



RESEARCH PAPER

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***MAKING SECURITY BETWEEN GLOBAL AND LOCAL  
THE ITALIAN STATE POLICE OFFICERS' OPINIONS FROM A  
SOCIOLOGICAL FIELD RESEARCH\****

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#### ***Summary***

This paper discusses the outcomes of a survey made within a sample of Italian State Police officers, thanks to whom it has been possible to investigate their opinions on particular areas of interest: orientation of values, professional identity, perceived risks and threats, evaluations of the strategies of security-building and relations with the local polices and with the citizens.

The outcomes of the research let us delineate the profile of the Third Millennium State Police, that is, a Police more and more focused on the protection of the citizens, who live in a globalized society, where however there are glocal risks and threats that worry and make born increasing protection requirements. Therefore, the role of the State Police is changed, and its members are seen as the “tutors” not only of the public order, but also of the community safety.

Consequently, even the conception of “making security” itself is changed: no longer an order enforced from above, but an order built from the bottom, in the full collaboration with the community and with the other police forces on the territory.

#### ***1. Transformations of security: an introduction***

The requirements and objectives of security are far back central in the political debate, in the interests of the Public Opinion, and present themselves as a privileged focus of the media debate. The security has become a notion that includes challenges that are heterogeneous, but at the same time interconnected, a semantic catalyst, from which they conceptualize many of the other values to which we refer in order to legitimize decisions and policies.

We can indicate some of the principal processes: one dealing with the increasing trans-nationality of each phenomenon – included risks and menaces, difficult to foresee, monitor and thwart – so

that we could talk about a global risk space. That social image, that in the middle '80 was an innovative sociological theory,<sup>1</sup> has turned into a widespread awareness of living in a global risk society.

A second process consists in the fact that aspects previously considered as part of other spheres of the public action, have been "securized", that is, they are now considered security issues. Securitization is the inter-subjective process through which something is considered as the referent of a fatal threat, consequently claiming the use of extraordinary tools of protection.<sup>2</sup> Environment, health, uncontrolled people moves, economy, work, urban decay, incivility have been progressively securized.

Finally, a third process concerns to a turnover of priorities as regards to the hierarchies of the referents of protection: at the international level, in the mid-'90, within the UN framework, it was developed the concept of *human security*,<sup>3</sup> which gives a different meaning to the idea of security: a) it assures the supremacy of the protection of population against the defence of the State; b) it widens the spectrum of such protection. Human security tends to cover a wide range of needs and fears, going from local and short-time preoccupations to more global and long-term ones; therefore, it includes: physical, psychological, social, economic, cultural and environmental security. Also within the European Union framework, since the Treaty of Amsterdam, it has been instituted a space of freedom, security and justice focused on the protection of people and of the quality of life, while with the Treaty of Nice (2000) it was declared a real "right to security" for each person, including it among the fundamental freedoms.

These and other processes join and produce meaningful changes: first of all, they conduced to a metamorphosis of the State and its action, that deeply affected the traditional role of military, police, judges and social operator. It went in crisis the linear logic, typical of the first modernity, focused on opposites (public/private, internal/external) that for many decades has been the basis of the political mechanisms of the internal security and defence, "marking" significantly the relative apparatus; also the State monopoly in this sphere has partly declined.

At the macro-system level, a new paradigm was born, which on one hand sees the search of security of the peoples as a tool to assure national, regional and global stability, while, on the other hand, the State is no longer the only subject that can put into action *securization* processes, that come true with the participation of various actors instead. Security becomes a plural notion; its several meanings refer to: a) the presence of different typologies of security (the adjectivate security); b) the need of multilevel intervention in order to satisfy a particularly articulated demand; c) the intervention of several sector institutions, agencies and organizations.

In addition, security can be thought in relation with whole systems (international, regional, national) or sub-systems (institutional, economic, social, cultural) or in relation with people. Under the first profile, it could be defined as the level at which a system, in its various components (or sub-systems), can perform its functions, in acceptable risk conditions, acting as if the risk does not exist or as if it would be reduced to such lower level to not bear on its efficiency and effectiveness. On the other hand, when referred to people and their rights, security on one side recalls the idea of protection from dangers, risks and threats and, on the other side, that of peaceful enjoyment of one's goods and rights.

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\* My warm thanks to Italian State Police for the generous collaboration and its Chief, Antonio Manganelli, for the authorizations.

<sup>1</sup> See Beck U., *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> See Buzan B., *People, States and Fears*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> The foundation document of the concept to which refer is: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, New York, UNDP and Oxford University Press, 1994.

The whole field of security measures is going to articulate in complex systems that contemplate the recourse to the inter-governmental coordination and the creation of structures, agencies, groups, that brought to further connections among the States and strengthened the interdependence conditions; moreover, they created both an expansion of the private sector in spheres traditionally of public competence, and an erosion of the functional differentiation, so that to different functions correspond different bodies and apparatus. For the internal security, there emerge the concepts of “urban security”, “participated security”, that see the contribution of several actors, both institutional and not; at the international level, in the field of the so-called *security governance* it has been considered very important the contribution offered by the private enterprises, of different kind.<sup>4</sup>

The transformations above mentioned and more others, required not only a multidimensional vision of security, but also a “refoundation” of the systems, specialized in its protection, complexities and the unprecedented acceleration of phenomena and processes in local, national, international scenarios marked an out-and-out discontinuity compared with the past, whose range stimulates conceptual cadres to equally deep redefinitions. Policies and practices require open, creative and dynamical operational orientations, while organizations and structures are called to a deep renewal. In fact, it merged a strong need to provide appropriate answers to emerging issues, able to “reflect” – thanks to the rapidity and adaptability of their capabilities of acquisition, elaboration and response – the turbulent dynamic of risks and threats. Security, meant in a more direct relation with the social and individual dimension and articulated in various areas of interest, requires knowledge, expertise and capability greatly differentiated.

## **2. The transformations of the State Police in Italy**

### **“Making police” in Italy: the State Police**

The State Police is one of the five national police forces under government direct control, since they depend on their respective Ministries,<sup>5</sup> of which they come abreast local police forces and services, which depend on the local administrative bodies. Historically, in the Italian framework, the Police has been associated for a long time during the second post-war period, to authoritarian attitudes. These, on one hand, derived from the military organization of the Corp at that time, and on the other hand, from the kind of orientation adopted by the institution toward the maintenance of the public order, protest and conflict policing. During the '80, after the State Police Reform – that, among the other things, determined the demilitarization of the corps, the possibility for women to get to it and the unionization – the Police entered into a new phase of its history; the emphasis on the public order has been gradually replaced by a growing attention for *public security*, that is the protection of the community.

According to a trend observed in all the Polices of the post-industrial societies, it has been relativized the functioning as a government tool of control on a society considered potentially hostile and reluctant toward its characterization as a power (even broaden) in the service of the community and social peace. Through a progressive transformation of the “making police”, a repressive kind of control has been strongly sized in behalf of a soft policing, where mediation and negotiation practices are relevant (as, for instance, in the case of the protest policing) up to the

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<sup>4</sup> See Deitelhoff N., Wolf K. D., *Corporate Security Responsibility? Corporate Governance Contributions to Peace and Security in Zone of Conflict*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> The Italian system, besides the State Police (in Italian named ‘Polizia’ *tout court*), which depends on the Ministry of the Interior, provides for the ‘Arma dei Carabinieri’, dependent on the Ministry of Defence, the ‘Guardia di Finanza’, dependent on the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the ‘Corpo Forestale dello Stato’, dependent on the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies and the ‘Polizia Penitenziaria’, dependent on the Ministry of Justice. ‘Arma dei Carabinieri’ and ‘Guardia di Finanza’ are military corps.



more recent multilevel policing and community oriented policing activities, characterized by a strong attention for the relationships with the local communities and by the search of cooperation and consensus. Finally, as it happened with many European police forces, also in Italy, from the '80 it developed a growing interest in precautionary models (local intelligence policing).

These changes in strategies went with organizational shifts, with the emerging of new trends such as the increase of the differentiation (with the multiplying of structures and “specialities” partly independent from each other), specialization (with specific tasks attributed to the various structures) and professionalization (with a strong emphasis on the formation and development of a kind of “technological knowledge”).

