

**Police Communication and Citizen Initiatives on Web 2.0**  
The Effects on Social Visibility

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# POLICE COMMUNICATION AND CITIZEN INITIATIVES ON WEB 2.0: THE EFFECTS ON SOCIAL VISIBILITY

## ABSTRACT

This research provides an exploratory overview of the connection between the police, citizens participating in crowd-sourced policing and/or digital vigilantism on Web 2.0 and the concept of visibility in the context of the Netherlands. These concepts – policing, citizen policing, and visibility – can be considered as interwoven, however, in which ways has remained unclear so far. Based on the idea that the online world provides new effortless ways of communication and thereby stimulates citizen activities such as digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing, this thesis looked into how the police, an organization that only recently embraced the potential of Web 2.0, responded to this development in the Netherlands, and how this interaction and the activities by each group have impacted the social visibility of the police, these citizens, as well as that of suspects and/or missing persons. The central question for this research therefore was: In which ways do citizens initiatives – such as crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism – and the police influence each other's actions as well as the social visibility of the police, suspects and/or missing persons, and citizens themselves, through their Web 2.0 communication? Data gathering through qualitative interviews with six Rotterdam police representatives as well as four citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing and thematic analysis of this data led to four main themes, namely Web 2.0, police communication, citizen participation, and visibility. The themes confirmed that Web 2.0 stimulated citizen's willingness to help out the police, either by responding to their call for help or starting a supplementary action themselves, while at the same time showing that it has led to an increase in the police's willingness to share information and ask citizens for help. Due to this increase in deliberate police communication as well as in citizen actions due to the lack of effort and time it requires, the police and suspects and/or missing persons have moreover become more visible as information on these groups has increased, is visible on several platforms, and is shared more often. Additionally, activities on Web 2.0 by citizens have also increased the visibility of these citizens despite the possibility of anonymity.

**KEYWORDS:** *Web 2.0, Visibility, Citizen Initiatives, Digital Vigilantism, Crowd-sourced Policing, Online Communication, Police, Suspects, Missing Persons*

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Abstract and Keywords

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The police: you see them driving around in their police cars, during a night out in the city center dressed in their uniforms, and you recognize a police station when you see one. But are they really optimally visible as well as approachable? If you need their help after someone has broken into your shop or you have been assaulted, do you really feel like you can put your trust in them to find the person(s) responsible for this? Or do you start your own investigation as well, with or without any regard for the visibility of the suspect and yourself? What about when the police asks for your help in identifying a criminal or providing information about a robbery? Do you help the police, do you ignore it completely, or do you ignore the police and try to solve the case yourself by essentially starting a witch-hunt and organizing people to find and catch a criminal? The answer to these questions differs from person to person, but possibilities for the police to involve citizens or for citizens to start their own actions seem to expand with the increase of Internet users and possibilities to communicate and organize through Web 2.0 platforms.

Essentially these days we live in two worlds, the offline world and the online world, worlds that are increasingly seen as closely connected and therefore this division is questioned by many in contemporary literature (Wittel, 2000; Wellman, B., Boase, J., & Chen, W., 2002). What this thesis explores is how police visibility as well as the increasing visibility of suspects is stimulated by Web 2.0 – the form of Internet which focuses on interaction for instance through social media and weblogs and which has caused the Internet to become more embedded into our day to day lives (Fuchs, 2008). Therefore the online and the offline world has started to blur more and more. At the same time, Web 2.0 has given citizens an increased (anonymous) voice in the world (Fuchs, 2008). It can therefore be argued that Web 2.0 is a place where the police should also be active, and thus communicate with the citizens and listen to what they have to say. Essentially Web 2.0 has offered many new ways for communication next to the older 1.0 technique of for instance e-mail as well as offline forms of communication. This research therefore focuses on the ways in which the police in the Netherlands, and specifically in Rotterdam, makes itself and the work it does visible through Web 2.0, how they use the opportunities Web 2.0 provides, and on how they communicate with their citizens, in particular in the online world. Since communication about suspects and ongoing cases is part of this communication, how citizens have been trying to identify suspects or solve cases themselves these days also plays an important role in this research.

This thesis focuses on citizen participation by examining two phenomena. On the one hand there are people who try to help the police by identifying a suspect or share information in the search for a missing person, something that this thesis will refer to as crowd-sourced policing, a term used by Schneider and Trottier (2012). On the other hand there are the citizens who take it a step further and take the initiative to do more that inform the police of who the suspect is and turn to digital vigilantism, in which citizens make suspects as visible as possible to the whole world, often with information such as their full name and place of residence, as a way to punish the suspect in the online world outside of the justice system (Trottier, 2014). This thesis looks into how these two phenomena are visible in the Netherlands and how the police has reacted to them so far. Does the police, in particular the Rotterdam police, for instance, make use of these citizen initiatives or does it see these actions as a threat? And how does the police play a role in decisions made by citizens to participate in these actions? Is their goal to help the police or rather to take control and sentence the criminal themselves rather than leaving this up to the justice department?

While citizen participation has potentially negative aspects – such as sharing of incorrect identification and possible naming and shaming – as well as potentially positive aspects to it – such as an increase in reach of a police message and more people who can search for a missing person – one effect it always has is the increased visibility of suspects or missing persons. This increased social visibility can be closely tied to the visibility of the police, as this is the party that usually leads the search for the suspect and the missing person and traditionally was the party that had the most control over the visibility of the searched party although they now have to also work with an increased visibility of suspects and missing persons created by citizens. Because of this, this thesis connects information on online visibility, especially of the police and of suspects, to the two phenomena of crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism in the Netherlands to see how police and suspect visibility are tied to these citizen activities. Furthermore, this research revolves around the question if citizen participation is due to police visibility, and their call for help, or rather if it is based on a lack of police visibility, and therefore a reaction to this lack of visible progress by the police and thus triggering acts of vigilantism (Haas, De Keijser & Bruinsma, 2013).

Citizen participation already existed before the creation of Web 2.0. Citizen policing in the form of neighborhood watches is one example (Van Steden, Van Caem, & Boutellier, 2011;

Johnston, 2001). Another is the use of wanted-posters that allowed citizens to help out the police, something that can be called crowd-sourced policing (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). Acts that take citizen participation one step further and essentially take place outside the legal system have been around for many years as well, for instance when citizens decide to hunt down someone whom caused collective outrage and turn to vigilante actions. Vigilantism already existed centuries ago and has been present in many different forms and therefore the reaction of the police to this phenomena has differed on many occasions as well. One form of vigilantism in the United States was, for instance, visible in the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, while another examples could be found in the acts vigilantes undertook together to catch a thief or an outlaw as early as in the nineteenth century in Northern America to regulate crime in an informal way (Johnston, 1996). These days vigilantism is still visible, for instance, in border security groups at the U.S.-Mexican border. What these cases have in common is “the essence of vigilantism – the taking of action not formally sanctioned by society by people who aren’t specially designated to do so” (Moulton, 2011, p. 197). Essentially, vigilantes take it upon themselves to act as the police in tracking people down and as a judge in determining how these people should be punished.

Citizen participation in the form of crowd-sourced policing as well as acts of vigilantism have always been tied to the media in the past. News media reports of certain events have, for instance, caused collectively offended feelings that have led to acts of vigilantism. Calls for help of citizens by the police in television programs like the Dutch *Opsporing Vermist* in the solving of criminal cases have existed for many years as well. Moreover, tabloid journalism, for instance by *News of the World*, have named and shamed pedophiles in the past (Örnebring, 2006). These days this connection to media is even more evident since crowd-sourced policing as well as vigilantism have turned to Web 2.0 to find information as well as to share it. Essentially one could see digital vigilantism as the 2.0 version of vigilantism in which Web 2.0 has a central role, as it is essential for their communication and organization. The entire process of vigilantism takes place on the Internet now, rather than in the offline world – although it can still lead to offline effects as will be discussed later. Overall, digital vigilantism campaigns as well as crowd-sourced policing initiatives no longer need traditional news media to really launch their campaigns, whereas this used to be the case with former forms of vigilantism, such as vigilantism in tabloid newspapers.

Identifying someone on one's own seems to appeal to more and more people now that the search for the offender can be done in the relatively anonymous and easily accessible online world, that provides access to for instance tools of communication that require little effort (Downey, 2012). This can be done after a call for help of the police, but can also be on the initiative of a citizen. Issues that collectively offended people, from small objections like wrongly parked cars, to more criminal offences like thefts, and to more shocking offenses like extreme violence, can now thus lead to both online and offline consequences. While when people participate in crowd-sourced policing usually make the suspect visible through a photograph, further information on the suspect is usually passed on to the police so they can arrest the suspect and so that the justice department can determine his or her punishment. Digital vigilantism, on the other hand, can lead to online naming and shaming, which can lead to offline repercussions when address information is made public as well (Trottier, 2014). Suspects are made visible in the online world to the largest extent, and possibly in the offline world as well. One could therefore see digital vigilantism as an extension of vigilantism that makes the relation between vigilantism and the police even more complex as it adds another way in which citizens participate, leading to useful information and maybe the apprehension of suspects as well as possible negative effects, for instance by complicating the case in court. Based on this this thesis works with the expectation that the police looks more favorably towards crowd-sourced policing, but the results section will show if this is indeed the case with the Rotterdam police.

