

Au regard de l'évolution des systèmes sécuritaires, comment les acteurs de la sécurité privée et publique perçoivent-ils la notion de partenariat (PPP) et comment cela impacte-t-il la mise en place de ces partenariats ?

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Transcription – entretien 10

[Non enregistrement des 1ère minutes]

Interviewer : what can be the main factors that differentiate you from the public security ?

Interviewé : Which are the main factors that make us different from the public security institutions? Well, several. First of all, I think that the private sector in general, but private security services in particular, have the profound capacity to be more flexible in upscaling and downsizing whenever needed, because we have the personnel. We also are more flexible in recruiting people. It's well known, I think, that for public sector, it's a quite a more difficult structure to be recruited and deployed than in the private sector. At the end, in the total cost of ownership, I think that private sector is also less expensive maybe, which does not mean that we are cheap or cheaper. It means that for social assets of social passive like pensions and everything else is already calculated in the price and where of course public services do still have this on their accounts. Another thing is that public sector is not known for their innovation power, or at least to say that they do not have the incentive to do innovations and that they look to private sector initiatives. And in that sense, I think that also our sector is better placed to search for high quality or high technological equipments in the market.

Yeah, and several others which I cannot find at the moment.

Interviewer : That's very good. And what is your perception of the public sector?

Interviewé : My perception of the public sector, well, Personally, I think it's important to emphasise that I think everyone working in the security sector, whether it's private or public, deserves everyone's attention and respect. I think everyone struggles to handle the different threats, the different complex interactions with public. Certainly public services just have to do with the resources they are given. Although not always, not not always in London (?), but still there is of course not an infinite lack of budget, no sorry infinite budget for public security resources, so I don't have to do what they what they have to do. So, so yeah, of course there are well needed in a liberal, in a liberal democratic state as like Belgium and many others. So, so yeah, I think they're, yeah, they try to do a good job for the resources they are given, the time they have, the tasks they are given. We always speak about lack of resources, but of course we have to keep in mind that everyone always look firstly to the public security services if some new things has to be handled or maintained or if the new laws are voted. Then as always to police, to do the order maintenance and that on. So their pile of tasks only raises. And yeah, I think that's very difficult for them to please the public, to please their government, to please others.

Interviewer : No.

Interviewé : So, so yeah, they are well needed. At the same time, that's yeah, it's a public sector and a public sector has inherent info eye security be. So, yeah.

Interviewer : And what do you think about the image that they have about you, the private sector in general?

Interviewé : It's I think. Um... Augmented think that. It's it has changed overtime. Or maybe before they looked at the private sector as, yeah. as a private sector that... doesn't come even close to what the public sector does. I think there still is a huge part maybe who thinks like this, but more and more people which I speak, which I meet, they accept that they cannot do everything alone. They accept that as long as everyone stays within the lines or the boundaries which have been set by the legislator, there can be other partners. And that private sector can take other tasks as well, which may be known and not done already by the private sector. And so I think that it still is divided to the pros and the cons, the believers and the non-believers and everything in between who do not have a profound opinion about this. But I think that the new generations will come to become the police leaders are more on a modern way of thinking on partnership and to look at how they look at their own organization. Where in the in the past, maybe most in the police leaderships thought about their organisation as the one and only organisation which can handle society's problems. I think that is more and more not the case. Nonetheless, it's not always the police leaders who decide to partner with private sector or not.

Interviewer : Yeah. And what do you think of the laws governing the private sector? Are they appropriate, too restrictive, with shortcomings?

Interviewé : Can you repeat the question?

Interviewer : Yeah, of course. What do you think about the laws on private sector?