During the time and with the consolidation of the concept of public security, intended as the protection of the community, the local dimension has assumed an increasing centrality; it is particularly at this level, where important processes happen, which contribute to define the quality of life of the citizens, that the security demand is structured and articulated and that, based on a “risk culture”, an out-and-out factory of fears and intolerances notably widened, adding old and new needs.

Although the “risk society” is global, however it is at the national, and then local, level that threats and risks gain in importance and become the objective of specific *policies* to face them. Each society has to face global risks and threats and local features; in Italy, the new risks that jeopardise the health and are able to get out of the immediate perceptive capabilities, as it happens with the radioactivity and toxic substances in the air, in the water and in foods every day, conjugate with the insecurity fed by the wear of the protection networks made up both by the traditional Welfare State systems and by family or affiliation communities that no longer discharge their function of support and defensive “barrier”.<sup>6</sup> Migration lived like disorder and “contamination” of one’s daily habitat and the fear of the micro-criminality as well as the organized crime, the unease toward a dominant individualism that rives the solidarity bonds and wear the social capital, produce a continuous state of preoccupation and alert that notably increases the perception of being under threat and, consequently, the protection demand. This attitude widespread among the community leads to relevant externalities at the Police service level.

During the last twenty years, in Italy, the problems of security have seen the demands of the people aggregating essentially around two hubs: the first, that we could call “institutional”, calls for having a “visible” police so that it would represent a significant deterrent against criminal behaviours and offer to the people an effective assurance; the second hub, social and multi-tasking, takes interest in having a police “at disposal”, that is, able to listen to and take care of the citizens’ requirements and to solve their problems.

Flying squad is required not only for those activities directed to fight criminality, but also to replace other public services and to contribute to put down a sense of insecurity widespread among the community. Such a situation brings the State Police to face an increasing complexity: the traditional tasks add up with those activities subjected to normative duties and with other activities which derive from “contractual” duties in charge with local authorities and other institutional subjects. Furthermore, it should be added a widespread capacity for collaborating with and opening up to the community and its requirements.

By operating on the territory and for the territory, the policeman feels him/herself as a State organ,

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<sup>6</sup> The recent Censis (Italian Institute for social studies) report on the condition of the Country outlines a social situation of wear of the social bond. See CENSIS, *Quarantaquattresimo Rapporto sulla situazione sociale del Paese 2010*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2011.

but also as an active party of the society of which he/she looks for the legitimation and consensus. The Police operator, called every day on the territory to “square with” the (juridical) law and the (social) reality, with the duties of his/her function and with the expectations (not always coherent to them) of the people, with resources and (moderate) means and with (unrealistic) social expectations of protection, has to relate with such duplicity, which should develop in an evolutionary equilibrium able to cope with a reality constantly on the move. It is a remarkable load in terms of workability, image and with unavoidable psychological implications.

### ***A culture and a professional identity in transition?***

The professional identity of the Italian State Police members to underwent to remarkable transformation, developing a growing complexity, which requires the recourse to ambivalent logical in order to be adequately managed.<sup>7</sup> On one side, the identity of the policeman has set up again as regarded by models and approaches more horizontal and open to the civil society and its demands, therefore, to its dynamics, contradictions, strains and conflicts; on the other side, the permanent and fundamental role as guardian of legality and public order, as well as of the effectiveness of the State sovereignty on the territory, keeps on being a focal point both in the self-perception and construction of the professional identity, and in the perceptions and expectations of the citizens. Today, the main indicator of success of the Police doings is the capacity to conciliate the respect of liberties and individual rights and the “service” to the community, through the protection of institutions, laws, security and public system.

These two orientations can be already tracked in the historical analyses of the Police begin: a position sees it as a body created from below – that is, by the civil society – to answer to the community’s demand of assurance against private violence, hence as source of a wider and more effective security than that individuals and groups were able to assure themselves. Another one, instead, considers it as a structure created from above, by the political class, as a tool to assure the respect of the laws of the State and to enforce it to individuals and groups that do not recognize themselves in them. The English Police is moulded on the first conception, with its tradition of *community policing*; the French one on the second, since it was born as *King’s police*.

In both cases, however, the police job entails a delicate equilibrium between law and power, between the need to assure, even through the use of force, the ordered execution of daily activities in the community, the protection of its laws and systems and the respect of the community rights. To the two models correspond two different ways of legitimation of the Police itself – a civic legitimation, “from below”, in the first case; a political legitimation, “from above”, in the second one – that reflect also different criteria of conceiving their role by the responsables. In fact, the different conceptions express different ways of acting in the field, of relating to the population and the public order problems, to criminal and deviant subjects, both preventing them and facing and reacting to the crime.

The Polices of the societies of a ripe democracy tend less and less to flee as institutions that are functional to the political power and more and more as hub of a power that keeps on being socially built by the participation of the majority of the community. The passage from a statist Police, sole expression of the executive power, thus, authoritarian, to a more oriented toward the community one brought to remarkable changes at the organizational level, in the operational practices and in

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<sup>7</sup> Ambivalence is not a lack of clearness, that is ambiguity, it is not a whitewash, nor deception, but it is a peculiar characteristic of complexity. There is sociological ambivalence when several requests, also contradictory, act at the same time. The ambivalent situation is distinguished by not requiring strategies that restore homogeneity and coherence, but, on the contrary, it stays open to permit strategies of alternation between the two poles and of continuous redefinition of the equilibrium point, never definitive. See Merton R. K., *Sociological Ambivalence*, New York, Free Press, 1976.

the behaviors. During the years it has become more and more clear that, although prevention, control and repression of crime are the more obvious and less controversial aspects of the police tasks, other aspects more pro-social are not less relevant.

The internal security of a Country adds up, on one side, the security of the State, of its institutions and the certainty of its laws, on the other side, the security of the community and of the local space. A wide range security, not prejudicial to the rights (and, among all, also the right to protest) and the liberties of the community, is an integral part of the social peace and of the democratic execution of the collective life, on the protection of which is put, among the other institutions, the Police too.

The further and more recent development of the security protection through *multilevel governance* strategies, that aim for including a plurality of subjects – institutional, political and social – in the implementation of the respective *policies*, has made the production of public security a function that cuts in several actors, harbingers of different logics and communication codes. Therefore, the Police finds itself to act in a participated security system, that is, like a knot in a net that involves local institutions, community, associations, and that requires a different attitude towards partners: it is required the adhesion to a system of values that go over a simple compliance with rules and procedures, and an increased knowledge of the social reality, of its problems together with a ripe awareness of the dynamics that cross through it.

However, on the other hand, it is important for the State Police to keep its function and body-identity Weberian depository of the legal coercion, rather, it is this prerogative itself that qualifies the whole network in which they are articulated the *multilevel governance* strategies of the participated security. From the ambivalence of this position, that is, being an integral part of a network and of a specific public sector, from the capacity and disposal of the respective members to manage such ambivalence not as a limit, but as a resource, it originates the possibility to carry out new and significant functions for the whole community.

### **3. Security-building: the research on State Police officers**

#### ***Characteristics and methodology of the Survey***

The survey on State Police officers, the outcomes of which are discussed in the present paper, is part of a wider survey on the State Police members, at different levels of the hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> The ending aim of the research is a focus on the organizational actors, put in the different levels of the institution, in order to make come out the personal experience of the past and present changes of such a fundamental State institution.

The survey on officers made use of a typically quantitative strategy<sup>9</sup> on a sample made up by 316 people, which resulted quite homogeneous both from a socio-demographical and from a professional point of view, and shows a good degree of representativeness compared to the universe from which it is drawn. Apart from being sufficiently representative at a statistic level, the sample presents a relevant sociological significance since it is the Police officer him/herself, with his/her practices and knowledge, who builds every day the security on the territory, assures (or not assures) the population, implements the different policies. Moreover, while the most part of the

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<sup>8</sup> The set of these empirical researches constitutes the contribution of a team of sociologists of the International Studies Department (Roma Tre University), directed by me, to a PRIN Project (Progetto di Rilevanza Nazionale), sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research. The researches conducted with quantitative methodologies profited by the support of interviews and discussion groups carried out during the several years of teaching at the “Police High School”, in Rome, by the analyses of iconographical material, documents, reports and internal studies.

<sup>9</sup> In October, 2010, through an assisted self-administered questionnaire, 316 officers, coming from all over Italy, have been interviewed at the Istituto per Sovrintendenti e di Perfezionamento per Ispettori in Nettuno (Rome).