Since digital vigilantism and online crowd-sourced policing are recent phenomena – based on the historical roots of the offline versions of these phenomena – as is the online visibility of the Dutch police, research into these topics is still limited. The exact way in which these three concepts are connected in real life experiences and if these groups influence each other's motivations to be active online remains unclear, especially in the context of the Netherlands – a lack of understanding this thesis hopes to solve in part. To achieve this, this thesis works with the initial understanding that the increasing online presence of citizens on Web 2.0 means that the police also needs to be visibly active on this medium, since a lack of visibility may lead to valuable intelligence missed and a lack of trust in the police by its citizens and an increase in support for citizens led campaigns such as vigilantism as is argued to have been the case with traditional vigilantism in the past by Haas, De Keijser and Bruinsma (2013). The research for this thesis explores what indeed are the reasons for the online police presence, how



communication with citizens plays a role in police activities these days, and what role they play in initiating crowd-sourced policing initiatives or digital vigilantism as well as to which reactions and results this can lead to by the police as well as within the justice department. Furthermore, the research focuses on how Web 2.0 thus stimulates police visibility as perceived by the police, as well as how it stimulates suspect visibility originating from the police or from citizens in the form of crowd-sourced policing initiatives or digital vigilantism, while citizens can possibly work around their visibility in this new form of vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing.

Drawing on information obtained through interviews with the Rotterdam police as well as with people from different areas of the Netherlands participating in citizen initiatives to identify criminals or find missing persons, this thesis aims to answer the following research question:

**RQ1:** In which ways do citizens initiatives – such as crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism – and the police influence each other’s actions as well as the social visibility of the police, suspects and/or missing persons, and citizens themselves, through their Web 2.0 communication?

In order to answer this research question important sub-questions are:

**SQ1:** Which Web 2.0 platforms and practices are used by the Rotterdam police to communicate with its citizens about criminal and missing persons cases?

**SQ2:** In which ways have police and citizen activities on Web 2.0 shaped the perceived visibility of the police?

**SQ3:** In which ways have police and citizen activities on Web 2.0 shaped the perceived visibility of suspects and/or missing persons?

**SQ4:** In which ways have citizen activities – like crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism – on Web 2.0 shaped the perceived visibility of these citizens themselves?

**SQ5:** How does the perceived visibility created by citizen initiatives influence the police perception of citizen participation as either a threat to or an ally?

**SQ6:** Which factors influence the decision of citizens to turn to citizen initiatives such as crowd-sourced policing or digital vigilantism in the Netherlands?

The aim of these sub-questions is to form an answer to the research question. The first sub-question will look into police communication to its citizens in particular. Which platforms are used for which reasons and how has the evolution in communication impacted its visibility as well as their role in suspect visibility. Furthermore, it will show if citizen participation is

something that they keep in mind with their communication approach on Web 2.0. Sub-question two, three and four will determine in which ways Web 2.0 actually impacts the perceived visibility of these different groups. The fifth sub-question focuses on the view of the police on citizens participation more thoroughly and will try to determine if the positives of the visibility created by citizens outweigh the negative aspects or rather the other way around. Finally, based on the information provided by the interviews with citizen participants, sub-question six will look at the issue the other way around and determine why citizens work on solving crimes themselves and if this is possibly a reaction to the lack of visibility of the police. All these questions will thus portray how web 2.0 influences police communication as well as citizen initiatives and how this in turn impacts (their approaches towards) social visibility of different groups.

Although the specific subfields on digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing are slowly becoming more substantial, the specific relation between the police and these two types of citizens participation in the Netherlands is not yet researched and therefore an innovative research topic that forms the basis for this thesis. Furthermore it will add to the concept of visibility created on Web 2.0. This research cannot only be seen as scientifically relevant, but also contributes on a social level. One aim of this thesis is to see if the police is still lacking in some ways with its visibility and communication towards citizens. This information could thus be beneficial for the police. Another aim is to map out why people turn to crowd-sourced policing or digital vigilantism and whether it is used as a substitute for the police or rather as a supplementary action. Overall, this focus provides the Dutch police with a clearer picture of citizens participation motivations. At the same time it also makes possible problems within the police visible, for instance the splintered communication within the police in Rotterdam, so that recommendation for change can be made by the participants of this research that will receive a copy of this thesis. Since this thesis also maps out the ways in which these different groups are connected it may also lead to new forms of teamwork between government and citizens. Furthermore, this thesis may give citizens a clearer view on how the police works, and what choices in terms of visibility of the police itself as well as of suspects and/or missing persons are made, especially with bigger criminal cases. This could make the public more understanding when communication is slow since they now know what considerations play a role within the police organization.

Additionally, the results of this thesis possible will make people participating in crowd-sourced policing or digital vigilantism think about the effect their behavior has, which may also impact the future relationship between citizens and the police. Citizens will be shown the positive effects of their help when information is communicated directly to the police but also will be made aware of the of the downsides of Web 2.0, and citizen initiatives in particular. Not only can this thesis make citizens initiating or actively participating in these phenomena aware of how they could act more effective, it can possibly also give the rest of the Dutch society a better picture of citizen initiatives such as digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing and thus nuance their view of what they do as bad of good. This could possibly make people more aware of the usefulness of sharing information for example and may help avoid some of the harms associated with these types of initiatives, such as categorical discrimination when the suspect seems to be Polish – an example of what can happen as mentioned by the shopkeeper whom preferred to stay anonymous.

This thesis will now continue with a chapter containing a literature review on the essential concepts in this research to sketch the situation based on existing academic works. Concepts such as Web 2.0, digital vigilantism, crowd-sourced policing and (new) visibility will be explained thoroughly and linked to the police in term of how they influence police work and specifically police communication towards citizens. In chapter three the research design will be explained in detail, focusing on why the method of qualitative interviews was chosen, how the sample was created based on two groups, namely police representatives and active citizens, and how the gathered data was analyzed through the use of thematic analysis. The fourth chapter will present the result of this thematic analysis and will show which main findings were found in connection to the sub-questions. This thesis will end with a final chapter consisting of the last conclusions that can be drawn and that will answer the research question of this thesis. Furthermore, it will reflect on the process of creating this thesis, the obstacles that were faced, and the ways in which this thesis could have been improved. Additionally it will provide recommendations for further research based on the information found in this research.

## **Chapter 2: Previous Research and Theories**

As shown in the , this thesis revolves around the ways in which visibility plays a role on Web 2.0 in relation to both the police, citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism, and that of suspected criminals. It is thus of great importance to situate the research within existing literature and explain essential concepts for this thesis more thoroughly, in particular digital vigilantism, crowd-sourced policing, Web 2.0, and visibility. This chapter will therefore firstly provide a more comprehensive scientific understanding of digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing, two theoretical concepts in which the abstract concept of visibility is present. Further sections in this chapter will tie those concepts in with the developments on the Internet and how these developments have an impact both police and suspect visibility. Additionally, attention will be paid to how police around the world involves citizens in police work and how (a lack of) confidence in the police is important in these two types of citizen participation.

### **2.1 Vigilantism in the Offline World and in the Online World**

Citizens often have a certain view on police cases and justice in general which influence how they react to the police. Some are willing to help out the police when they are asked for help, while others start their own campaigns to fight injustice or identify and/or apprehend suspected criminals. Vigilantism, or “eigenrichting” as the Dutch call it, is a well-researched topic and many different definitions have been created (Johnston, 1996). While vigilantism can be framed entirely as a form of social harm, this thesis works with Johnston’s (1996) nuanced definition that focuses on six essential features of vigilantism since this also leaves space for a more positive interpretation of vigilantism. He argues that vigilantism should not be seen as a spontaneous act, but rather an act that requires planning (Johnston, 1996). Moreover, citizens choose to participate in this activity, making it a voluntary act rather than a mandatory one. (Johnston, 1996). Johnston (1996) furthermore states that vigilantism requires “a form of ‘autonomous citizenship’ and, as such, constitutes a social movement” (p. 220). This thus means that the group of volunteers that are working together to react to some sort of wrongdoing with vigilantism as their aim, work without involving any law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, vigilantism involves the threat of the use of force, or even the actual use of force (Johnston, 1996). A fifth element that is of importance is the fact that vigilante groups react to something that can be considered a threat to the established order (Johnston, 1996). The concluding element of Johnston’s (1996) definition is

that vigilantes aim to further control crime and offer security, next to what the authorities are offering (Johnston, 1996). Vigilantism is often connected to retributive justice as it concerns a “violent reaction by an individual or group to the perpetrator(s) or alleged perpetrator(s) of an offence” in which the idea of “righting a wrong” on behalf of the victim plays a role (Johnston, 2001, p. 967).

Vigilantism can be connected to the idea that the public-private and the state-society divide is increasingly being transgressed these days in democracies like the United States (Walsh, 2014, p. 238). Public institutions, such as the government, interact more and more with private organizations, leading to private organizations, and thus ordinary citizens, working on tasks previously prescribed solely to the government. Walsh (2014) illustrates this by referring to the example of citizens policing the border with Mexico. In the case of immigration control in the United States, Walsh (2014) talks of the deputization, responsabilization and autonomization of citizens (p. 242). With deputization he refers to the creation of “institutionalized partnerships between government authorities and private citizens” (Walsh, 2014, p. 242). Responsibilization on the other hand “authorizes and encourages citizen participation – often through extensive technical, logistical and financial support – but on a voluntary basis” (Walsh, 2014, p. 242). Finally, autonomization occurs when citizens organize themselves without the government asking them to and undertake (illegal) action (Walsh, 2014). Essentially people involved in autonomization are involved in the vigilante organizations as explained by Johnston (2001). Walsh (2014) even argues that vigilantes, “while operating without official authorization, the organizations do not perceive their actions as overriding or transgressing the legal order” but as “exemplary citizens fulfilling duties, the government is unable and unwilling to perform” (p. 249). Essentially, as argued by Johnston (2001) the problem with mobilizing the public is that “alternative modes of ‘autonomous’ citizenship might also be encouraged, typically in the form of vigilantism” (p. 967), often the mode that the police would like to prevent at all costs. As argued by Van Steden, Van Caem and Boutellier (2011) in the specific context of the Netherlands, this public-private divide is eroding as well since “the police and judicial authorities no longer bear the sole responsibility for maintaining public order – if they ever did” (p. 434). They, however, do talk largely about partnerships between the government, especially in the form of the police, and the public, thus not referring to vigilante actions. The results section of this thesis will show if this public-private divide is indeed transgressed in the Netherlands and

whether one could argue that citizens are taking on duties of the state when they are asked to do so, or on their own initiative.