Interviewé : Ohh. Well, we have quite a restrictive, well, restrictive law, I mean, we have a strict law, which means it's in the...It's regulated on a rise, on a wide basis and a deep basis. So it means that lots of activities are regulated and also how you have to do these activities and with what methods you would like to use. So do you have a framework legislation? Of I think 260, 280 articles, which is pretty good. It's clear. It's licenses, persons, obligations, competences, powers, so control and sanctions. So I think it's a really clear overview. But then you have the framework, but that's why it is a framework. You have also the royal decrees. And sometimes it's important to also look at the royal decrees because there are quite some. And I think you have Belgian... I think we have the most and world degree is not one or two articles, some are really huge and are really regulated in detail. So I think that the, how you say in English or French, but the problem is in the tail of the snake. And I think that we can say that for a bit we are quite over-regulated in details, and the details are under royal decrees. So, but for the framework, it's okay. We have, like, I have no remarks. Yeah, I have, of course, remarks, but overall, it's a good framework.

Interviewer : Mhm. Okay.

Interviewé : But all the other decrees, I think they should be modernised and more simplified.

Interviewer : Okay, so maybe a gap between the reality on the field and the theory.

Interviewé : Yeah, sure, because if you look at the formation, we have a world degree since 2018, which has been changed, I think 2021 for the formation for the guards, but for the formation for the installation for camera, not camera, for alarms, that royal decree was, has seen the light in 1991 and has not been changed since then. Now, I don't know about you, but I think we live now in the 21st digital century and that a royal decree which regulates the formation of people who install technology is quite, yeah, stunning. So, yeah, that's just one example. And you see that because of the huge amount of regulations, the administration struggles with keeping up to date. And yeah, you cannot back social evolution and frame it in the details, certainly not about technology. So I think that's the big issue.

Interviewer : Okay. I've heard in past interviews that people sometimes want more strict legislations to have more professional security, private security. What do you think about that?

Interviewé : I think that's quite a strange remark, knowing that for Europe, I think we have the highest quality providers of security services in Europe. And that is thanks to one part, the strict legislation that of the good framework, I think, of course. But I don't think more strict regulation will, more regulation does not equal more quality. I mean, there are other ways to enhance quality in the services. It also depends on where. Now, it also depends. I mean, on client side, clients are always sceptical and are always strong in their analyse about services delivered, whether that is security, whether it's cleaning, whether it's other services that you give. Of course, security is a very important service because clients give that very much importance, which is logical. Of course, they outsource this, and of course, they want good partners for this. But at the same time, maybe, Hélène, it's quite interesting to also say that if clients that some clients, it's a two-way st. Like what you ask me, it sounds like a one-way st, but it's a two-way st. I mean, if clients do not want to pay for good quality services, well, if you if you if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys. And you cannot ask for high quality security with low quality workers. And so there's another problem in the market is that clients go for the lowest price bidder. And if you go for the lowest price bidder, it's very difficult to, yeah, I do not want to say this, but to complain about services delivered. And I think that's also something which is happening in the market. And it takes 2 to tango because also all companies have a stake in it. Are responsible because, yeah, they want to have the contract, you know, and they're willing to have the contract and and and lower their prices. So, it's, yeah, it's not a race to the bottom, but it makes that clients complain about maybe not the highest quality of security services, which is for me more nuanced, because we have in comparison with many, many countries in Europe, I think already one of the best quality services. That said, that's one thing that is a private site of people, of clients who want contracts. We have also the public sector site. And there's a problem, like a few peanuts you get monkeys, is the public procurement regulation, the public procurement directive on EU level. And you know EU level has to be transposed to national legislation, which means that national legislation cannot change if the EU legislation is not changed. And the EU legislation for public procurement says that it has to be the lowest bidder and there are

no quality requirements. And that means that all government contracts are actually given to the lowest bidder. So it's quite appalling that public services maybe ask the highest the highest demands or quality and whatever, but they give the bad example to work on the lowest bidder. So I think that at European Union level, it is, they have taken the initiative to change the European legislation. And hopefully they put more quality criteria for like essential services like security. Maybe it's a different thing if you want to buy vending machines, like I don't know, but maybe it's a different thing to buy in security services and that you need very much high quality criteria to make sure that these are the right companies who can deliver the personnel, who can deliver the material, who have the infrastructure, who have everything that's needed to make sure they can deliver the mission as it was asked.