Police decisions is discretionary, discretion keeps on incrementing when we approach the behaviour “in the field”.

In a kind of turnaround of the bureaucratic logical, that sees the extent of discretion incrementing at the top of hierarchy, the officer in the field holds a great extended power of “situation definition” that acts – even before the rules of conduct – as a guide for action. They are “street level bureaucrats”, since they have to enforce every day abstract rules to concrete typologies of individuals and situations. Although in Italy during the training of the State Police personnel great importance is reserved for juridical aspects, the point is that even those behaviours expressly defined by the law require a *hic et nunc* reconstruction.

The discretion margins that get to concern the definition itself of Police tasks, correlate to different behaviour styles, provided with coherence. In literature, the choice among different styles of policing is linked to situational and aptitude variables; in the first case, the differences of behaviour are made going back to the characteristics of the situation (nature of the problem, peculiarities of the people involved, in terms of status, gender, age, etc.), to the features of the action (for example, the seriousness of the offence) and to contextual variables. The aptitude approach, instead, explains the behaviour of officers regarding to the particular “style” they choose, depending on the prevalence given to the implementation of the “law” and of the “order” or to the problem solution, to the social peace-keeping, to the respect of individual rights and so on.

The aptitude approach is the one that directed the research presented here.

In the questionnaire, made up by 18 close-answer questions and 3 open-answer questions, the survey areas chosen have been:

- orientations of values;
- professional identity;
- risks and threats for the public order and security;
- the strategies of security-building;
- the relation with local police and citizens.

Through the analyses of these five macro areas it has been outlined the profile of the Italian Police of the Third Millennium, giving particular attention to the ways of relating with the community, since it is an institution provided with particularly important powers about rights and fundamental freedoms. In fact, while in the authoritarian systems the judgement of the police action stays in its effectiveness, in the democratic societies it is pivotal its capacity of conciliating the respect of liberties and fundamental rights with the protection of security and public order.

#### **4. Values and professional identity**

In the framework of the transformations outlined thus far, the thematic of values and professional identity is of significant relevance; the orientations of values constitute a good indicator of the fundamental features of a culture – and of an organizational sub-culture<sup>10</sup> – since those things considered important in one’s life direct one’s way of acting in the working world too.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Culture can be defined as a set of shared significances, interpretations, values, systems of beliefs and knowledge. To share a culture means to behave in order to validate its general assumptions, though being differences in contributions and experiences. Geert Hofstede’s studies since the Seventies have become the basis of the research of organizational cultures. Hofstede G., *Culture’s Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values*, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1980; see also Morgan G., *Images of Organization*, London, Sage, 1980.

<sup>11</sup> The study of the values of social actors acquired an increasing importance in the contemporary social analysis, after the pioneering studies by Almond and Verba and those more recent by Roland Inglehart (Almond G. A., Verba S., *The Civic Culture: Political*

professional identity, in turn, meaning a specific modality of social action, juridically marked but also rooted in a relational context, is a good indicator of the self-placement of an organization within the social space. Through this approach to subjectivity of social actors, it is recognized all the relevance of the members of the State Police organization in delineating the concrete execution of the police job and the new face of the institution.

### ***The orientations of value***

The analyses of the orientations of value is focused on a fundamental question: policemen tends to favour a world vision that stresses materialist orientation – focused mainly on security and authority – or a post-materialist vision prevails, focused on the values of self-realization and democratic participation?

This question comes from the acceptance of the hypothesis and outcomes achieved by Roland Inglehart and the *World Values Survey* (WVS) in studying the cultural changes. The diffusion in all the western societies of post-materialist complexes of values or, anyway, hybrid – that is, where there are both the materialist and the post-materialist components – noted by Inglehart's studies, gains a particular importance in our survey, considering the historical evolution of the Italian State Police that saw the passage from the emphasis on public order to a greater attention to the *public security* towards a culture in the citizen's service.

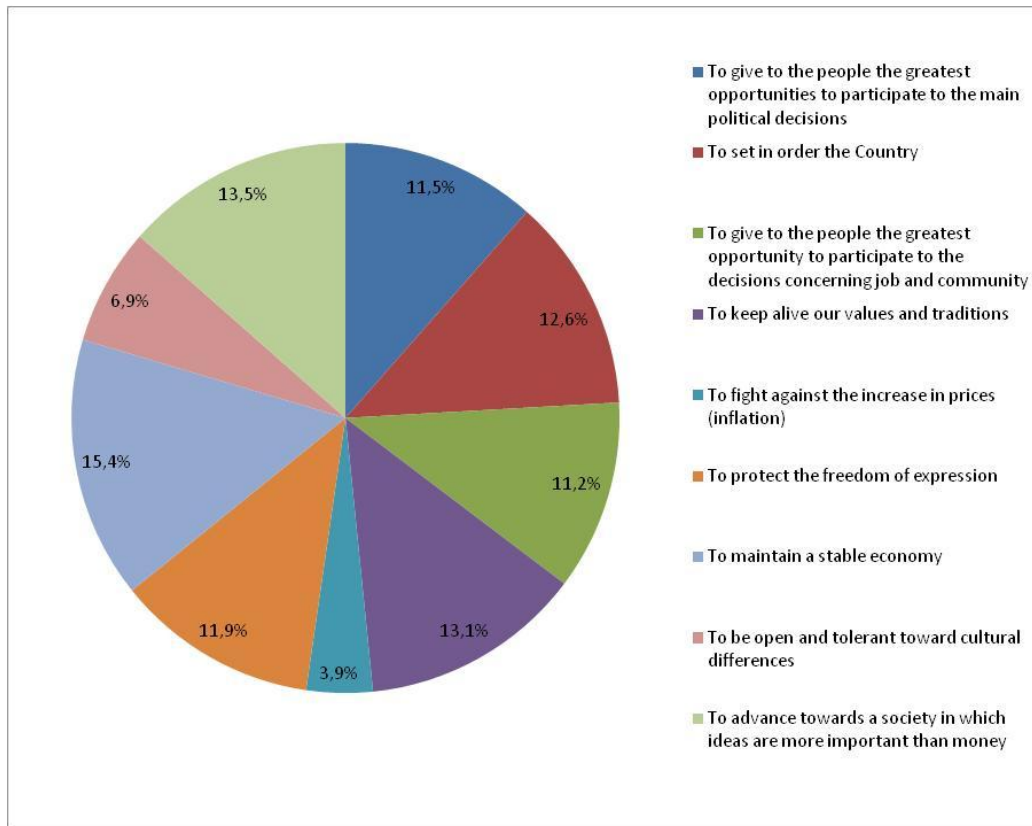
Through the partial change of the scale of values used by Roland Inglehart in his researches,<sup>12</sup> it has been elaborated a list of nine values, asking them which ones were the two most important. The outcomes are summed up in Figure 1.

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*Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963; Inglehart R., Welzel C., *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> It is referred, in particular, to the Inglehart Scale, defined, in the last survey of 2005, *Post-materialist Index 4 Items*, whose methodological specifications are at disposal at the URL: <http://worldvaluessurvey.org>.

**Fig. 1** “It is reported here a series of claims regarding those things people think are important for their life and for the life of the community. Please sign which ones are the most important in your opinion.”



**Source:** Elaboration on the research data.

Except for “the fight against the increase in prices (inflation)” and, more significantly, “to be open and tolerant toward cultural differences”, all the other items received a number of answers quite similar. This fact indicates the presence of a great variety of opinions and attitudes in the sample, that are expressed in the respective priorities. However, by reducing the various items to the materialism/post-materialism polarity, the picture becomes clearer: while the number of “pure post-materialist” is greater than that of the “pure materialist” – about 37% against 25% - the category (slightly) in majority is represented by “hybrids” (38%), that is those individuals who show a cultural complex characterized by the presence together of materialist and post-materialist orientations.<sup>13</sup> The marked prevalence of the post-materialistic and “hybrid” value component indicates in the respondents a vision of the Italian social reality no longer focused on the supremacy of the authority and hierarchical institutions, but on dialogue, democratic participation and community centrality.