Previous research connected to vigilantism in particular focuses largely on the aspect of naming and shaming, for instance through vigilantism in tabloid newspapers (Pawson, 2010; Critcher, 2002). Academic articles are, for example, written on the media crusades of underage prostitution and pedophiles in tabloid papers and how this influenced the public and the government (Örnebring, 2006). The practice of naming and shaming, an important part of vigilantism, was applied in tabloid papers by publishing information of sexual offenders, such as name, age, the crime of which they were convicted, and place of residence. Not only has naming and shaming been a key feature in research on tabloid newspapers, it has also been connected to protests against violations of human rights (Hafner-Burton, 2008), thus showing that many acts of vigilantism, and concepts within this theory such as naming and shaming, cover a broad scope of topics.

The specific connection between policing and vigilantism – on which this research focuses – has been made in previous research focusing on many different parts of the world. Martin (2009), for instance, researched vigilantism in South Africa and how this is a trend that seems to be continuing due to the government's inability to keep its citizens secure. Within the Dutch context, Haas, De Keijser and Bruinsma (2013) have investigated the connection between police responsiveness and the support for acts of vigilantism. Their work shows that if the police response visibly fails in any way, such as a slow response time or inability to do anything, the public becomes more supportive of vigilantism (Haas, De Keijser & Bruinsma, 2013, p. 235). Furthermore, they conclude that in particular cases, for instance when a citizen is the victim of a crime, support for the police could be extremely low due to an inadequate responsiveness and thus lead to a support for vigilantism, although in general the public could still have a positive view of the police. Haas, De Keijser, and Bruinsma (2013) thus show the important role of the police officers that respond to an incident since their response could affect the public support or opposition towards acts of vigilantism.

What these studies have in common is a focus on the offline world. These days, however, the online activities among Dutch citizens are increasing rapidly with an online participation rate of 96% of the population ("Internet Users," 2014). It is therefore not surprising that a new online form of vigilantism is emerging, namely digital vigilantism. This thesis mainly looks into this

new form of vigilantism and focuses on the ways in which digital vigilantism is connected to police practices, police visibility and visibility of suspects. As argued by Slavkovik, Dennis and Fisher (2014) digital vigilantes “engage in a wider range of activities that may or may not result in physical crowd formation”(p. 5) and may thus become a larger phenomenon. Digital vigilantism is defined by Trottier (2014) as “a process where citizens are collectively offended by other citizen activity, and respond through coordinated retaliation on digital media” (p. 60). This concept is also referred to as, for instance, digilantism or internet vigilantism by other scholars (Prins, 2010; Slavkovik, Dennis & Fisher, 2014). Essentially, the Internet thus provides a platform for these people to come into contact with share “a perceived injustice and solicit the help of the digital crowd to seek out the perpetrators and expose their identities to the authorities or to the public” (Slavkovik, Dennis & Fisher, 2014, p. 5). Thus where in previous decades tabloid newspapers, for instance, played a large role in this, nowadays the Internet has become a new medium for vigilantism, a medium no longer only supporting on news media institutions, but also on user generated content, thus leading to a smaller role for the traditional media.

As mentioned previously, vigilantism is often connected to ‘naming and shaming’. This is also the case with digital vigilantism, since the aim of digital vigilantism is often to make the offender visible, which can be done through internet platforms. Information of the targeted individual is often made public, information “which may be retrieved from any number of sources” (Trottier, 2014, p. 61), and that can consist of full names but can even go as far as providing medical information and home addresses. Trottier (2014) states that “this is done with the intention of conventional justice through police or other legal channels, as well as unconventional justice such as online harassment” (p. 61). A view of the police as “ill-equipped to handle crimes and fall short in tracking and prosecuting criminals [can lead to] victims and individuals – not being victimized themselves but angry or frightened – [taking] matters in their own hands by using new technologies” (Prins, 2010, p. 220). The results section of this thesis will determine if this is actually the case in this case study of the Netherlands.

## **2.2 Crowd-sourced Policing**

Crowd-sourced policing shares several characteristics with (digital) vigilantism, but there are some noteworthy differences as well. As explained by Schneider and Trottier (2012)

“crowdsourcing refers to work delegated to an unspecified – and now typically online –

community” (p. 62). With this type of citizen policing one can think of citizen neighborhood watch initiatives or actions from citizens to help identify criminals, like they have done for a long time, for instance by responding to “wanted” posters – posters hung up by the police with pictures of suspects in order to have citizens identify them. Crowd-sourced surveillance is also becoming more common, in which private surveillance companies employ the help of citizens (Trottier, 2013).

Research done by Schneider and Trottier (2012) shows the development of crowd-sourcing by the police by focusing on two riots in Vancouver in 1994 and 2011. After the 1994 riot computer kiosks were installed where the “public was encouraged to view the videos and to enter the name, address, and even workplace of anybody they recognized in order to aid the police in their search for the rioters” (Schneider & Trottier, 2012, p. 59). Essentially the crowd was asked to help with police work. Their research, and other research on citizen involvement with policing (Downey, 2012; Osimo, 2008), has shown that these days more and more of these forms of citizen policing take place in the online world. In the case of the 2011 Vancouver Riots, the role of the crowd increased due to their online activities (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). A Facebook page named “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” was created on which citizens uploaded and identified rioters. As argued by Schneider and Trottier (2012) more and more citizens who were not affiliated with law enforcement agencies were engaging in pseudo-police work on the Internet which they referred to as crowd-sourced policing. Essentially the crowd worked outside of “criminal justice protocol[s]” and tried to “bring suspects to the attention of authorities (and others who may be able to identify them) by posting text, photographs, and other content on Facebook” and other social media sites (Schneider & Trottier, 2012, p. 62).

While Schneider and Trottier (2012), referred to this as crowd-sourced policing this thesis will describe this specific example as an example of digital vigilantism rather than crowd-sourced policing since the aspect of naming and shaming played a role here as well, something that is an element of digital vigilantism rather than crowd-sourced policing. After the 2011 riots, something did happen that this research does see as crowd-sourced policing. The Vancouver police force started a poster campaign accompanied by a website in search of the rioters, asking the citizens for help (“Hockey Riot 2011,” n.d.). Citizens involved in this process were indeed part of an act of crowd-sourced policing initiated by the police. At the same time the police pointed out the “growing danger that the tools of social media will be used to mete out vigilante justice” and



asked citizens to refrain from doing so (“Hockey Riot 2001,” n.d.). All in all one could speak of a sort of lateral surveillance, next to the surveillance by the police, in which citizens also “watch over one another” (Schneider & Trottier, 2012, p. 63), thus showing how digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing can be intertwined in practice.

While Schneider and Trottier (2012), also include naming and shaming in crowd-sourced policing this thesis works with the conceptual distinction that while (digital) vigilantism uses this approach, crowd-sourced policing does not. While crowd-sourced policing initiatives can include providing a name of a suspect to the authorities, naming and shaming to the extent in which this is done in vigilantism initiatives, such as providing contact information and photos, is not the case. Furthermore, crowd-sourced policing can also include initiatives in which the public helps with missing person cases, in which naming and shaming is not an element at all, but in which a police duty is essentially crowd-sourced. Another distinction that this thesis will work with is that while crowd-sourced policing can start as an initiative of the crowd itself, similar to what is the case with (digital) vigilantism, yet crowd-sourced policing also occurs when citizens are asked by the police to help out. What digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing do have in common is “the organization and use of everyday technology by citizens not affiliated with law enforcement” (Schneider & Trottier, 2012, p. 68).

In general this thesis will work with the idea that crowd-sourced policing:

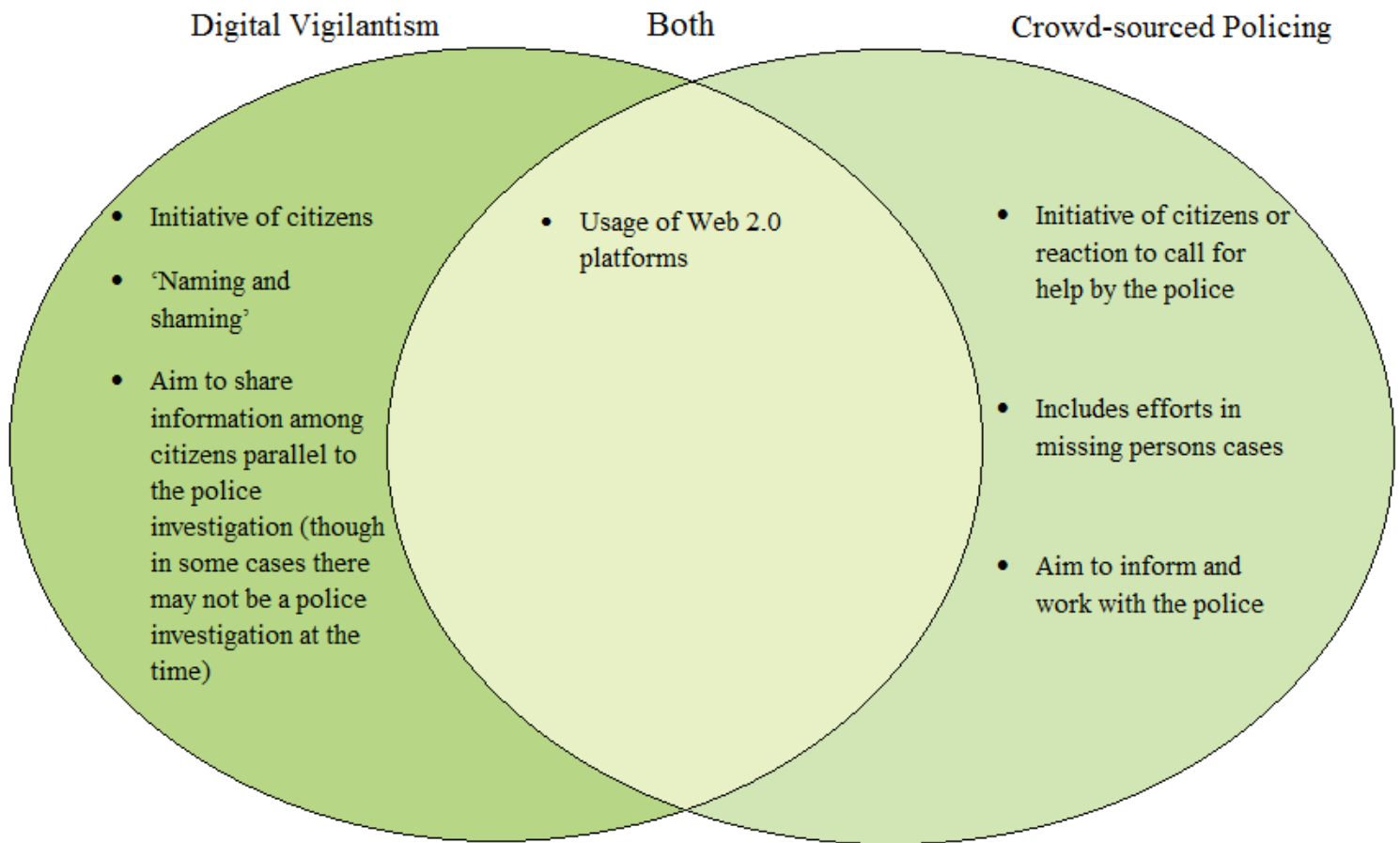
1. Is either an initiative by a citizen, or a reaction to a call of help from the police
2. It can include the attempt to find a missing person
3. The aim is to inform the police, not to name and shame the suspect