Interviewer : Okay. Okay. And what form can take the partnerships between public and private sectors?

Interviewé : It can be on a contract level, it means that you outsource and private sector takes contracts and do the tasks, or it can be on a more equal level from a public-private partnership. That, for instance, for events, for example, that the the organisation who is planning the event takes a contract with private security, but that next to public security, they work on an equal level, everyone within their own competences and boundaries. Unfortunately, it's um, there are four. There are good examples of about partnering, but no, there are good examples about working together, but that's not partnering up. I mean, if you have an event, private security is at the front line doing access control, but still police is also there to do other tasks, but they are not partnering up. They are doing just different tasks there, work together, but it's not partnered up. It's not an example of a PPP. But yeah, but the biggest examples of PPP are of course in outsourcing and contracting to private security. But yeah, I think there's lots of more to do than there's done now.

Interviewer : Okay, and what could be the advantages and disadvantages of PPPs?

Interviewé : But I think the advantages are clear, I think, yeah, I mean, um... People who think that public security services are still the only one who can handle society's problems live in the past. And that's it. Maybe everyone Maybe everyone really focusing on the on the on the problems on maybe the risks not but on the problems or the ideological line of not working with the private sector, maybe have to comprehend that most people now already spent. No, let me say this. People spend less and less time in public domain. They spent the times on a private domain, which means your homes, your work environment, your leisure environment, your travel environment. And yeah, you name it. These are private entities or semi-private or semi-public, whatever. And public sector is for the public domain. And of course, everything else, what happens on the private side, what which is panel law and everything else, of course afterwards come the public sector. Yeah, so I

think it's very important for everyone to realise that if public and private do not connect up, that's not about private, private, private. No, I mean, I start to hate the difference between public and private, you know? They say, well, you know, probably private. I mean, it's like if they speak about private security, they already polarize, you know, they already put the two next to each other. I mean, it makes no sense, you know, in this time of age and this complex society and how things evolve, how stress evolve, how criminality phenomena evolve. It's a way about how you work together, how you put public and private together in a more, in a new model or new form of thinking about searching for solutions. And yeah, so what are the risks? Of course, I mean, public have their responsibilities, they have their monopoly on certain competences which have to be at the state level. No one even doubts it. But yeah.

Yeah.

Interviewer : Okay. And what are the essential elements for a successful partnership?

Interviewé : **W**hich one which is always repeated is distrust. But yeah, they say, well, trust is one thing. Another one are people, I mean, individuals. You have to be like a visionaire at the public side to say, I want to work with private security. But to prevent that successful, because a PPP can be very successful, to make sure that a PPP or a public-private, I don't know what for collaboration can be structural, you have to incorporate this in your structures and make it more official. And if people, and that's what we see all the time, you have some visionaries and they say, well, oh, we're going to do this, we're going to do that. And you will say, oh, well, great idea. Wow, look at him, look at him. What's he doing? What's he doing?

And then he's gone. Because he leaves the organization, he's going to do another function, and the PPP collapse, you know. And yeah, I don't think that's a smart way of working together. That's not a smart way to handle security in a society. So I think trust is, of course, an issue, but trust is in the legal framework also. I mean framework.... I mean, if a people, if a guy is a police officer, I'm also going to say, oh, I don't know you. I mean, he's a police officer, you know? I have to trust him and it has to be in his actions that to prove me wrong, you know? And otherwise, like I'm just a sceptical citizen on an anti-authorian attitude towards someone. And that has to be the same towards us. You know, that's private security. There is a legislation. We are screened. We are, by the way, we are better screened than public, than the public police. You know, people can get people...I refused to work in the private security sector, but they can start as a police officer. So please question me and say, well, whoa, how is this possible? We get screened each five year, everyone. That's not with the police. You know, if someone makes mistakes, they get fired. Okay, show me some examples of people who got fired at a police institution the last weeks, the last months. I don't think there are many, you know. So if it's about trust, they have to trust the legal framework, you know. And of course, trust the companies, yes, of of course, we do not have one private security company. We are no competition, by the way, to the police anyway. We are complementary. Yes, we can do tasks on a competition level, but these are tasks that police wants to outsource. That's something else. If they outsource, it's not obliged, by the way. You know, you can say, oh, private security in the law, now you can use drones. Yeah, okay, but police are not obliged. It's not mandatory to use drones of private security sector. They can still use their own drones. So it's still it is still a free choice of public security to work or to work not together with the private sector.