Materialism, post-materialism and “hybrid” component should be further qualified: first of all, the particular materialism expressed by officers does not point up the topic of a “police” social order,

<sup>13</sup> A confrontation with the Italian population as it outcomes from the 2005 *World Values Survey* – the last one available for our Country – shows that the two extremes represented by pure materialist and post-materialist are made up by a smaller number of persons than that pointed out in the sample. See Maniscalco M.L., Antonelli F., Giobbi L., Rosato V., “La costruzione della sicurezza sul territorio nella percezione degli assistenti/agenti della Polizia di Stato. Primi risultati di una ricerca”, in *Democrazia e Sicurezza/ Democracy&SecurityReview*, 2011; at <http://www.democraziaesicurezza.it/>

but that of economic stability – probably, as an effect of the current phase of economic crisis – and underline the respect of traditions and the preservation of values: therefore, it is a bias not authoritarian but “conservative”, both in the material sphere and in the ideal one. Post-materialism, in turn, does not qualify itself for the openness to cultural differences (that is the second value less chosen), but for a strong democratic idealism, according to which we should engage in building a society where ideas count more than money and the participation of the people to public decision is greater. If we consider the importance given to the freedom of expression, the picture is clear: the post-materialism of the respondents does not express a cosmopolitan idea of democracy and society, but it relates to a more classical and radical ideal of democracy, with deep anti-utilitarian hints.

In the same way, in the matter of “hybrids”, they are connoted by a very strong emphasis on cultural stability too – in terms of preservation of traditions and values – associated with the commitment to the construction of a society less oriented toward the money supremacy and more tied to the role of ideals.

The category of hybrids is in great measure a category of idealists, who think the cultural, political and social change in terms of a re-establishment of certainties and of the strengthening of the social bonds of communities. Therefore, we are in the presence of an attitude intent on the protection of social and cultural stability and based on the refusal of some of the main factors of dynamism (and break-up), typical of the globalization, such as cultural fragmentation, individualism and the triumph of the economical processes on the other social spheres. These attitude assume additional significances in the context of the other areas investigated by the research.

### ***The professional identity***

In the research, the professional identity has been investigated through two important dimensions, tightly interrelated: the “Subjective Identity”, that is the synthetic image that the individual assigns to him/herself, and the “Identity for the Others”, that is the way the individual thinks to be considered by the others. According to the lesson of the symbolic interactionists, in particular, Charles Horton Cooley,<sup>14</sup> the Self and the Society are divisible only in the abstract, because the individual creates and moulds his/her sense of identity through a constant interaction with the external world. In particular, with the concept of “Looking-glass Self”, it can be explicated that mechanism through which the individual builds his image in a “reflected” way, that is on the way the others see him, or, even better, on the way he thinks the others see him. Therefore, the “Subjective Identity” and the “Identity for the Others” are two sides of the coin, since the construction of the identity, both individual and social, is the outcome of this continuous interweaving of ideas, images and one’s and others’ opinions.

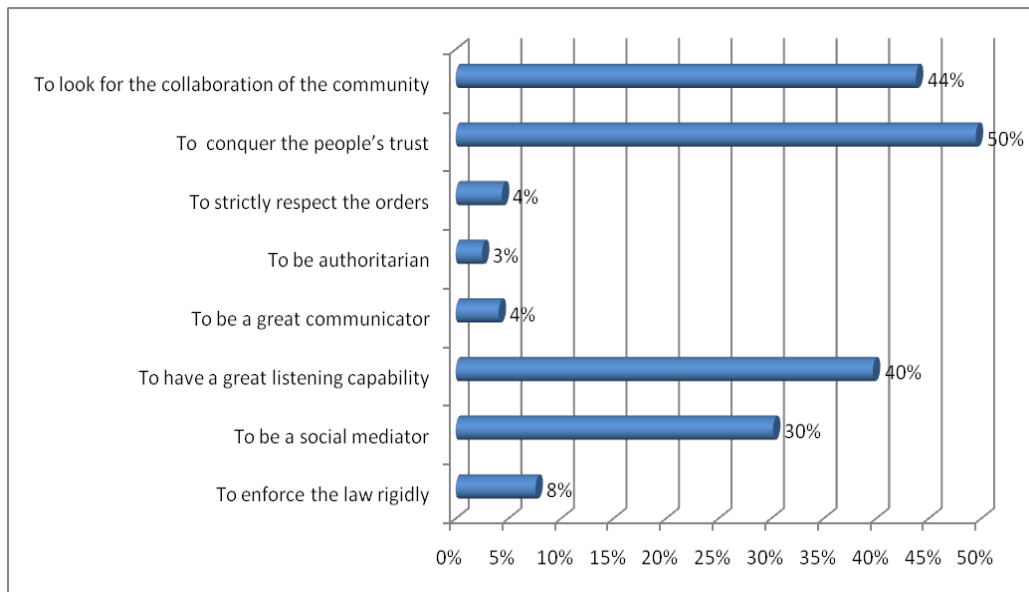
In this survey, the professional identity in the self-definition of the respondents has been analyzed through a single question on the meaning they give, according to their personal working experience, to their role as State Police officers. Figure 2 shows how the answers that collect the biggest consensus are those that return a self-image strongly oriented towards the collaboration and the openness toward the community: “To conquer the people’s trust”, “To look for the collaboration of the community”, “To have a great listening capability” and “To be a social mediator” are, respectively, the answers that collect the vast majority of consensus. On the contrary, the four items left – that, specifically, identify an attitude that we could define authoritarian and self-referencing of the Police, that is, where values like the enforcement of the order and the respect of the discipline prevail – received negligible percentages. The search of legitimation, consensus and external collaboration, hence, seem to be the main elements that characterize the professional

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<sup>14</sup> See Cooley C. H., *Human Nature and the Social Order*, Scribner, New York, 1902, and *Social Organization: A Study of the Larger Mind*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909.

self-image; these answers return a profile of a *post-authoritarian Police*, confirming the predominant orientations of values, connoted by a conservative ultra-idealism, deeply rooted in the idea of a *Community supremacy*.

**Fig. 2 - “In your opinion and according to your working experience, what does it mean today being a policeman?” (\*)**



Source: elaboration on the research data.

(\*) Respondents could choose up to two answers. Consequently, the total percentage is higher than 100%.

Going to the “Identity for the Others”, built by the perception of the community’s attitude towards the State Police – surveyed, also in this case, giving the respondents the possibility to choose up to two statements, which better approached to their opinion, given six options – the prevalent image is that of the Police seen, where serving: “as the first institution to which address in order to solve their problem, even when these problems has nothing to do with criminality” (Fig. 3). Therefore, it is the image of a *problem solver* Police, nearly a lightning rod, “all-acting”.

What the respondents believe it should be required by the citizens to the Police is a wide *range* of activities mainly aimed at granting a “social control” of the territory, able to reduce the cost of social transactions and to contain micro-conflicts. In fact, it is about mediation and conciliation intervention, vicarious performances with respect to the lack of “social capital”, which in any case stay connected, even if not in a traditional way, with the front of the legality tutor. In other words, it is this role of State representative itself – with the authoritative dimensions that it subtends anyway and that permit a significant margin of discretion and influence in interaction contexts – that assures a positive outcome of the interventions.

The Police action, in such cases, has subject phenomena which do not fall within the *core missions* of its forces, but on which they are equally called to intervene by the people, whose expectations are connoted by strong requests of an *ethics of care*. If we draw this image near to that according to which the community sees the Police: “as an institution with whom to confront *au pair*, by collaborating in order to make the community safer” – an image of the policeman based essentially



on relational and cooperative dynamics and focused on a concept of security cooperatively built – we will find, even at this level, the cultural domain of the ideology of *community policing*; a Police, thus, thought in defence and in the service of the *Community* more than of the normative foundations of the social life of the Country, referable to the idea of *Society*. In this dimension, Police becomes a resource for the good of the “community of proximity” that cannot be renounced.

Another positive image of the Police is that more focused on the traditional organizational *mission* (“as a friend institution that protect them from the criminality”); in this definition, the institution is seen as a public defence to protect legality and, at the same time, “friend” of the citizen because it protects from the crime. Also in this case, it should be underlined the protective and careful dimension towards the community: the activity of crime contrast is thought to be perceived by the community not as an overwhelming control, but as benevolent protection. It is, thus, a more imbalanced on legal-normative profiles version of the *community policing*.

On the whole, the outcomes discussed up to now give indications that seem to sign the happened passage in the community’s opinion from a Police as “power” to a Police as “service”, with the relative emerging of an *ethics of responsibility*. The element is coherently connected, although in a small percentage, with the self-image sketched out by the sample that resulted strongly oriented towards the collaboration and openness toward the community.