In the case of digital vigilantism this is defined as:

1. An initiative of a citizens to investigate and/or share information parallel to the police investigation (though in some cases there may not be a police investigation at the time)
2. Does not include missing persons cases
3. Making the suspect visible is an aim
4. Naming and shaming is part of it

See figure I for a visualization of the overlap and divides between the two phenomena.

Figure I: Overlap and Differences in Digital Vigilantism and Crowd-sourced Policing



Now that the definitions of these two phenomena are defined it is important to consider how Web 2.0 plays a role in the existence of these phenomena as well as how these two phenomena are connected to police and suspect visibility. This will therefore be done in the subsequent sections.

### 2.3 Web 2.0 as Facilitator of Digital Vigilantism and Crowd-sourced Policing

When focusing on the phenomena of digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing, as well as on police visibility these last few years, Web 2.0 is an important concept. During the first phase of the Internet it served as a tool of cognition (Fuchs, 2008). It revolved around the ease of publishing information that could then be read by many, a way of using the Internet now referred to as Web 1.0 (Fuchs, 2008). Since 2005, however, a transition has taken place towards Web 2.0 (O'Reilly & Battelle, 2009), meaning "a change from the Web as a publishing platform to a tool supporting communication" (Fuchs, 2008, p. 128). Fundamentally, Internet users are no longer

only acquiring information from the Internet, they are also creating and distributing information themselves. People participate on Web 2.0, for instance, by commenting on articles that they have read, and by creating Facebook pages, Twitter profiles, and weblogs.

Essentially citizens on the Internet are no longer just consuming what is on the Web, they are also producing content. Combining this development, Ritzer (2010) refers to citizens active on the Internet as prosumers. People are no longer relying on others to do many things, they do the work themselves. An example portrayed by Ritzer (2010) is how people these days use electronic kiosks to check themselves in at the airport, thus producing your own ticket, while at the same time consuming it as well. This dynamic is also highly visible on the Web 2.0 since “it can be argued . . . as crucial in the development of the ‘means of prosumption’; Web 2.0 facilitates the implosion of production and consumption” with platforms such as Wikipedia, Amazon, and YouTube (Ritzer, 2010, p. 19). Furthermore, prosumers are no longer prosuming on their own. Creating or achieving something together as citizens has taken up a large role in Web 2.0, also creating place for digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing. O’Reilly and Battelle (2009) refer to Web 2.0 as “a marvel of crowdsourcing” with online marketplaces like eBay, and “vast personal lifestream collections on Twitter, MySpace and Facebook” (2009, p. 2), places where people can thus prosume together.

As described by John (2012) “sharing is the fundamental and constitutive activity of Web 2.0 in general, and social network sites (SNSs) in particular” (p. 1). Social media sites, used for digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing, like Facebook, revolve around the idea of sharing information, as its crowdsourcing potential as O’Reilly & Battelle (2009) already suggested. Sharing information and opinions on Web 2.0, can lead to a crowd-sourced initiative in which information is shared with the public and/or with the police. Where previously these opinions and information had to be shared in person, or for instance by e-mail, these days there are other options, such as social networking sites, that have made sharing easier. This thus creates opportunities for an increase in the police communication and the ways in which they can ask for help of citizens as well as an increase in crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism. This idea of sharing can also be seen as a reason for police use of Web 2.0 platforms as it could be argued that their visibility enhances when the messages they send are shared.

With all these new possibilities, Web 2.0 can be seen as an enabler for crowd-sourced policing as well as for the more aggressive forms of citizen participation such as internet activism

(Powell, 2011), and digital vigilantism (Trottier, 2014), since Web 2.0 can thus be seen as the place from which this collective outrage originates as well as the medium through which retaliation is coordinated and achieved. One example within the Dutch context that clarifies this is the response to the “kopschoppers” incident in Eindhoven in January 2013. In connection with this incident the police handed over a copy of security images of an act of ungrounded violence by seven underage men against one other man to a local news media that works with the police, named *Bureau Brabant*, which was then published on their website as well as shown on television (Nijs, 2013). The publication of the security footage proved to be the facilitator for collective outrage of the public. Following this publication, weblogs, Tweets, and Facebook posts were used to collectively identify the offenders of the security images and make sure that they were visible and ‘naming and shaming’ them as a form of punishment as well as to make them visible to the police. Essentially the process of vigilantism in this case largely took place in the digital world due to the use Web 2.0 platforms, something that has happened many times since then with new “kopschopfilmmpjes” in the Netherlands according to the interviewees and will therefore be expanded on in the results section.

It should be noted that in the case of digital vigilantism, and often when one looks into crowd-sourced policing as well, no specifically designated crowd-sourcing platform is used (Slavkovik, Dennis & Fisher, 2014), but rather generic platforms Facebook and comment sections on news websites and blogs. It is thus not the case that a special platform is created for this campaign, for instance a website created by several of the participants. Instead, the use of a generic platform by digital vigilantes was for instance visible with the 2011 Vancouver riots investigated by Schneider and Trottier (2012). It does occur that vigilantes communicate within, for instance, a specific Facebook group. In this respect one could also talk of online communities within Web 2.0. These virtual communities often employ “methods of ‘policing’” behavior of members in their group (Wall & Williams, 2007, p. 392). Essentially Wall and Williams (2007) argue that most online “community members prefer the use of vigilante justice, peer pressure and ostracism to maintain order in Cyberworlds” (p. 403) thus implying that vigilantism has a larger place in the online world than it has in the offline world these days. One could argue that this is most likely the case because the police does not have control over the entire Internet at the moment, since they are often unable to monitor the entire web, meaning that online crimes often are handled by vigilantes, or at least brought to the police’s attention through vigilante action

(Slavkovik, Dennis & Fisher, 2014). This observation is confirmed by Prins (2010) who argues that “vigilantism appears to be facilitated by several characteristics of Internet, among them its interconnectedness and the lack of traditional institutional control mechanisms” (p. 220).

Research on the connection between Web 2.0 and crime, has for instance also shown that people’s attitudes towards the justice system, criminal offenses and trials are connected to their use of social media, one of the key tools of Web 2.0 (Rose & Fox, 2014). It can be argued that when people use social media to keep track of news on criminal trails they become more invested in the outcome of the case. Approximately one third of their sample group “urged other people to take action on social or political issues based on a criminal trail” and thereby showed that they use social media as a media outlet as well as an outlet for social action (Rose & Fox, 2014, p. 783). What their research showed as well was that those who followed criminal trails on social networking sites, like Facebook or Twitter, were more likely to seek revenge through digital vigilantism, or even in the offline world (Rose & Fox, 2014, p. 785). Essentially this research thus suggests how the addition Web 2.0 platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, has made it easier to be informed of criminal cases, to share ones opinion to a larger audience, and try to achieve some sort of social action as a reaction, for instance through digital vigilantism.

## **2.4 (New) Visibility**

As mentioned previously, this thesis connects the phenomena of citizen participation and police communication to the more abstract idea of visibility on Web 2.0. This section will first explain a new view on visibility since the development of Web 2.0. Following this is a section on police visibility in particular.

### **2.4.1 Visibility on Web 2.0**

As stated by Thompson (2005) “the visible is that which can be seen, that which is perceptible by the sense of sight; the invisible it that which cannot be seen, is imperceptible or hidden from view” (p. 35). While this definition shows strong ties to physical capacities, thus of actually being somewhere to see something that happens and being visible yourself as well, this is no longer the only form of visibility for the majority of people, since a new form of asymmetrical visibility is possible. Due to the increase in all forms of communication media a mediated visibility has been created, in which “the field of vision is uni-directional: the viewer can see the distant others who

are being filmed or photographed but the distant other cannot, in most circumstances, see them” (Thompson, 2005, p.35), next to other forms of asymmetrical visibility like for instance espionage and surveillance. Thompson (2005) calls this idea, largely made possible because of Web 2.0, new visibility. An example of this can be found in videos of fights being posted on the Internet. In relation to digital vigilantism one incident that exemplifies this in the Netherlands was when a video was posted online of one girl violently assaulting another girl for no apparent reason while being cheered on by other high school students and being filmed (Dollen, 2015). In this case the suspect as well as the victim were made visible while the person making them visible is not visible. The suspect was then made visible even further by digital vigilantes, both anonymous and visible to the public through the use of their own Facebook accounts, who posted information on Web 2.0 platforms such as her phone number.