Interviewer : Okay, and do you think the communication and the knowledge of each other is enough?

Interviewé : No, and there is, that's why last week there has been a circular published by the Minister about explaining which police tasks could already be done within our legislative framework, which do not need changes in the legislative framework and which are not.

You're not, you do not use, you do not need to use police competences, you know, to fulfil these tasks. So that's why they make up the circular. And it helps police leaders to think about which tasks they do and which people they use for this. And maybe can get help with the private sector. So the reason why this is done is because they do not know. And also with this circular, not everyone will know tomorrow. And maybe next year, maybe over five years, there has been changes in police leadership and nobody reads the circular anymore. You know, I mean, it's how life goes, unfortunately, but they don't know. Some know, but most not. If I speak to belief leaders, they always say, oh, you can do this, oh, you can do that, you know, like. So yeah, and if you don't know each other, then yeah, you don't get called to ask for, can you do this or can you do that?

Interviewer : In a daily perspective, could we say that the private security could be an effective and useful source of information? For the police.

Interviewé : But yes, of course, I think we already sit on a lot of data. I mean, first...

Several things. Our security, we have over 20,000 security officers in Belgium. If you put this next to the police, it's not a neglectable amount. And these are people who have eyes and ears everywhere where they are not. So I think it could be very helpful to put up partnerships and to deploy private security offices on some places or use eyes and ear which are already deployed at some sensitive areas, I don't know.

The first second is that we have a lot of data, camera footage, alarm detection, analysis, so this is quite...even a bigger amount, I think, than the police has. And it could be could be pretty of that could be of value for the police. But don't fall off your share, but there is no digital way to give our data to the police. It does not exist, you know. If our people still have to pick up the telephone and call to the emergency centre of the police. So, there are no direct lines. Rather that is not possible because of different IT infrastructures, rather it's not something they want. I don't know, but it's, yeah, I think it's a lacking, it's a gap in the management of data in the 21st century about how to go on with the security information now.

Interviewer : Okay, so there's no network existing, but it could be a very useful and a necessity to create this. OK, yeah, and for the partnerships, it could be a it is, it's an essential, in fact.

Interviewé : Yeah. Well, yes, of course. I mean, it's also there, it's always a one-way st. I mean, private gifts to public, but public never returns to private, you know? So private data is wanted, and they want it. They do not, they get some information, but it's not the data, it's just information they that we give to them because they ask for it, or because we work together in a partnership. If we

work together on prevention schemes for like house theft, then they then we tell them. If we see suspicious vehicles, if we see suspicious people, they will never tell to us that we have to watch out for this number plate or this vehicle with this color. It's just a simple example, but that's how we work together, you know. It's always private to public, but never public to private. And it's sometimes very difficult, you know.

Interviewer: Mhm. Yeah. Okay. And what are your thoughts on arming security guards?