Another interesting element that should not be undervalued – on the contrary, it should be subject of further close examination – is represented by the opinions expressed by about 15% of the respondents, who imputes to the local community a negative image of the Police; this image, articulated on specular and opposite dimensions compared with those discussed before, underlines the “absence and the extraneousness” towards the problems of the community and, for 12%, the ineffectiveness or, even, the heavy-handedness. In this last case, a stereotype lingers, partly derived, probably, from the military organization of the Police during the past decades and the related “posture” in the execution of their functions, and partly from the orientation assumed in some more recent occasion by the institution – and emphasized by the mass media – in particularly disputed activities of maintaining the public order and protest and social conflicts controlling.

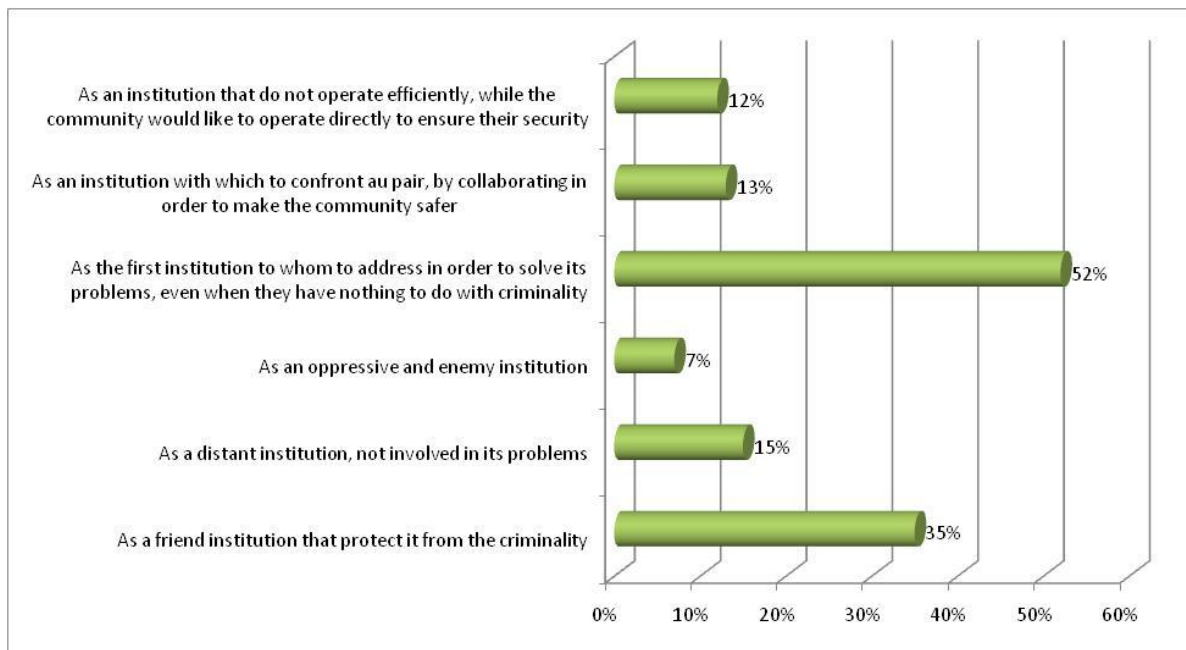
These recommendations, although in minority percentage, recall the presence of two “ghosts”: the one of an extreme use of force and the inefficiency one. The first one, directly imputable to the social actor, would require a strengthening of the service ethics, the second one is due to financial and organizational ties of the institution, that is, to structural ties. Being the first one diffused by the mass media<sup>15</sup> and the second one originated by the objective lacks found in the daily operational activity,<sup>16</sup> these “ghosts” resound in the imagination of a part – even if minority – of the respondents, that sees them confirmed in the people’s opinions. These answers represent a shady area in the dominant new self-representation and will be further investigated in following analysis.

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<sup>15</sup> An area of the survey has analyzed also the image of the Police diffused by the media; the matter is of greater importance, since in Italy many fictions, dedicated to the Police forces, have a remarkable audience. These outcomes can be found in Maniscalco M.L., Antonelli F., Giobbi L., Rosato V., “La costruzione della sicurezza sul territorio nella percezione degli assistenti/agenti della Polizia di Stato. Primi risultati di una ricerca”, in *Democrazia e Sicurezza/ Democracy&Security Review*, 2011; at <http://www.democraziaesicurezza.it/>

<sup>16</sup> The lack of personnel and means has been indicated many times during the interviews, conducted also in occasions different from the present survey.

**Fig. 3 “If you think about the place where you now serve, how would you define the way the community sees the Police?” (\*)**



**Source::** elaboration on the research data

(\*) Respondents could choose up to two answers. Consequently, the total percentage is higher than 100%.

Referring very briefly to the overall identity issue and at this first level of elaboration, we could therefore claim that on one side there is the majority of the “optimists”, that is, those according to whom the relationship with the other social subjects, their consensus, their orientations are fundamental elements in defining one’s identity and operational procedure; these respondents present an orientation to relation rather than to performance, that brings them to push into the background the problematic elements of the “doing police”. On the other side, there emerge attitudes more prone to underline criticalities and problems that are projected in the “look” of the others (local community and mass media). In this sense, we could define these respondents as “pessimists”.

## **5. Risks and threats for security and public order**

### ***Minor risks and threats: towards the decline of the supremacy of the public order?***

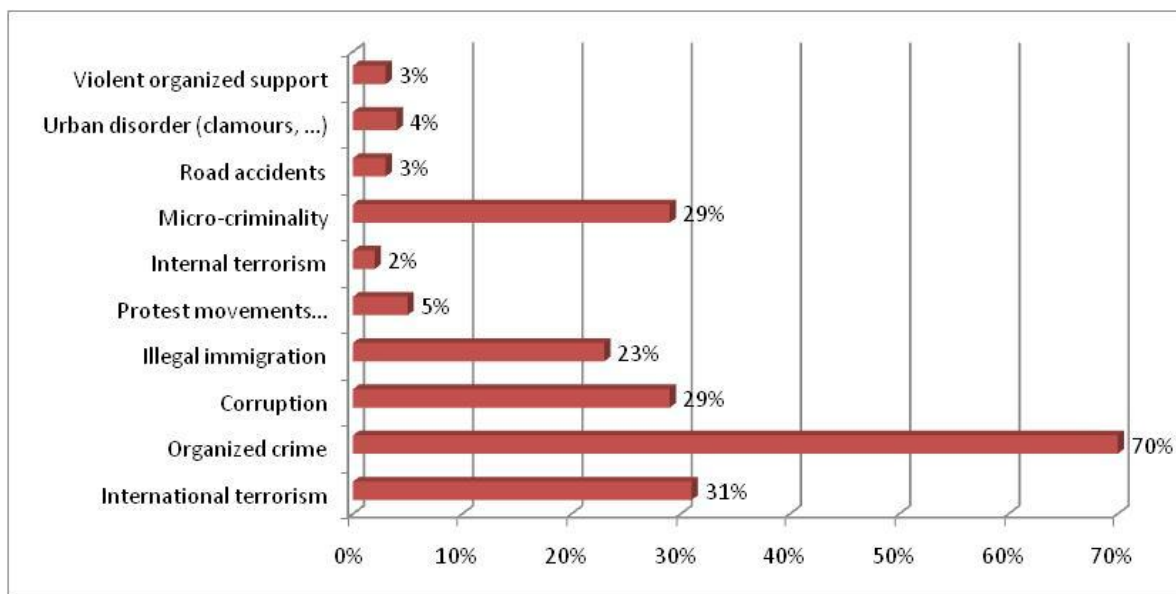
The evaluation of risks and threats according to the State Police officers has been analyzed along the local-national-global axis. On one side, the analysis of the risks relevance and of the threats from a national point of view represents a good indicator of the priorities the respondents think the Police to be pursuing at the Country-system level, as an institution on the whole; on the other side, the analysis of the same issue from a local point of view, that is, referred to the place of service, shows the perception of the presence on the territory of these risks and threats themselves. In this way, the “push from above”, the *input* generated within the organization and that creates a hierarchy of risks and threats in the national framework, is clarified and declined “downwards”, at

the territorial level, also showing, in backlight, the expectations and strains on the State Police, coming from the local communities.