The research done for this thesis focuses on the power citizens have on the Internet to make people visible through digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing as well as on the visibility of the police and how this possibly influences citizen initiatives, meaning that this concept of new visibility is of great importance. One could argue that digital vigilantism is based on the idea that offenders are made visible in preferably a high-visibility environment, as is the case with offline vigilantism as well. According to Brighenti (2007), “mass media are high-visibility places endowed with the quality of conferring visibility to the people who join them” (332). The Internet could be considered as such a high-visibility place as well, since through for instance digital vigilantism people can be made visible on Web 2.0. Furthermore, it is a place where material will remain visible for a long time since ““what goes online stays online”” (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011, p.802). The internet, however, can be seen as a place of one-sided high-visibility since while it can be used to identify people and make them visible, it also offers anonymity to digital vigilantes since they can make someone else visible without revealing their own identity. Moulton (2011) argues that this one-sided high visibility situation is maintained by the police as well as through the characteristics of the Internet. He offers two reasons why the Internet provides its users with the perception “that there is an insufficient response by authorities” (Moulton, 2011, p. 197). Moulton claims that the first reason is the anonymity on the web and the secondly that “the Internet considers responses by authorities to be a threat and simply routes around them” (2011, p. 197). The image that Moulton (2011) draws is that the authorities have very little control over digital vigilantism by referring to vigilantism in

the Wild West. Moulton (2011) argues that “the vigilante who hung the horse thief without benefit of a trial was possibly, and occasionally actually, subject to due process himself. The digital vigilante is not caught in this conundrum and even, to extend, the irony, benefits from the very ineffectiveness of the authorities that triggered his actions” (p. 199). Moulton (2011) thus argues is that digital vigilantes respond to an inactive and/or invisible police force, yet because of this digital vigilantes are not caught either.

#### ***2.4.2 Police Visibility and Support for (Digital) Vigilantism***

This thesis focuses on visibility of suspects and digital vigilantes as well as that of the police. Brighenti (2007) argues that “visibility is a double-edged sword: it can be empowering as well as disempowering” (p. 335). In relation to the police, their visibility can be empowering as it can make it easier to communicate with the public, for instance in missing persons cases. Furthermore, making cases visible, for instance, through television programs like *Bureau Brabant* to discuss local incidents, can make the work the police is putting into a case visible. This visibility of cases can also be the initial reason for people to start searching for suspects in cooperation with the police, as well as in the form of digital vigilantism (Huey, Nhan & Broll, 2012). On the opposite edge of the sword, Brighenti argues that a visible position in society also means that if something goes wrong this will be made highly visible. This can lead to the undermining of an exemplary model, such as the police. Essentially one could therefore see usage of social media platforms by police officers as an increased risk for police indiscretions to come to light and thus risk the reputation of the police (Goldsmith, 2014). In turn the possibility to make indiscretions visible to the world can be seen as empowering to the citizens, similar to exposing for instance a corrupt government or company, which can be seen as socially progressive. The connection between new visibility and the police was enhanced by Goldsmith (2010) by focusing on how the image of the police was threatened because of Facebook pages and YouTube videos that were created to share images of police misconduct, thus making police discrepancies visible, pages created by what Schaefer and Steinmetz (2014) call cop-watching groups. These types of digital vigilantes have created Facebook pages on which they for example make incorrectly parked police cars visible to the online community. In this age of new visibility in which digital vigilantism is raising, police visibility on the Web 2.0 can thus be helpful since it

may lead to less digital vigilantism, yet on the contrary their visibility can also hinder police work since it can undermine the position of authority of the police.

Not only can visibility of the police lead to a reaction by citizens, a lack of police visibility can also have an unwanted effect for the police, namely a possible decrease in support for the police and increase (support for) (digital) vigilantism. Haas, De Keijser and Bruinsma (2013) did research into confidence in the police and support for vigilantism in the Netherlands. They performed their research by drawing upon “Easton’s (1965) theoretical distinction between specific and diffuse support for political institutions” (Haas, De Keijser & Bruinsma, 2013, p. 228). Essentially “specific support refers to ‘a set of attitudes towards an institution based upon the fulfilment of expectations of policies or actions,’” while diffuse support refers to “a ‘firmer and more durable set of attitudes towards the legitimacy of the institution’” (Haas, De Keijser & Bruinsma, 2013, p. 228). In simpler words it could thus be argued that diffuse support is the type of support for the police that one creates over a long period of time, which is not connected to a specific event but more of the overall performance of the police. On the other hand, specific support is indeed related to a specific occurrence. As investigated by Haas, De Keijser and Bruinsma (2013) it could be said that when specific support for the police may be lost due to a lack of visible action taken by the police in a specific case, it can still be the case that the diffuse support for the police is still present (Haas, De Keijser & Bruinsma, 2013). Respondents in their research even that when trust was lost in the police due to a lack of visibility and responsiveness, support for vigilantism could rise. Based on their research it could thus be argued that police visibility, especially in terms of communication on progress in criminal cases, can be a way in which (support for) vigilantism can decline.

## **2.5 Police Use of the Online Possibilities**

It could be argued that Web 2.0 has changed the way in which the police makes itself visible. In the past the police has always have had to dependent on news media (Chermark & Weiss, 2005) and television programs such as *Cops* for their visibility (Doyle, 2003). Asking citizens for help also happened through television and news media outlets as well as through wanted posters. As argued by Marx (2013) before Web 2.0, and its accompanying new information technologies, identifying suspects was labor intensive for the police. Since the creation of these Web 2.0 technologies there has been an increase in “appeals by police to citizens for help” (Marx, 2013, p.



56), thus lessening the labor intensity. It is, however, not yet a reality that all police units over the world that have access to the internet use the options Web 2.0 offers to communicate and ask their citizens for help. As mentioned by Schafer, Varano and Libby (2011) “many state and local agencies now operate websites, [yet] most are static creations reflecting Web 1.0 orientations (i.e., limited use of multimedia and real-time access to information)” (p. 148). Downey (2012) confirms this and argues that especially these local municipal police agencies have yet failed to actively use Web 2.0 and its social media platforms. The police is thus often not yet visible to the full extent due to inactivity on certain Web 2.0 platforms, nor do they use information citizens can provide, to make certain people and or issues visible, to their full potential. Essentially they only send information and hope that citizens contact them with information by phone or possible email and/or contact forms on the website. Furthermore, many police agencies do not use social media such as Twitter and Facebook for direct communication with the citizens, once again failing to use this to their advantage in term of visibility of the police as well as possible help with suspect visibility. When the police makes use of Web 2.0 optimally is, however, hard to determine, as their use of Web 2.0 content for actual online policing can also harm the bond with the community when citizens feel as if what they post online is being scrutinized by the police (Trottier, 2012). The use of Web 2.0 possibilities can therefore be seen as a balancing act.

There are, examples on how different law enforcement agencies around the world have been able to use the functions of Web 2.0 to a larger extent, or in which the intent to use it more prominently is made clear, and thus show the potential Marx (2013) sees as well. Schneider and Trottier’s paper on the Vancouver riots for instance mentioned that “police are harnessing social media” in several ways, such as using it in a proactive manner “by establishing an online police presence” (2012, p. 68). Furthermore, Downey (2012) stated that police agencies in the United States have made use of Web 2.0 applications to post stills of surveillance footage online in order to fight teenagers wrecking malls. It could be said that Web 2.0 is also used by the police in the United Kingdom. Focusing on the police use of Twitter in the August 2011 riots in London and Manchester, Deneff, Bayerl and Kaptein (2013) showed that there was a willingness of the police to be visible on Web 2.0. and thus showed how the mediated visibility could be used to their advantage. They portrayed two different usages of Twitter. On the one side Twitter was used instrumental for “either seeking or providing information or demonstrating police performance (e.g., number of arrests made, officers on the street, or requests for information)” (Deneff, Bayerl

& Kaptein, 2013, p. 3479). On the other side Twitter was also used in an expressive manner since messages were personalized and direct interactions with individuals on Twitter were conducted (Denef, Bayerl & Kaptein, 2013, p. 3479). Overall this thus shows that the police was highly visible during this event thanks to the use of a Web 2.0 platform and made use of its interactive possibilities, something that seems to happen more and more (Brainard, L., & McNutt, J., 2010; Crump, 2011; Hughes, St. Denis, Palen & Anderson, 2014). This thesis has done further research into the visibility of the police on Web 2.0 in the case of the Netherlands and if this visibility in a specific event also has an impacts on support for digital vigilantism. For the newly found information see chapter four.

### **2.6 Public on Web 2.0 as a Valuable Partner or as a Complicating Factor**

Due to the interactive nature of Web 2.0 platforms, police visibility on these platforms increasingly consists of the dissemination of police messages as well as requests for help of citizens. However, the question can be asked whether involvement of the public through the Internet in police cases is actually beneficial to the solving of police cases and the social order. Previous literature on citizen participation has pointed out to negative and positive aspects of citizen participation for the police as well as for suspects. The positive outlook is for instance portrayed by Moulton (2011) who states that vigilantes are not just the enemy but they can also be allies for the police. Furthermore, one benefit, of crowd-sourced policing as shown by Schneider and Trottier (2012), is that crowd-sourced policing initiatives on social media can really have an effect on police work as it seemed to have an impact on the people turning themselves in. Additionally, by focusing on the use of Twitter during the search for the suspects of the Boston Marathon bombing it can be argued that social media is used during periods of crisis “to share information . . . , to participate in collaborative sense-making . . . , and to contribute to response efforts through digital volunteerism” (Starbird et al., 2014, p. 655). It is thus very much a useful tool for the public to share information with the police as well as the public, while it can still be used by the police as a tool for communication as well.

