there is not enough information to draw

precise conclusions. I attended a joint meeting between Athlone SAPS, CPF, Metro and various NWs during the time this study was being conducted and, during the meeting, the Metro spokesperson mentioned that the vast majority of their resources were being utilised in other areas of the Cape Flats – this offers a possible explanation for the lack of operations and collaboration with the NWs in the areas I investigated.

(5.3.1) A network of NWs

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this research was the fact that there are strong relationships between the NWs and that they assist one another whenever it is required. This assistance can take many forms – from sharing information and providing legal advice to responding to calls for assistance in the event of an emergency where more manpower is required. No other academic literature involving the collaboration between NWs in South Africa has yet been found and, seeing as NWs are widespread across the country and play such a major role in dealing with crime, this comes as a surprise. Previous research on NWs such as that carried out by Schärf (1989), Visser (2009), van Wyk and Theron (2005:55), Meyer and van Graan (2011), as well as van Graan (2016), who have conducted in-depth investigations into NWs in South Africa, some of which included investigating multi-sector collaboration in crime prevention, have not mentioned this point.

From the data, it appears that these partnerships are spread across Cape Town, however, these relationships are strongest among NWs who are in close proximity to one another. This ‘joint neighbourhood watching’ as it has been termed by the participants is a relatively new concept that emerged approximately 15 years ago during a meeting between one of the NWs in the study and the Western Cape government where the NW convinced the officials to allow it to happen.

This phenomenon of ‘joint neighbourhood watching’ or the collaboration between NWs does not appear to be accounted for in the nodal policing framework as the NW is considered to be one node – and that the node interacts with other nodes in a network. In other words, the network or relationship being discussed here is occurring within the node – it is “intranodal.” While it can be argued that this ‘joint neighbourhood watching’ can increase the knowledge, capacity and resources of the node in its entirety, thereby increasing its ability and authority to influence the behaviours of others (Wood & Shearing, 2007), unfortunately, the nodal policing framework does not provide enough information to explain this thoroughly. As such, more research is needed on this phenomenon.

(5.3.2) The NW and SAPS

In terms of the NW relationship with SAPS, while there is indeed a network here in that the two work together to ensure safety and security, the relationship is undoubtedly strained. This does differ drastically when compared to the time of the initial conception of the NW programme in South Africa. According to the work of Schärf (1989) as well as Cawthra (1986:10), NWs worked with the police to ensure that their communities were protected (albeit it for the wrong reasons during the apartheid regime). Indeed, the NWs have stated that there has been a decline in the quality of this relationship over the years – where initially the two structures worked well together but now, they rarely work together unless required. Currently, while the concept of community policing is in place promoting collaboration between communities and SAPS, the NWs have made it known that SAPS does not provide them with any assistance while they are patrolling – and this is a requirement. However, the NWs are continuing to work with SAPS to the best of their ability and are actively working to repair this partnership.

(5.3.3) The NW and the CPF

Similar issues have been occurring between the NW and the CPF. While the network still exists, there is considerable conflict occurring between the two structures due to the fact that the CPF is failing to address the concerns of the NW – thus bringing any progress to a standstill. The participants of the study made it very clear that there was a definite divide between the CPF and the NW – as was emphasised by the Portfolio Committee on Police (PMG, 2019:1). It was stated that the CPF does not appear to have the best interest of the NW and the community at heart and instead choosing to side with the SAPS. This artificial divide does appear to be the result of political interference – a byproduct of the competition between the Democratic Alliance and the African National Congress. According to PMG (2019:1), this tension first arose due to the decrease in funding to CPFs and the subsequent increase in funding to NWs by the Western Cape government (led by the Democratic Alliance). This decision may have driven the CPF to favour the SAPS over the NW. Fennell (2020:182) noted that the Western Cape Community Safety Act (No. 3 of 2013) makes provision for and promotes the partnering with community organisations to create safer communities – following a systems-thinking and an inclusive, holistic approach (features of the neo-liberal concept of collaborative governance) to address issues of safety and security. The Western Cape government, following this neo-liberalist rationality, stated that the NW model is aligned to the Western Cape

Community Safety Act (No. 3 of 2013) and that NWs are more representative of the community structures than CPFs and are therefore seen as the more beneficial structure of the two (Safer Spaces, 2021). This combined with the fact that the DA is actively seeking to reduce their reliance on the SAPS and devolve policing powers to the province appears to be accelerating this breakdown in relations between the NW and CPF. Admittedly, the validity of this finding is questionable due to the inherent limitation that comes with only interviewing NWs. This is discussed in the “limitations” section and is recommended to be studied further to obtain a clearer understanding of this divide between NWs and the CPF.