In this way, the sociological dimension of the protection of the *Society* (Italy as Country-system) confronts itself with the dimension of the *Community* (the place, the real and defined territory where serving). The representations of the risk, threat and security, analysed within these points of reference, allowed the formulation of wider considerations regarding the transformations of the idea of security in Italy in the organizational actors institutionally delegated to its production.

Through the confrontation of the evaluation of risks and threats considered more relevant in both dimensions, national and local, it follows that “social movements”, “organized support”, “internal terrorism”, “urban disorder” and “road accidents” receive little attention both at the Country-system level and the Community where serving level (Fig. 4).

**Fig. 4 “There follow some threats to security and public order. Generally speaking, if you think about the present situation in Italy, which are in your opinion the two more serious threats? (\*)**



**Source:** elaboration on the research data

(\*) Respondents could choose up to two answers. Consequently, the total percentage is higher than 100%.

If we move out “road accidents” – whose low percentage is probably referred to the fact that they are not considered as a prior threat, but they are instead referred to contingent situations<sup>17</sup> - and “internal terrorism” – presently residual in our society – the other indications give interesting cues of reflection. “Violent support” and “urban disorder” reflect a particular manifestation of the violence in the present society; for some aspects, these issues fall in the so-call “urban security” area,

<sup>17</sup> They are not identified as real threats or as carrier of relevant negative externalities for the local or general collectivity, but they make fear only regarding to the individual accidentally involved; however, the policemen, who serve in the Traffic Police and are aware of these risks, are not like mind.

referable to both the notion of public security and the typical profiles of the intervention of the local powers. Urban security, in fact, represents an important articulation since on one side it recalls the idea of defence of primary public interests (in the first place, the people integrity), on the other side it suggests a link with the quality of life.

Also the level of dangerousness assigned to “social movements” has been low, probably due to a plurality of changes that operated and still operates at many levels and despite the pressing of the present economic crisis; first of all, it is different the typology of the main post-modern movements that present an eminently cultural character, are a *one issue movement*, take a stand on issues soaked of value dimensions – such as environment, the relation between life and death, health, sexuality, information and communication procedures – and manifest themselves through protest repertoires, markedly meaningful and usually not much violent. Moreover, it should be added that some issues – environment, health, human rights, economic security, etc. – are shared by many Police members, holder, as we have seen, of post-materialistic and “hybrid” values.

It is also different the response by the State compared to the past one: if during the Seventies the logic of *protest policing* was based on an inclination to the use of force, today the institutional policy is inspired by the respect of the right of expressing one’s dissent and in managing the public order, during the protests, favours prevention and negotiation.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, on their whole, these data show a decreasing, both from “the top” and from “the bottom”, of the preoccupations, connected to the traditional management of the public order by the Police Forces and to a kind of orientation that find scarce legitimation both in the organizational ideology of the policing community and within that culture of the conservative post-materialism, completely bent on the supremacy of the *Community*. Moreover, the underlining of the supremacy of ideals and dialogue, pointed out above, influenced the answers for sure.

Regarding to the preoccupations connected with the defence of the *society* at the Country-system level, instead, the most of the respondents perceives the organized crime as the main threat; such a kind of illegal activity is considered almost deeply rooted in our social and economic tissue, with damaging effects able to stop the working of the institutions and the economic and social development of full areas. Moreover, this choice reflects, probably, a prior attention that the institution at the present time addresses to the fight of organized crime on all the national territory. It is also high the level of attention towards the “international terrorism” and the “micro-criminality”.

Particularly interesting is also the attention for the risk of “corruption”. Corruption as the mechanism that deepens in democracies the gap between occult and evidence and obstructs the equality of goods access is sadly known in our Country; during the first years of the Ninth century it was denounced by the sociologist Vilfredo Pareto in his critics to the degeneration of the parliamentary democracy and during the Nineties it was at the base of the crisis of the Italian First Republic. Corruption breaks up the social trust, creates groups and social brackets that develop illegality competences<sup>19</sup> and combines, through a lateral exchange, sectors of the political world with the organized crime.

### ***Prior risks and threats in the territory where serving***

It is different the situation that emerges with regards to the relevance of the risks and the threats in the place where serving; widely speaking, the threat of “micro-criminality” is prior and, in this case, comes before the “organized crime”. The third priority, instead, is related to the “illegal immigration” (fig. 5). The overall view that emerges is, thus, focused of the emphasis of the molecular threats to public security, widespread in the tissue of the daily life of the local communities. A representation

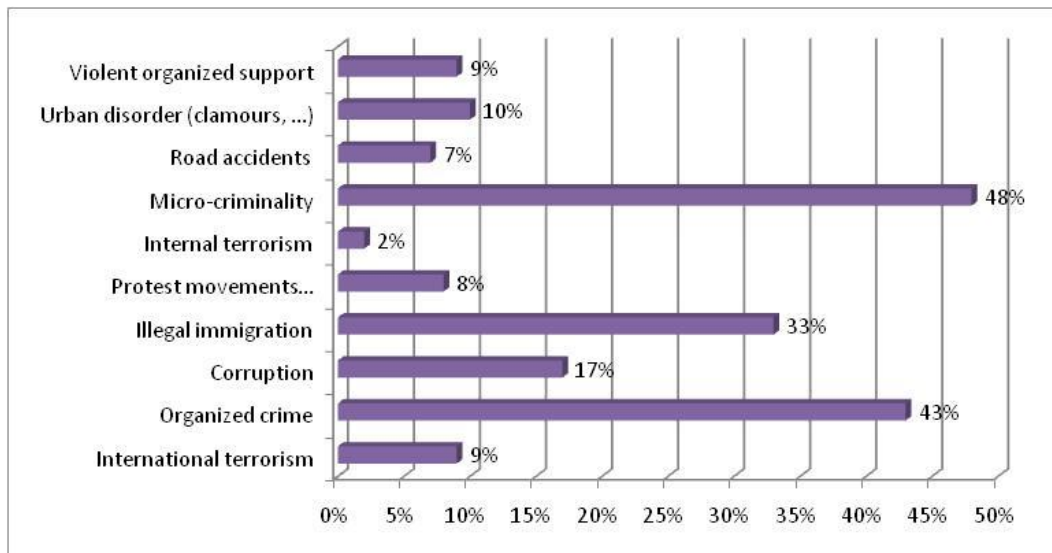
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<sup>18</sup> Della Porta D., Reiter. H., *Polizia e protesta. L'ordine pubblico dalla liberazione ai no global*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> It is typical the figure of the “faccendiere”, an Italian specific terminology, particularly significant, hard to translate.

that is probably effected by the same preoccupations of the community and of the collective local actors.

**Fig. 5 “There follow some threats to security and public order. Generally speaking, if you think about the situation in the place where you serve, which are in your opinion the two more serious threats?” (\*)**



**Source:** elaboration on the research data

(\*) Respondents could choose up to two answers. Consequently, the total percentage is higher than 100%.

## **6. Building security on the territory: the State Police relationship with the community and the local Polices**

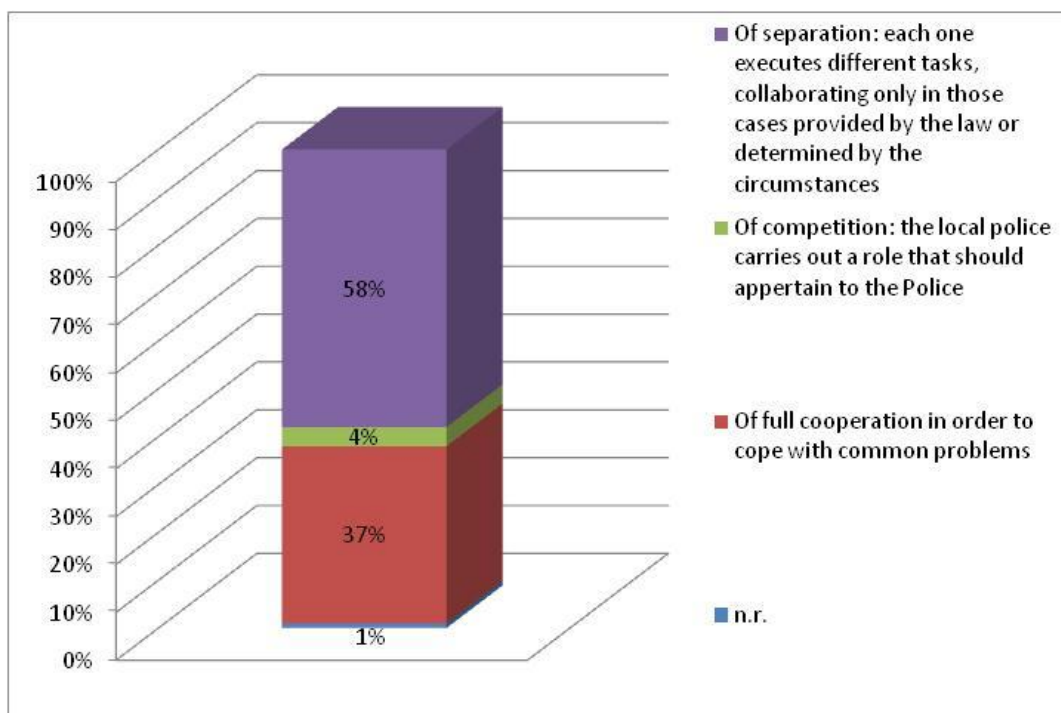
### ***The relation with the local polices and the “defence” of one’s specificity***