The use of Web 2.0 platforms by the police as well as citizens in situations where a suspect needs to be identified and found can, however, also have negative effects. While Marx (2013) confirms that the public provided the police with valuable image, videos and tips which helped in the fast identification of the suspects, he also points out that there is “a rush to

judgement by citizen cybervigilantes who erroneously identify and publicize information on people who turn out not to be suspects” (p. 56). Good intentions of citizens in reactions to a call of action from the police can thus lead to innocent people being named and shamed. This shows once again that the public can help as well as complicate matters. Focusing on the use of Twitter and the spread of misinformation by citizens, it can furthermore be argued that “crowdsourced information flows can correct misinformation . . . [yet these corrections to misinformation] are muted compared with the propagation of the misinformation” (Starbird et al., 2014, p. 654). Essentially, information spread on Twitter in the case of the Boston marathon bombing was used by the police as hints on where to search and who to search for, yet the spread of incorrect information also complicated matters and fueled the panic thus showing a negative side effect. Due to this dynamic of negatives and positives Prins (2010) argues that it is “the government’s responsibility to rethink whether these types of do-it-yourself justice need to be (can be) restricted and controlled by law” (p. 220).

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Argumentation**

What the literature review shows is that research on the tie between the presence of the police on Web 2.0 and citizen activities and especially how their actions influence or are influenced by social visibility is still limited and additional research is thus useful, something this thesis aimed to do. The following sections will thoroughly explain why the choice was made to work with qualitative interviews for this thesis in order to provide answers to the research question and the sub-questions in particular, and add to the subfield in general. The choices made and the challenges that were faced concerning the sampling of interviewees will also be explained in further detail. This will be followed by a report on how data was collected and finally how it was analyzed. The sections will explain what was done rigorously and thereby validate the performed research, while at the same time highlight how problems were solved along the way.

#### **3.1 Method: Qualitative In-depth Interviews**

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined qualitative research as “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” and “can refer to research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well about organizational functioning, social movements, [and] cultural phenomena” (p. 10-11). This is done in this thesis as well, since the data worked with was not obtained through a method of quantification, but by talking with interviewees about their opinions and real-life experiences with, for instance, organizational procedures and actions by citizens. In order to find the answers to the research and sub-questions, data was collected through qualitative interviews, a method that lends itself for exploratory research (‘t Hart, Boeije & Hox, 2009). This research can be seen as exploratory in nature since literature on this specific subfield in the context of the Netherlands is fairly limited at the moment. The gathering of new data through in-depth (expert) interviews was therefore of great use.

To get as much information as possible, from different angles, within the particular framework described in the introduction, the decision was made to work with two groups of interviewees, as will be explained thoroughly in section 3.2. Expert interviews with police representatives from Rotterdam – whom had functions connected to communication and/or the Web 2.0 presence of the police, especially in the form of social media – provided data on specific experiences with the online police presence as well as particular examples in which they

encountered citizens participation and the interviewee's views on this phenomena. Furthermore, they were all able to provide information on citizen initiatives making their input even more valuable. In-depth interviews with citizens taking initiative in the form of crowd-sourced policing, and sometimes hinting towards digital vigilantism, highlighted the other side of the issue by providing information on motivation to participate as well as their view on Web 2.0 and the police, and how their decisions influence visibility of several groups.

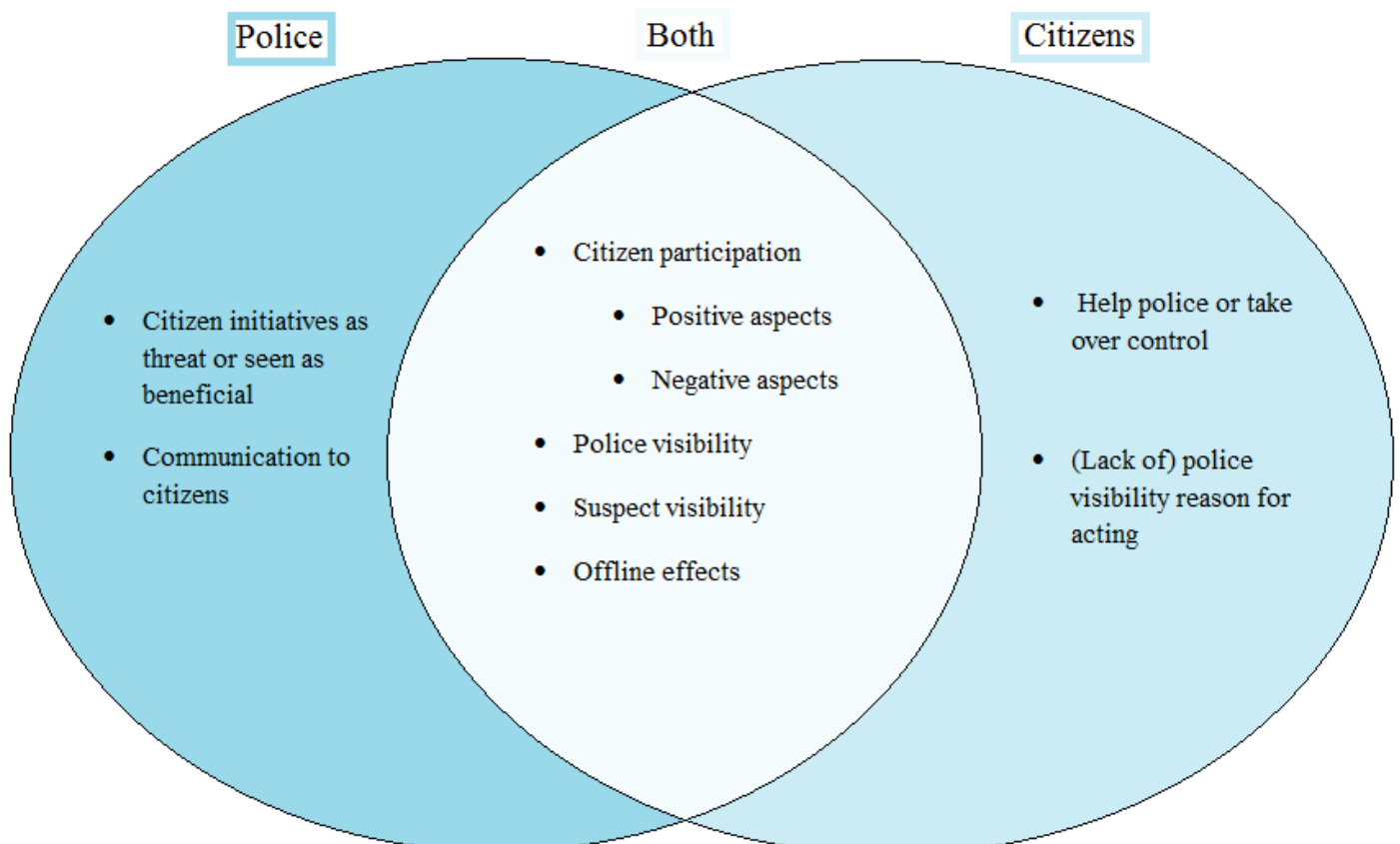
Qualitative interviews could thus be considered the best approach for this thesis, as the research question required in-depth information on issues such as visibility and stance towards crowd-sourced initiatives and/or the police, which was provided through these interviews as well as specific examples given to exemplify certain views and attitudes. As argued by Gilbert (2009), where quantitative data is more about administrative data and statistical calculations, "qualitative research most often describes scenes" (p. 35), which is precisely what this thesis had done, portraying the scene of police and citizen activities in the Netherlands, and in particular Rotterdam where the police is concerned, as completely as possible. Essentially a thick description has been formed, which does not only focus on the behavior of the interviewees, but also on the context (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This thesis aimed to connect Web 2.0 and the idea of visibility as a social condition to two phenomena, namely the police expanding its (online) visibility and seemingly increasing amount of people participating in digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing. It therefore describes the scene as well as looks into the factors that constitute the scene. The aims for this thesis and the limited amount of existing literature on the topic also meant that content analysis – as one of the other forms of research methods – as the main research method was not the most suitable approach, nor were surveys, due to its lack in acquiring in-depth information and "spontaneous information rather than rehearsed positions" (Gilbert, 2009, p. 249). It can therefore be said that interviews were the most appropriate and fruitful way to gather the data for this thesis.

### **3.2 Units of Analysis and Sampling**

The sampling for this research is based on the belief that the best way to answer the research question is to work with two different populations, namely the police and the government on the one hand and digital vigilantes and people involved in crowd-sourced policing on the other hand. These groups were be able to answer specific questions only they can answer and questions that

could be answered by both groups. Figure I provides the overview of the division and overlap in the questions that was used. Both groups could provide information on suspect visibility as well as on police visibility – although the police representatives of course could report on this to a larger extend. Furthermore, they could all portray the positive and the negative sides of citizen participation for the citizens themselves, the police, missing persons, and (innocent) suspects as well as discuss the online and offline effects of such actions. Yet where police representatives could talk of the ways in which they communicate with citizens and why as well as how they could use citizen initiatives to their advantage on the one hand but point out the negative aspects of these sort of actions from their point of view and thus determine whether or not citizen initiatives should be seen as a threat or as a beneficial development, interviews with the group of citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing could highlight the other side of the coin. They could namely show if what they did was meant to be supportive for the police, or rather as a way to take control themselves. Moreover, these interviewees could answer if their view on police visibility and responsiveness is actually a reason to turn to citizen initiatives.

Figure I: Overlap and Differences in Populations in Interview Themes



Based on this visualization the expectation was thus that interviews with the police could provide important information for sub-questions one, two, three, and five while interviews with citizens could help answer sub-questions two, three, four and six.