(5.3.4) The NW and private security – a complicated relationship

The final relationship that the participants introduced into the conversation was that between the NW and the private security industry. This represents a relatively new node in the network involving the NW. The different NWs that participated in this study all shared the same view – the private security sector does not have the best interests of the community at the forefront of their objectives, but the two do have to work together to police their communities and create a safe and secure environment. This is because private security companies have access to vast amounts of resources compared to the NW which can be useful if it is needed. In the case of this study, one NW was utilising the LPR system of a private security company to track stolen vehicles entering their community. While the collaboration between the NW and private security does appear to support the findings of van Graan (2016), the relationship is more complicated than it is portrayed in their study. For example: the statement was made that “the single biggest threat” to the existence of the NW is private security – this is rather paradoxical in nature. The reason for this statement is that private security companies are attempting to establish themselves in the areas where these interviews took place. It was stated that these companies are using marketing ploys to achieve this by arresting a criminal and releasing them again – a sort of “catch-and-release” tactic (as explained by the participants) to make sure that there continues to be a need for them in the area, so that they may expand their operation and thereby reduce the importance of the NW. Private security companies do not necessarily have the best interest of the community at heart and, according to Irish (1999:1), “police for profit”. This is a major issue for the NWs that took part in this study, however, due to “the bigger picture” in terms of security provision, the NW has no other alternative but to work with them.

Further complications as a result of this apparent threat to NWs by private security companies arise when one considers that various NWs in Cape Town keenly work with private security

companies. These include Milnerton NW, Sunset Beach NW as well as Platteklouf, Welgelegen and Panorama NWs (CrimeWatch, 2016). However, the common theme among these NWs is that they operate in affluent areas as opposed to the NWs that took part in this study. In these affluent areas: (1) the crime rates are much lower than those in areas on the Cape Flats (Institute for Security Studies, 2023); and (2) these communities have sufficient funds for private security interventions. As was stated by (Singh, 2005:44) when state policing fails, those who can afford it often make use of private security services. The less affluent communities do not always necessarily have the opportunity to afford private security and, as such, the NWs that were interviewed tend to use them only when necessary.

(5.4) Methods of policing

The NWs have indicated that they have had to evolve and become more sophisticated over years as they attempted to keep up with the ever-changing criminal activities in their respective areas. One of the major developments was that they would patrol their area in a strategic manner where, for example: before every patrol, specific roles would be assigned to certain members, patrol routes would be arranged before the patrol, and the confrontation of suspected criminals or deviants would be conducted in a restrained and controlled manner. This does contrast with the findings of Schärf (1989:220), Fourchard (2011:615), and van Wyk & Theron (2005:54), who stated that NW members would patrol their areas and indiscriminately and violently confront any individuals believed to be criminals, gangsters, or ‘troubled youth.’ This does appear to have changed in recent years as is portrayed by the findings of this study. Similarly, NW members have stated the importance of restraint and treating everyone they come across while patrolling their area with respect. Once again this is in stark contrast to the early days of the NW as stated previously. The NW members admitted that they were aggressive and ‘heavy-handed’ with individuals in the past but that they learned from their mistakes. This new approach has been adopted to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. This signifies a change in ‘mentalities’ (Burris, Drahos and Shearing, 2016) in terms of how the ways of thinking have evolved over the years. Importantly, the nodal governance framework states that different nodes have different mentalities that contain their goals, values and norms regarding how governance occurs (Burris, Drahos and Shearing, 2016). In the case of the NW and policing, the participants have stated that they are gentler in their approach when dealing with criminals or people suspected of causing trouble in the community. They

have also become more strategic in order to ensure both their safety, as well as the safety of the person(s) they are confronting.

Finally, the NWs have compiled databases and utilise technologies to police their areas. Their databases contain information regarding patterns of crimes, as well as the information of the people who committed those crimes. In addition, they utilise LPR cameras to monitor the flow of vehicles through their area. What is being discussed is one of the core features of a node as discussed by Burris, Drahos and Shearing (2016:33) and Shearing and Wood (2003:402) – in terms of the set of technologies utilised. The use of technology such as LPR recognition cameras and the formulation of databases for crime pattern analysis and the identification of suspected criminals and deviants is indicative of just how much the NW has evolved over the years. As was previously stated, the NW has had to ensure that their methods of policing and security provision have evolved and adapted to the ever-changing threat of crime in society, hence the use of various technologies. The NWs that took part in the study have also indicated that they make use of radios to communicate and coordinate with one another while on patrol, and that they make use of social media and messaging apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp to share updates in the community regarding issues of safety and security, as well as to alert on another to any incidents that may be occurring in the community. These new sets of technologies have only been developed in more recent years (referring particularly to that of social media) with the advancement of science and information technology systems on a global scale – these are therefore relatively new sets of technologies adopted by NWs.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

(6.1) Introduction

This concluding chapter of the thesis provides a summary of the entire research report and provides recommendations for the further study of certain findings that emerged from the data. Additionally, the limitations of the study are also discussed, followed by concluding remarks.