Within the new orientations and a widespread and articulated security demand there is the development of policies, integrated in the framework of a multi-level *governance*; such a strategy forecasts an international, supranational, national and local cooperation, more and more oriented towards the prevention of the illegal and “uncivilized” behaviours rather than their repression. It is about a deep change already consolidated at the European level, as in our Country, that sees more Polices, of different kind, working in the same territory, with tasks that sometimes are complementary, other times overlapping, or Polices of different territories, cooperating. In particular, the incidence of many Polices in a same territory can produce synergies and concrete improvements in the execution of their tasks, but it could also create frictions, dysfunctionality, contrasts. At the level of single Police apparatus – and of their members – there can be misunderstandings, rivalries, frictions.

Therefore, in our research it was entered a question that, referring to the place where the respondent serves, asked the definition of the relations with the local police. Such a question, on one side, wants to make emerge the subjective experience of an inter-institutional cooperation that

in Italy dates back to about 15 years ago and, on the other side, gives another point of view for investigating both the professional identity and the complex relation between the defence of the corporate level and of the communitarian one. The answers received see the majority of the sample (58%) underlining its specificity: according to the respondents, the relations with the local police are “of separation: each one executes different tasks, collaborating only in those cases provided by the law or determined by the circumstances”. The recall to the specificity of the State Police, and to the legally due functions, is there also in a small fraction of the sample, 4%, that emphasizes them with a polemic vein, claiming a competition among the two poles, since “the local police carries out a role that should appertain to the Police”. The 37%, however, express a positive opinion, by defining such relations “of full collaboration, in order to face common problems” (fig. 6).

**Fig. 6 “Always referring to the place where you serve, how would you define, in general, the relations with the local police?”**



**Source:** elaboration on the research data

As expected, the respondents who serve in the North<sup>20</sup> of the Country are those who more often emphasize a relation of full collaboration: in the framework of the strong push represented by the organizational ideology of the *community policing* and in face of the expectations coming from the local communities, the cooperation with the local police forces represents a central element in the defence of the *Community* and its problems. The shared field on which such collaboration is set is a further resource useful to face that *gap*, signalled above, between threats and risks that have an eminently local profile and do not fall, immediately, within the priorities perceived at the Country-system level. While the officers who serve in the Centre of Italy represent only a blunt version of

<sup>20</sup> The people of the North of Italy are more inclined to support local positions and parties; it is interesting to note how the openness and the osmosis with the local realities make the Police officers, despite of their regional origins, sensitive to the cultural contexts where they operate.

this representation, the South of the Country and the Isles constitutes the opposite case.

Those who serve in these regions underline more often the issue of separation, since the threats and risks that have to be faced, first of all the organized crime, do not represent only a challenge, specific of the national Police forces, but, above all, they ask for a commitment in working *on* the local Community, and, therefore, on the local police forces themselves – rather than *in* the Community, near to the other individual and collective actors. In this case, the ideology of *community policing* assume a more broadly meaning, more abstract and referable more to the general dimension of the Country-system than to that, concrete, of the citizen as a social actor, expression of a Community to be defended *with* him and *close* to him.

### ***Building security: the supremacy of the community and of the local dimension***

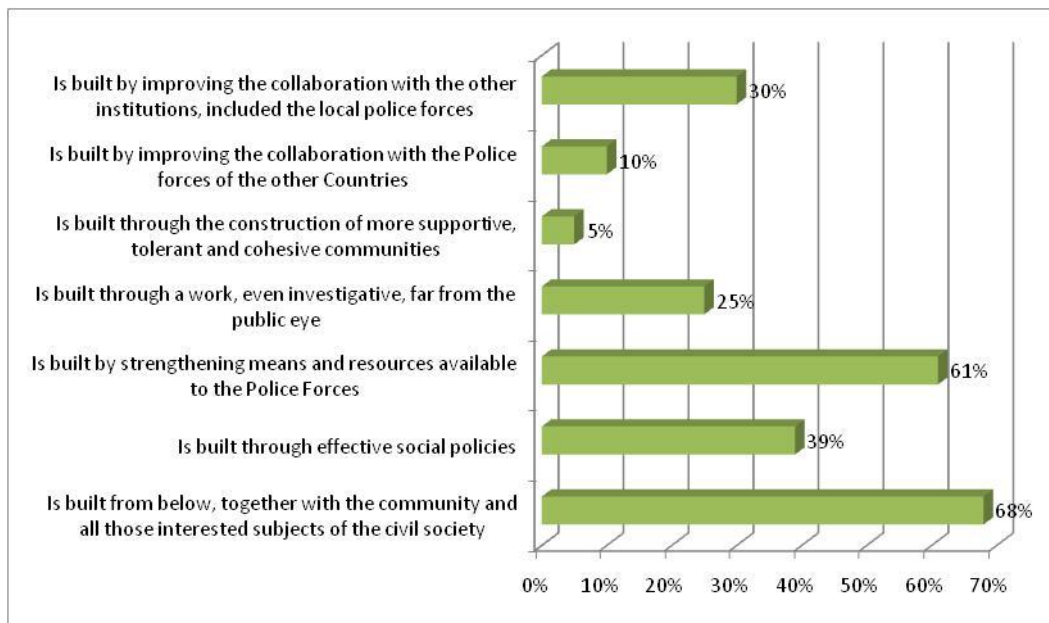
Following this line of research, being incited to express their opinion on how the security could be built today, the protagonists of the survey demonstrated both a fair trust in the intra-institutional collaboration and the already-noticed professional “egocentrism” which assumes, in this case, provincial veins. In fact, if the 30% claimed that “security is built by improving the collaboration with the other institutions, including the local police forces”, it was low the percentage obtained by the option “security is built by improving the collaboration with the Police forces of the other Countries” (10%). This orientation shows that the *focus* of attention keep on being concentrated on the territory of operation, with the consequence of giving little importance to the transnational dimensions of the criminality or, in any case, considering this aspect scarcely influential in determining the efficacy of the Police action. The item arouses perplexities, considering the good level of cooperation achieved by European polices in terms of information exchange.

Coherently with a model of *community policing* which in the sample is declined as an institution that looks for consensus and legitimation among the population, it creeps the opinion according to which even during the concrete execution of one’s profession it is possible to get useful resources from the civil society; in this way, the higher percentage, equal to the 68%, was reached by the option “security is built from below, together with the community and all those interested subjects of the civil society”. The openness toward the social, the emphasis on the research of an economic stability and the cry of what could be defined an ethics of care – all declinations of the already-noticed conservative post-materialism that characterizes our respondents – influenced the 39% of the sample that, by adopting an “enlarged” idea of security, chose the modality “security is built through effective social policies”. The lowest percentage (5%) is always referred to the social and backs the opinion according to which “security is built through the construction of more supportive, tolerant and cohesive communities”; it is a vision that receive very scarce consensus, just in line with that value distrust towards a bigger openness and tolerance towards cultural differences.