### ***3.2.1 Police Representatives***

The first interview group consisted of those responsible for policing the Netherlands. Six representatives of the police were interviewed to find out more about their policy on visibility and their view on and experience with citizen participation, especially in the forms of crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism. Some interviewees could give valuable information on in which ways the police tries to get in touch with the citizens and use the online possibilities for this – information that could contribute to literature that already exists and was used in section 2.5 – and if the aim here is to send information or to actually communicate back and forth and thus to use the potential of Web 2.0 as described by Fuchs (2008). The gathered data on this contributed to answering SQ1. Interviewees were also asked about the ways in which they do not only make the police visible, but suspects and missing persons as well, and if this is influenced by the high-visibility environment of the Internet as argued by Brighenti (2007), thus providing important information for sub-questions two and three. Furthermore, interviewees of this group were, for instance, asked if they saw digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing as either an ally from which the police could benefit or as an enemy that threatens police or judicial processes, a distinction used based on Moulton's (2011) work. By focusing on this dynamic information was gathered that helped answer SQ5 and contributed to answering the main research question. Information gathered while talking about citizen initiatives also helped determine if there is a difference in attitude towards crowd-sourced policing or digital vigilantism, something that was to be expected based on section 2.1 and 2.2 in this thesis.

Beforehand it was determined that interviewees in this group could be press officers of the police, officers, but also representatives of the justice department, or even mayors of specific cities in which incidents occurred that led to digital vigilantism. While at first the aim of this research was to find a diverse group, from different parts of the Netherlands, after the first meeting with a social media coordinator in Rotterdam, the decision was made to make use of snowball sampling and limit the focus to police representatives within this region, as this first police representative Arnoud Grootenboer argued Rotterdam to be a city in which the police was

acting as a pioneer as far as their online visibility is concerned, something that was later confirmed by the other police respondents as well. Where in Rotterdam the online presence of the police is a priority, 50% of the interviewees from this group doubted this to be the case in other parts of the country. Essentially Rotterdam could be seen as a test site especially in terms of the online presence of the police, and practices that are shown to be successful then also slowly become part of the police practices in other parts of the country. So while Rotterdam is certainly not the only police force that is active on Web 2.0, it does offer one of the best views on the current state of the online police presence and what is to be expected in the future in this specific field. Furthermore, since the online presence of the police and their experiences with online phenomena like digital vigilantism in response to “kopschopfilmje” – a video of an assault that is similar to the “kopschoppers” incident in Eindhoven – was key to this investigation, Rotterdam, a district with thus a lot of experience and a large online presence, in particular was chosen to be the best way to answer the research question.

While attempts were made to also come into contact with representatives from the Public Prosecution Service (“Openbaar Ministerie”), since police representatives had shown that these two organization were closely linked, interviewees from this organization were unfortunately not found. Since communication with press officers goes through the communication department first, direct contact was not possible. Even after several calls and emails with people from two different communication departments of two different districts of the Public Prosecution Service – namely that of Rotterdam and Oost-Brabant – actually speaking to one of the press officers was unfortunately not possible. This struggle for access also contributed to the focus on the Rotterdam police force as snowball sampling could be applied – the form of sampling advised to use when access problems occur by Miller, Mauthner, Birch, and Jessop (2012). Essentially Arnoud Grootenboer served as a gatekeeper who permitted access to others connected to the Web 2.0 presence of the Rotterdam police that otherwise would not have been found in the search for respondents (Miller, Mauthner, Birch & Jessop, 2012). Using this sampling technique interviewees for this group became police representatives from different departments within the police in Rotterdam, connected to communication, social media projects, and/or the unit responsible for conducting investigations into certain crimes and finding suspects by communication to citizens and asking them for help.



To get into contact with the police firstly communication departments of the police that were involved with incidents that led to digital vigilantism were contacted by making use of phone-number and e-mail addresses that could be found on [www.politie.nl](http://www.politie.nl). This only led to people declining to be interviewed, and the advice to talk to other experts who in turn declined to participate. Additionally, the contact form on this website of the national police was used to find the appropriate people to talk to, which led to the first interviewee getting into contact with the researcher, as well as one other from the communication department. This first interviewee provided the researcher with access to his network, which led to more interviewees. To actually get into contact with these police representatives the decision was made to contact them either by email or by phone, and (partially) due to the fact that one of their colleagues had provided their contact information as well as the researchers willingness to meet at a time and place of their convenience they were all willing to participate. Overall these different ways of contacting people thus led to a slowly developed but useful sample of police representatives.

### ***3.2.2 Citizen Participants***

Since this first group consisted of experts on police visibility as well as on citizen participation and the response of the police to this, this group became the main focus of this thesis. Data provided by this group did not only show how the police used the Web 2.0 and how this impacted the visibility of the police as well as that of suspects and missing persons, important data was also given on how citizen participation plays a role on Web 2.0 and how this can lead to an increase in visibility, thus providing a lot of information that could already help answer the research question. However, for actual motivations for citizen participation, considerations made on the issue of visibility, and the view these people have on digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing and its effect on visibility of the police could only be given by this second group of interviewees. This second group of interviewees thus became a secondary source of information.

While at first the idea was to talk to people who participated in digital vigilantism rather than crowd-sourced policing, accessibility turned out to be problematic. Administrators of Facebook groups concerned with digital vigilantism, which were originally part of the plan to interview, rejected the request for an interview, or ignored it. It could thus be said that these gatekeepers essentially denied access to participants. After this, if specific people who posted on the wall of these groups could be contacted through Facebook this was done as well, however,

once again these requests were ignored or rejected. Essentially a lack of a gatekeeper willing to help with the research complicated access to respondents. Furthermore, a Dutch weblog *GeenStijl*, on which for instance the “kopschoppers incident” led to digital vigilantism, also refused to participate in the research. As argued by ‘t Hart, Boeijs & Hox (2009) people who decline to participate cannot be interested in the topic, they can dislike the chosen method, or simply do not have the time and sometimes simply cannot be convinced to participate as was the indeed the case.

Due to the lack of access to this population the decision was made to focus more on crowd-sourced policing, especially in relation to smaller crimes, like theft and breaking and entering. Participants were thus no longer required to be involved in campaign in which naming and shaming played a large role. Participants who were involved in campaigns in which the search of suspected criminals was one of the main objectives or the search for a missing person, thus became the main focus. Possible participants were found through information of their actions on news websites and Facebook, after which contact was made through Facebook, followed up by email or by telephone calls. In the case of the interview with shop owner Leon Videler, initial contact was made through a chat with the Facebook page of his shop, this was followed up by a number of phone calls since the first few times he was unavailable or lacked mobile service. Finally an appointment was made by phone and after the interview some more information was shared through WhatsApp. This thus shows the need to be persistent in contacting interviewees, but to make sure never to pressure people into participating, and how the use of different media can be useful.

To find these respondents purposive sampling was thus applied, a type of sampling that can be used to “reconstruct an event or a set of events” (Tansey, 2007, p. 766) something that was done with this group of interviewees, namely the discussion of one act of crowd-sourced policing they undertook and why. Furthermore, such a type of sampling can help “establish what a set of people think” (Tansey, 2007, p. 766). This form of non-probability sampling is, however, often criticized as it limits the generalizability of the findings due to the role of the researcher in the selection of the sample (Tansey, 2007), yet in this case it was the best option. While probability sampling is often seen as more reliable as the findings can be generalized (Gilbert, 2009, Tansey, 2007), this was impossible in this case due to the previously described limitations of access of this hidden population, thereby making “non-probability samples viable” (Tansey, 2007, p. 768).

Using the same approach as with the police representatives to overcome problems with access, namely through snowball sampling as advised by 't Hart, Boeije and Hox (2009), unfortunately was not possible either since the interviewees acted on their own rather than as part of a group and therefore were not able to provide new contacts. Purposive sampling was thus the best option to use for this group of interviewees, as this opened up possibilities of finding respondents, yet the researcher still worked with a particular target group at the basis, namely people who participated in or initiated acts of crowd-sourced policing or digital vigilantism.

In the end four people were interviewed for this secondary data set. A bar owner who posted a video of someone breaking into his bar on two occasion on his Facebook page and two shop-owners who encountered theft and who placed a photo or a video on their Facebook pages were interviewed to find out why they decided to do this and thus help answer SQ4. Had their confidence in the police – an idea based on the theory by Haas, De Keijser and Bruinsma (2013) – and view on police (in)visibility and/or suspect visibility anything to do with their decision to put the images online for example? Furthermore, the interviewees gave information on their own visibility as well as information on the groups of people they made visible, information that could be connected to Thompson's (2005) view on visibility in the result section and helped answer SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4. Since it turned out that of these three people two were only the starters of crowd-sourced campaigns but not people who actively share messages on social media, the final participant was chosen to meet that specific criterion as there are also many people who actively share messages and photos, without actually having been a victim of a crime, who may or may not have different motivations to participate, for instance the increased visibility of the police on Web 2.0 and can thus provide important information for SQ6. Due to the limitations in access of the population as described previously, the decision was made to interview someone who always shares messages on missing persons, missing things, and missing animals from the researcher's own Facebook list. While this was an acquaintance, and not a close friend or family, it was still not ideal, but due to the recruiting limitations, acceptable for this second, supporting, data set. All in all this sample of citizen participants thus had its limitations, yet it still led to a very preliminary exploration of crowd-sourced policing in particular, and therefore it was more valuable to include the data than exclude it, especially since this was the best sample possible for this research due to the recruiting problems. It should, however, be made clear that the

information provided by this group of participants does not portray an absolute truth that can be generalized, but rather a start for further research.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

In particular, the plan was to make use of semi-structured interviews of about 45 to 60 minutes long. The choice for semi-structured interviews was based on the idea that by working with a structure of questions this would ensure that the main points of this research were addressed in each interview. But whereas in the case of a fully structured interview the “wording of questions and the order in which they are asked are the same from one interview to another” (Gilbert, 2009, p. 246), semi-structured interviews still leave freedom to decide in which order the set themes will be discussed and room for other themes to be brought up by the interviewees. The decision to work with semi-structured interviews was furthermore based on the fact that the interviews, especially with the police representatives, were expert interviews. Experts usually prefer a personal approach with interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee in an active manner in favor of a standardized interview (Baarda, Van der Hulst, De Goede, 2012).