Interviewé : Well, we are already armed. We do armed missions for different clients, mostly in the critical infrastructure segment, the military, the NATO, the embassies. So, yeah, we already are, so, and it's well-regulated. I mean, it's not... Sometimes you read in the press, yeah, armed and like if that... They throw weapons to us and say, oh, yeah, here's a weapon, do whatever you want. No. It's well regulated and it has a special royal degree on licences for carrying, licences for possession for the companies, how they have to store the weapons, how many weapons they can have. You know, in the private sector, you cannot have, let's say, oh, I have 100 people working as security guard. I want 500 guns. No, it doesn't work like this. You can only have, I think, it's a maximum of 10% of your personal limit on your total personal dispositive. So it is really strict regulated and is also strictly controlled. So people of the inspectorate of Minister of Interior, they come to your companies and they come into your safest, in your safe where you store the weapons to look if the weapons are there, to look how they are stored, to look if they are registered, to look who has access, to look if this is secured by an alarm detection, by camera detection, whatever, you know. So yes, we are armed. And it's not like, oh, we are armed. No, we are armed, we are well regulated. We are also not, we do not have any possibilities to use a firearm for whenever that we feel police like, you know, just like police officers can only use their arm for self-defence or when they are in a critical situation, we can only use this for self-defence. Which means that there really has to be someone in front of me with an AK, with a gun. Not with a knife on 10 meter, you know, not one climbing defence. It has to be self-defence for me, then I can pull my gun. That's why I think... There has not a lot of shots been fired in the private security sector because it is so limited, but still it's requested. It's also needed because Yeah, society evolves and client demands evolved and it's not just client demands on the private side, it's client demands on the public side. European institutions, international institutions, they don't want just security guards, they want armed security guards. So, and I think that's, yeah. Of course, we are not... We are not into propaganda for nobody wants guns. Nobody wants guns. I mean, nobody wants guns in-house. If you lose a gun, you have a problem. If a guard shoots someone and it is an accident, you have a problem, you know? So no one is in favour of guns. But guns are requested, guns are needed, and guns are regulated. And so guns are accepted in the course of our jobs. But it's really, really stricted to only some activities for some locations where we work. But of course, it's Brussels and it's Belgium, Brussels, European capital, but lots of international and European institutions. So it's normal that we have maybe a higher amount concentrated of security officers guarded than other European countries.

Interviewer : Okay, yeah. And you mentioned control. Do you think the control is enough or maybe to present, to restrict on the sector?

Interviewé : We are in big favour of controls. If you want to work in a security environment, if you want to put your services in the market, you have to accept that if you want to work on a domain of which many people still think this is a government task, then you should accept that there is the government who controls you. Period. Basta. But you can ask yourself how these controls are organized. And I think there is still lots of work to be done. I mean, you have 150 security companies, more or less, and only maybe 8, maybe 9, maybe 10, they cover 90% of the market.

So it means you have like lots of private security companies who are very, very little. They have only one people, two people, three people. They work, of course, in nightlife economy. They are the ones, the bouncers, like they say. They work in the discotheques and the dancing cafes and I don't know, whatever they do. But the problem of the sector is not in the top 10 companies. I mean, they have a name, they have an international image, they have stakeholders, they have lots of international, European and national norms to uphold, to be compliant to. So it's not in any one of their interests to do things wrong. Which does not mean that they do not get penalised or do not get any sanctions when there are controls, of course. But I cannot find, maybe you can tell me, I cannot find for the private security law - not all laws, but for the pipe security law - I cannot find any big non-compliance of a private security law. None, but in the tail of the market of the other 100 companies, the small companies who do events and nightlife economy. There I would be very interested to know how things are handled and happening because they do not have the structure, they maybe do not have the finance to respect this huge framework law with all these royal decrees. Because the big companies, they have their organization, they have this organisation over the four years, you know, they made-up a learning curve. They had a learning curve, they had grown pains, but now they're on a level they can observe all this regulation. If the administration or the minister puts new regulation, these are big enough to observe. But it's not so for the smaller companies. So I would be very interested to how do the smaller companies, and now we only speak about the private security law, the Belgian law on private security, but we also have more than 50 labour collective agreements. And these define how people are paid. And it's one thing maybe as a criminologist to look into partnerships, to look into how private security is respecting the law.

But do these small companies also respect the social regulations? Yeah. We do know that the big companies do. Again, they have the structure. They have big human resource departments. If they do not, they lose people. They do not want to lose people. They want these, they seek people. Of course they lose people. You know, it's a flexible, it's a flexible job, you know, and people, not everyone wants, lots of people start as a private security guard, but they don't want to end as a private security guard, you see. So it's like people starting their careers or whatever, but like the smaller companies, that's something of big interest for a federation and for everyone working in the industry. So, and that's where the problem, I think, of the image and the problem of is located.