(6.2) Summary

This study was conducted with the aim of uncovering the evolution of the roles and relationships (networks) of the NWs in the Athlone and Manenberg precincts of Cape Town over time. That aim has been achieved. The results of this study indicate that, while the main aim of the NW is to establish safe and secure societies through policing (which has been the case since their introduction in South Africa), the results also indicate that there has been a shift in the mentalities, technologies and networks of this particular node in the policing assemblage. Firstly, the NWs have stated that the relationship with SAPS is poor due to the fact that they are unresponsive to the needs and calls for collaboration by the NW due to a variety of reasons – namely the lack of capacity to deal with crime, incompetent individuals and corrupt employees. Importantly, this has not always been the case, these NWs in the past have worked well with SAPS, however that relationship has broken down in recent years due to the reasons previously mentioned. In terms of the relationship with the CPF, it appears to have broken down greatly – unfortunately this needs to be studied further as not enough information on this issue was provided to make definitive conclusions. Another finding of particular interest was the strong relationships between NWs – something that has only evolved over the past 15 years (it had not existed before then). Additionally, these NWs noted that, in terms of the network with private security, they are apprehensive to work with them as they are businesses driven by profits and, as such, do not have the best interests of the community at heart. Despite this they are attempting to start working together with private security as they know that collaboration is key is security provision.

In terms of the evolution of mentalities, NWs have adopted a gentler approach to policing – one that promotes kindness (in contrast to the heavy-handedness recorded both in the literature as well as from the testimonies of the participants) to ensure the safety of all parties. Additionally, they have also recently adopted a holistic approach in the fight against crime - one where community upliftment and development are practised to prevent crime from

occurring in the first place – a stark contrast to the sole focus on policing as recorded previously. Finally, they are also more strategic in their policing methods now compared to the past.

In terms of technologies, the NWs are now using more sophisticated technologies such as LPR cameras as well as electronic databases used to build intelligence networks. Additionally, they are also now making use of social media and messaging apps to connect community members to keep them updated on activities and incidents occurring in the community.

(6.3) Limitations of the study

It is important to note that this is a minor master's dissertation. As such, there were great limitations on the size and scope of this research. These constraints were, among others, time as well as funds that ultimately placed a limit on the number of interviews that took place. FGDs were then utilised in an attempt to mitigate this by obtaining information from a variety of perspectives in a short space of time, however, this did limit the number of NWs that could be interviewed to three due to the amount of data that was generated and subsequently had to be managed. Two NWs from the Athlone precinct were selected because it is a large area with many NWs operating within it (this may have resulted in a lack of diversity in terms of the data), while one was selected from the Manenberg precinct. As such, the results of this study, as with many qualitative studies, cannot be generalised to the rest of the population. They do still, however, offer insight into the evolution of the roles and relationships of the civil policing agency known as the NW over time – something that has been relatively understudied.

Additionally, there does also appear to be a fundamental limitation of the Nodal Governance (policing) framework in that it does not account for possible relationships (or networks) that occur within a particular node being studied. In the case of this research, it was discovered that a type of “intranodal” network existed in that there were networks between different neighbourhood watches across Cape Town. While this was discovered in the study, the nodal governance framework cannot be used to explain this.

Finally, another inherent limitation of this study was the fact that it only gathered information based on the perspective of the NW. In doing so, the perspectives and knowledge of other stakeholders, agencies and role-players (or nodes) were unaccounted for. This was particularly evident in the case of the relationship between the NW and the CPF where clear tensions and division were recorded – however, this was only from the perspective of the NW. As such, the

validity of the findings regarding the relationship between the NW and the CPF may face scrutiny – this is due to the phenomenological approach of this study which focuses on the lived experiences of the people related to the main object of inquiry (the NW). However, the study succeeded in unearthing tensions between the NW and the CPF, confirming the patterns that have emerged from government meetings regarding the two entities.

(6.4) Recommendations for further study

In general, this was a small-scale study that lay the foundations for more comprehensive studies into the evolutions of NWs in Cape Town, and possibly the whole of South Africa in the future. However, it is recommended that two findings of this research be studied more comprehensively in the future.

Arguably the most interest find of this study is the fact that there is an existing network of NWs active across Cape Town who work together and support each other in the fight to ensure a safe and secure society. Unfortunately, the nodal governance framework utilised here does not have the capacity to fully explain this finding. It is recommended that this be studied in greater detail in the future.