Anyway, a large part of the sample considers the “construction” of security within the action of a model of police focused on its main mission (order and security), aiming to grant the legality (broadly speaking) and to fight the crime. This overall orientation is articulated, inside, between an opinion welcomed by the 61% of the respondents, which underlines the necessity of a “strengthening of means and resources available to the Police Forces”; and a less widespread attitude, although supported by the 25% of the respondents, according to which “security is built through a work, even investigative, far from the public eye”, bringing back to mind a “classical”, silent and penetrating activity in the social tissue; nevertheless, it is not detached from this, because only the knowledge of the territory and of the phenomena investigated can assure the efficacy and efficiency of the activity executed (fig. 7).



**Fig. 7 “In your opinion, today, in general, security:” (\*)**



**Source:** elaboration on the research data

(\*) Respondents could choose up to two answers. Consequently, the total percentage is higher than 100%.

In short: territory attachment and localistic orientation seem to connote the opinions and evaluations of the sample; while on one side this makes the State Police an organism perceived near to and integrated with the community, on the other side it could present the dangerous unknown, in an age of globalization of the risks and threats, of a little sensitivity to the transnational aspects of one's function. However, it is probable that the reinforced cooperation between the European Police forces, recalled above, may concern the action of the highest hierarchical levels and not come to affect the daily job of the officer.

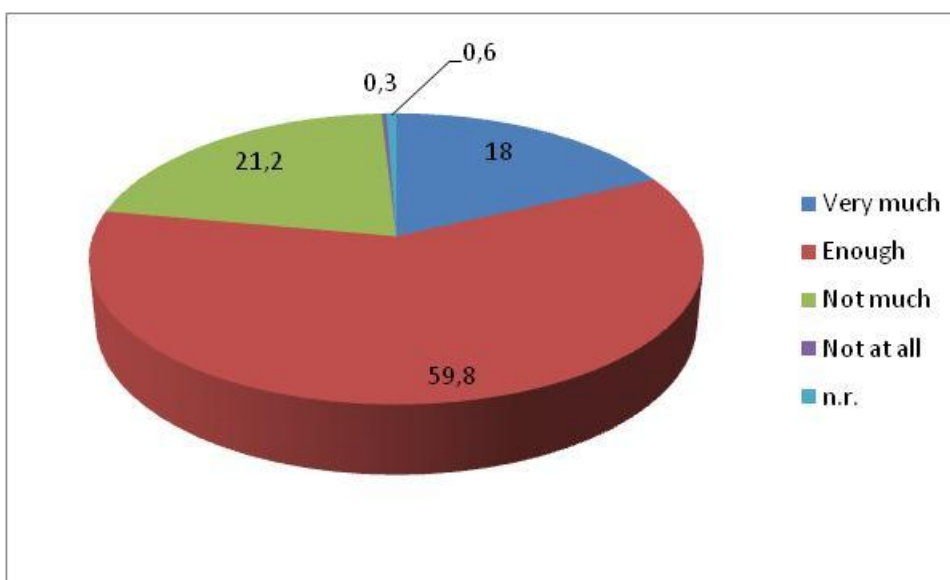
### ***The security of the Country and of the citizens: the pride of one's functions***

In the society of the risk and of the generalized insecurity the work of police is situated, among other things, in an unstable equilibrium, generated by the possible contradictions between security and freedom. The heterogeneity of the parameters that build the insecurity – as it is elaborated at the individual and collective level – makes it a very dynamic and complex phenomenon. Such a situation requires rapid responses and organizational structures able to conduct complex and integrated interventions, where the preparation and the motivation of the personnel – that represents the human capital – play a fundamental role. The evaluations and the definitions of the status of the operators and their capability of elaborating the experiences and inputs coming from the contexts are equally important. In Italy, as in the rest of Europe, the protection of the citizen has always been considered a prerogative of the State, so the feeling of security is connected more than any other thing to the actions and the representations of efficiency by the Police Forces that strategically operate for the safety of the community.



In order to stimulate the critical self-reflexivity of the sample on the effectiveness/efficiency of the Police activity, the research planned the introduction of two questions; the first one, broadly, required an evaluation on the adequacy of the Police in granting a satisfactory level of security in our Country, the second one courted the respondent's opinion on how much the local citizens feel secure. National security and local security was respectively surveyed in the direct opinion of the respondents and in their evaluation of the citizens' opinion. Regarding the first dimension, on the whole, the sample express a positive vision: the 81,5%, in fact, considers "very much" or "enough" adequate the Police in granting a satisfactory level of security in our Country; within these two hoarded percentages, the majority, 60,2%, chose, however, the option "enough", while according to the 21,3% Police is considered "not much" adequate. Nevertheless, in general, we can consider the opinions quite homogeneous in their realistic optimism (fig. 8).

**Fig. 8 "How much adequate do you consider the Police in granting a satisfactory level of security in our Country?"**



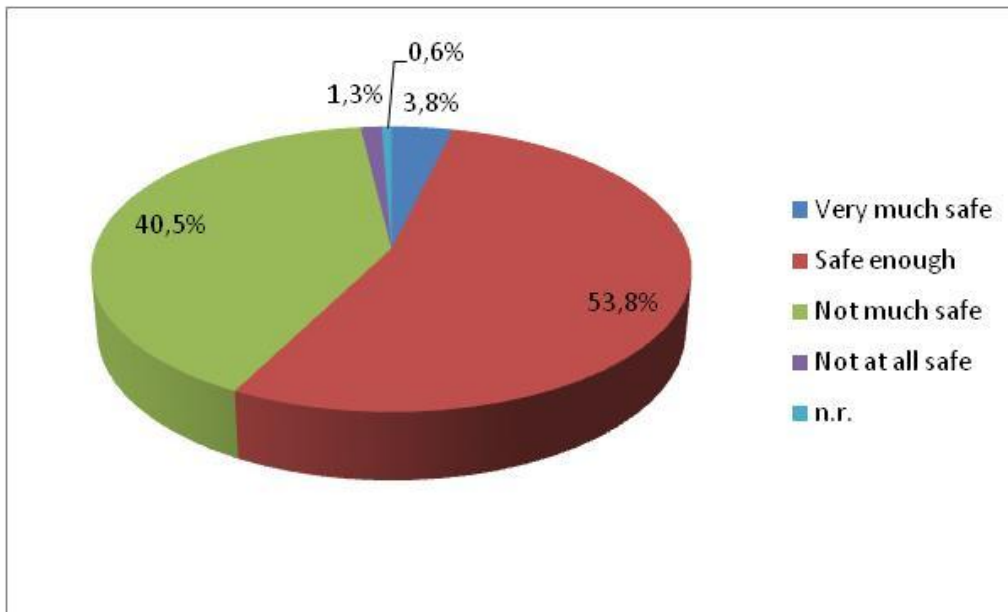
**Source:** elaboration on the research data

A further interesting outcome of the research is that which emerge from the correlation with the size of the city where the respondents serve; broadly speaking, with the increasing of the number of inhabitants it grows the perception of a smaller adequacy of the Police in granting a satisfactory level of security; the result can be easily interpreted if we consider the challenges that big cities have to face.

As regard to the opinions on the level of security perceived by the citizens, the situation is characterized by a smaller optimism, as it results from the answers to a question of the survey, with which it was expressively asked the respondent to indicate his/her own opinion about, referring to the citizens of the place where he/she serves. In fact, compared to the evaluation of the respondents about the effectiveness/efficiency of the Police action in assuring the security of the citizens, there comes out a weaker perception of the security: if the majority, 53,8%, answered that citizens feel themselves "safe enough", the 40,5% reports a situation where they feel themselves

“not much safe” (fig.9).

**Fig. 9 “Referring to the place where you serve, in your opinion, how much do the citizens feel themselves safe?”**



**Source:** elaboration on the research data

### Concluding Remarks

The outcomes of the research found a definitive internalization of a model of Police – although variously articulated – that we could define “of the citizen”, that is, more oriented towards the governance of the security, rather than its enforcement. This is a model of Police thought more in defence and in the service of the *Community* – intended as a group cemented by emotionally meaningful connections and by a shared cultural tradition – than of the *Society* – that is, an idea of a group structured by contractual relations built by culturally different individuals. Bent over the supremacy of the *Community*, it is engaged in the reaffirmation not only of the law, but also of a “morality” of the threatened social bond.

On the whole, the complex relation established with the territory, the bond and the permeability of the society seem to delineate an innovative profile of the Police officers; such a profile should be validated in the future through further analyses and in comparison with the other samples interviewed about the same dimensions of survey.

### About the Author

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