Interviewer : Okay. OK, and do you think people are ready to work together, really, or not yet?

Interviewé: Would you repeat that question and ask me more in detail what is it that you're looking for?

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm just thinking about. If people, and when I say people, I think about the police, the security, private and public security, if they are really ready to work together daily, Without any. I don't know how to explain that.

If it's really possible to imagine partnerships in their daily work, and if they are ready to accept that.

Interviewé :Well, you know, it's... I don't know if that's the case. I hope so. And I think it I think that it's time they should, but it's bigger than only the private security companies doing guarding tasks. It's also about cyber security. It's about working together in the digital environment. It's about private investigations. I mean, if you do not collaborate with private security, I'm afraid that one moment public security becomes quite irrelevant because it comes too costly. They always need more budget, which is normal. Everything evolves, but there's never enough budget. There's never enough budget, so, and of course, private security doesn't work for free. Of course, they don't have to work for free. **But** they do it on another scale, they do it on another way, they can do it on a more efficient way, that if the government would be ready to outsource tasks or to seek partnerships, I think they could quite do well and even not earn money, but ... only private money, which becomes public through taxes. And it means that everyone expects that the government works on an efficient way with the public money and also in security. But at the same time, I think it's important that we spent more on public security. We spent more on public security, not to let them do more, but to let them work more efficiently, to give them the equipment they need, to give them the people they need, but not to do everything themselves. We as a private security companies, we only work well in an environment where there is a strong public security. And that means that if we need security, if we need police, we have to need to call them and we have to expect that they come. If we need a private security company, it's nothing in a...in a failed state or in a weak democratic state, it's nothing. I mean, but in a strong liberal democratic state, I think there's a bright future for private security, as long as there's also a strong public security, but one which does not ask money to have 1000 extra people to do tasks where everyone asks, why is this something the police is doing? And so they can focus on something where you and I really have afraid of, you know, that is happening to us.

Interviewer : Okay, and on a more specific topic, the terrorism, do you think the private security can play a role in the fight or the prevention against terrorism?

Interviewé : Sure. Sure, and I think that that's on a different way, of course. We are active on a more prevention way. So if it is on a fight for terrorism, where it is to search and arrest, then there's nothing where we can play a role. But there has been during the threats around the assaults in Paris, and the threats during our fortunate attack on XX (?) and Malbec, there has been a big rise in deployment of private security guards on centre areas, also schools, government buildings, and so on. So yes, on a prevention scale, we can do it. We can also deliver the technology to detect wrongful behaviour. We can detect our software technologies... give us the possibility to see and detect on a quite early stage what's happening and whether this needs police intervention or not. Also, I think that private security and that is private security in the most broad sense of the word, that every security department in a company, in every company, has to play a role in early detection of radicalization, of being aware of insider threat activities, and they can play a role.

Um...in the prevention of terrorism in that way, I think. Also, don't forget that for terrorism, the banking industry which are also private, have also a big part to play in detection of financial flows of money going there or nowhere or suspected transfers. So, and there's also a big but also where the banks actually do some work for the government, because they, of course, they are obliged to, but their intelligence and counter measures to, it is also always linked to terrorism. So....

Interviewer : Okay. Okay. That's it for me. Would you like to add anything else?

Interviewé : No, I hope it was helpful for you. So yeah, I only ask, I always ask if you have finished your thesis and it's with Professor Seron, I think. Okay, that's perfect. That if you have finished your thesis, and you think it's well worth of spreading it, then please send me a copy. I would really appreciate it.

Interviewer : Okay, no problem for that.

Interviewé : All right, I wish you all the best. Good luck with the with the finalising your thesis and with the exams, and say hi to Professor Seron.

Interviewer : I'll say that to him. Thank you very much for your time. Bye.