The second recommendation refers to the relationship (and overall functioning) between the NW and the CPF and the artificial divide and tensions arising between the two. This has been discussed in government meeting previously (namely the Portfolio Committee on Police) and has also been identified in this study. Due to the fact that the size and scope of this study was limited due to various constraints, it is recommended that future studies investigate this issue in greater detail.

(6.5) Conclusion

In conclusion, the very aim of this research was to address a particular gap in the literature regarding the evolution of the roles and networks of NWs in the Athlone and Manenberg precincts of the Cape Flats. The results indicate that there has indeed been a shift in the networks, methods, mentalities and technologies of the NWs that were investigated during this study.

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Appendix A



University of Cape Town
Faculty of Law

Information Sheet

Title of research project:

Reappraising the roles and relationships of the neighbourhood watch: A look at the active neighbourhood watches in the Athlone and Manenberg areas.

Name(s) of principal researcher(s):

Brandon Davis

Department/Research group address:

Sixth Floor, Kramer Law Building (University of Cape Town Middle Campus), Rondebosch, 7700.

Principal researcher contact number:

060 529 8784

Principal researcher email:

dvsbra001@myuct.ac.za

Nature of this research:

This research is attempting to investigate the roles and relationships (or functions) of neighbourhood watches and to see how these functions have changed or developed over time. In conducting this study, the researcher wants to find out exactly what it is that the neighbourhood watch does, who the neighbourhood watch works with (and how), and how these things have changed over the years. As such, this research entails conducting interviews with participants (in a group format) to gather the necessary information that could ultimately shed light on this topic. **The interview session will be recorded using an audio recording device.** Importantly, participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

Participant's involvement:

Participants will participate in a group face-to-face interview (called a focus group) that will last no longer than 1½ hours. During this time the researcher will ask questions on the topic of the functions of the neighbourhood watch. Importantly, this is meant to be a conversation and participants are encouraged to talk to and respond to each other during the discussion. The researcher will act as the facilitator.

Risks:

This is anticipated to be a low-risk study. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

Aims and Possible benefits:

The aim this study is to uncover how neighbourhood watches go about dealing with crime in their areas (i.e. what methods they use, who they work with etc.). Additionally, the study wishes to highlight the importance of community intervention in ensuring safe and secure societies; and to use the findings to influence government policies in a way that ensures the implementation of appropriate methods to meet the needs of communities regarding safety and security. The study directly involves the neighbourhood watch organisation that the participant volunteers for. The findings of which may shed light on the position of the neighbourhood watch in terms of policing in South Africa and change our thinking on how safety and security can be achieved. In other words, this study could have direct implications for the future of policing in the country.

Confidentiality, Anonymity and Privacy

The recording of the interview session will be stored on a password-protected and biometrically secured laptop which can only be accessed by the researcher and, when not in use, will be stored in a secure facility. At no stage will the identities of the participants be revealed. In cases where quotes from the interview are used in the final write-up of this research, pseudonyms will replace the name of the participant and all other possible identifying information of the participant will not be included in the final document.

Please note: Should there be any queries or issues, the participant can contact the UCT Law Ethics Committee.

Senior Research Administrative Officer: Ms Lamize Viljoen: lamize.viljoen@uct.ac.za

Telephone: +27 21 650-3080



Appendix B

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Law

Informed Consent Form (Please tick the appropriate boxes)

- I have read the information sheet and understand the nature of the research. I also understand what is required from myself, the participant. Yes
No

- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following: I understand that my details may be included in the research / will be used in aggregate form only, so that I will not be personally identifiable. Yes
No

- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project. Yes
No

- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage. Should I withdraw, the researcher may ask if the information I have already given can be used – I can decide whether or not to allow this. Yes
No

- I understand that this research might be published in a research journal or book. In the case of dissertation research, the document will be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well. Yes
No

- I agree to the interview being audio recorded. Yes
No

- I agree to participate in this research project. Yes
No

Please note: Should there be any queries or issues, the participant can contact the UCT Law Ethics Committee.

Senior Research Administrative Officer: Ms Lamize Viljoen: lamize.viljoen@uct.ac.za

Telephone: +27 21 650-3080

Signature of Participant: _____

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Name of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Preamble: Introduction to the study.

Permission to record.

Verbal consent to participate.

Section 1: Introduction

What are your respective positions in the NW?

How long has the NW been in operation?

How did the NW come to be?

How was the experience during the registration process?

Section 2: Roles

What was the NW like when it first started?

What are the current responsibilities of the NW?

- What roles do you perform?

How do you go about policing the area?

How have your policing strategies changed over time?

Section 3: Relationships with other bodies/sectors/organisations

Has the NW ever found itself working with other organisations when carrying out their duties in the past?

- What about presently?

What is the relationship between the NW and SAPS?

- NW and private security/other NWs/organisations?