During the actual interviews, it can be argued that the approach was somewhere between a semi-structured interview and an unstructured one as the formulation of the question asked differed as well as the order in which they were asked. The order differed from the interview guide since often an answer of the interviewee was a natural transition towards one of the prepared questions. Only when one theme was discussed in its totality and the interviewee did not bring up a new theme on one's own, the following theme on the interview guide was introduced, essentially following the advice of 't Hart, Boeije, and Hox, (2009). This left room for new themes to be brought up each time, for instance the existence of a YouTube page called PRO 24/7 in the first interview, to which the researcher had to respond on the spot. It can thus be said that the semi-structured approach with the interview guide was still useful as it helped ensure that all themes were covered in each interview, yet ensuring a functional and enjoyable flow of conversation for the interviewee was seen as more important as it allowed them the opportunity to enter new themes or examples into the conversation and thus ensured maximal data collection. This, however, also meant that the formulation of the questions differed and in some cases not all the questions from the interview guide were asked as questions were forgotten or skipped due to

time constraints. While this led to a slightly less systematic data collection, all subthemes were still discussed with all the participants.

The aim for interviews of 45 to 60 minutes long was based on the idea that the longer an interview takes, the more chances there are to gather in-depth information, yet it also had to stay realistic in regards with how much time the interviewees would have for the interview, especially expert respondents like police officials. In the end this turned out to be realistic since although three interviewees with participants in citizen initiatives were only able to offer around 30 minutes of their time, the other one allowed for an interview of approximately an hour. The participants from the Rotterdam police were even more generous with their time with three interviews of an hour, one of 73 minutes and another of 103 minutes. This led to 186 pages of transcribed interviews with the police with a word count of 66.648 and 74 pages of data of the other group with a word count of 25.983, also depicting that the expert interviews provided the majority part of the data.

Working with two interview groups meant that for this thesis two interview schedules were used, one specified to each group. The interview schedule for the police, for instance, focused more on how they communicated towards the public and the role of Web 2.0 plays in this these days in order to answer SQ1. Furthermore, the interview guide included questions on in which ways they ask for input of citizens to solve crimes and how this can actually influence crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism. Another theme that was addressed is that of visibility, thus provided valuable information for SQ1 and SQ2, for instance by asking them what they can communicate about suspects and how visibility can turn against them. Moreover police respondents were asked about the positive and negative aspects of visibility connected to citizen participation from their point of view. Their answers were of great importance for SQ5. For the full interview guide see Appendix B.

The interview schedule for the citizens on the other hand revolved more around their own actions, and why they were moved to act and if this motivations had anything to do with their view of police visibility. Further questions revolved around the positive and negative effects of citizen initiatives again, only this times thus from the perspective of citizens participating in these sort of actions. Moreover these interviewees were asked about possible effects of their action for visibility of the police, suspects and/or missing persons, and themselves as citizens – important

information for sub-question two, three and four. Essentially the interview schedules were made using the divide and overlap portrayed in figure I. For the full interview guide see Appendix C.

To make sure the focus was still on the main research question, around half of the questions were (largely) similar on both interview schedules. Themes that were part of each interview furthermore were the use of Web 2.0, the digital pillory (“digitale schandpaal”), positive and negative aspects citizen participation, tie with the offline world, and tie between police and citizens – themes created based on the existing literature. One factor that did complicate the creation of the Dutch interview schedules, as well as the actual data analysis, was the lack of precise synonyms for digital vigilantism or crowd-sourced policing. Therefore the choice was made to work with term such as citizen initiatives (“burgerinitiatieven”), digital pillory (“digitale schandpaal”) and the idea that citizens act as a judge themselves (“eigenrichting” / “eigen rechter spelen”). During the actual analysis the answer to these question thus had to be categorized in quotes on (digital) vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing. This was done by using the definitions that were defined in chapter two, and thereby was done in a structured way.

During the interviews a digital voice recorder was used to record the interviews after receiving (written) consent of the participant, but in addition some notes were also taken in order to go back to important remarks that were made by the interviewees. In all cases the participants allowed for the recording of the interview after explaining what it served for, namely to create transcripts for this thesis. One participant, who suffered from voice problems, agreed on the condition that the interview would be removed from the voice recorder after the transcription had been made, something that was thus done. As planned interviewing the participants was done in person, with the exception of one participant who was interviewed using the back-up plan, namely through Skype. In the case of the interviews in person a neutral and quiet place would have been ideal but this was never truly the case. All the interviews with police representatives were done at police stations, often in a semi-quiet environment. One interview with a shopkeeper who posted a video of a thief on Facebook, Leon Videler, even took place on a terrace near his shop. While this was not ideal, due to interruptions of friends and colleges who were passing by, with the help of notes and the interview schedule, valuable information was still gathered. Essentially in each case it was an environment the interviewee was comfortable with, which was of great importance as it made them talk freely. The participant interviewed through Skype also

spoke freely and was comfortable with the setting, however due to connection problems it did occur that either the interviewee or the interviewer had to restart a sentence.

Before starting the actual interview the participants were asked for their permission to be mentioned by name in this thesis, next to their consent for the recording of the interview. To have proof of this, they filled out a consent form. The people that did not give their approval for the use of their real names and preferred to stay anonymous were given pseudonyms in the transcripts of these interviews and the information they provided was included anonymously in this thesis. The names that are used in the results section, are thus real names of participants that explicitly gave permission to do so. Furthermore, each interview was started by giving a brief explanation of the Master program the researcher is following and what this thesis was about. They were informed of the fact that there were two different groups that were being interviewed for this thesis, police representatives on the one hand, and citizens involved in online initiatives to identify or find criminals and/or missing persons. This was done as a way of warming up the interviewees before starting the actual interview in order to set the tone and context for the rest of the interview. Some talk about coffee and tea or the area the interview was being conducted also was a way to see how formal or informal the interviewee acted in order to adjust the actual interview accordingly and thus try and build a rapport with the interviewee (Verhoeven, 2007; Baarda, Hulst & De Goede, 2012).

Interviews with police representatives started off with what their job was specifically and then moved on to how this involved police communication, contact with citizens and citizen's initiatives like crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism, visibility issues and also asked them about their perceived differences between the online and the offline world in this context and thus the importance of Web 2.0. The interviews with the shopkeepers and the bar owner, started off by talking about the specific case they were involved in, since these cases ended up in the news and were the reason for the interviews with them, after this the planned questions, on for instance whether or not they did so because of their experiences with the police, were asked. The one interview with the person who actively shared messages of searches for suspects and missing persons, started off differently by asking about her online presence as an introduction before moving on to the actual interview schedule. Once the interviews had taken place, they were transcribed. Following this qualitative thematic analysis of the data was done as will be explained in the following section. The results of this analysis can be found in the chapter four.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

After the researcher finished the transcriptions, the data, in the form of qualitative texts was analyzed through thematic analysis, “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 79), that can be used to provide an extensive reflection on the entire data set through a mainly inductive approach. Due to the novel and exploratory nature of this research it was determined that it would be more productive to begin the analysis from the perspective of the empirical data, while still working with previously defined concepts such as visibility, crowd-sourced policing, and digital vigilantism, but not with an extensive theory. As thematic analysis is not connected to any specific theoretical framework it is ideal for this research project. Thematic analysis gave the researcher the opportunity to segment the data, in this case the transcribed interviews, into elements of interest, in this case all elements connected to Web 2.0, police communication, visibility, ties between the police and citizens, digital vigilantism, and crowd-sourced policing. These elements could then be connected and reassembled in such a way that connections between themes could be made, comparisons with existing theory could be made and the research questions could be answered.

Although thematic analysis is a flexible approach, some guidelines can be found. This research project worked with steps created by Clarke and Braun (2006) for the analysis of the data gathered for this research project. The first step that was taken based on their plan for thematic analysis was to familiarize oneself with the data through transcription of the data, re-reading it and writing down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following this step, was the creation of initial codes in a systematic manner. All transcripts were read and certain passages and/or lines were given a certain code, for instance social media, communication, or online attention. Furthermore, enlightening quotes on, for instance, motivations for certain actions and examples of activities that could add to certain codes were highlighted. This stage thus looked at the transcripts individually. These codes were then taken together to create themes in the third phase of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This third step is also known as axial coding (Boeije, 2010). To create these themes mind-maps were used by the researcher, on the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006). These showed how different codes fit together. Furthermore in the creation of themes priority was given to codes “on which a substantial amount of data ha[d] been collected” as advised by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995). At this point the transcripts of each group came together and parts of the transcripts were combined in new ways since



connections could be made based on the initial codes which then turned into themes. An example of a category that was created during this step for the interviews with the police was police visibility online. In the case of the second data set with citizens, emotions and rational decisions were two categories that were created. The fourth step in the process was to review the themes that had been created and to reflect if they indeed covered the entire data set provided by both interview groups. During this phase the focus was on “internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91), thus confirming that all the codes fit within the theme and that the themes did not overlap. The fifth phase of Braun’s and Clarke’s (2006) guidelines was to clearly define and name all the larger themes that were found in both sets of interviews. The themes that were formed were Web 2.0, police communication, citizen participation, and visibility. Finally, the last step was to actually report on the research and the data that was found and to relate what is found back to the sub-questions of this thesis, information that can be found in the following chapter. In short the data provided by both groups of interviewees was analyzed individually in a systematic way and the first patterns were then identified. Once this was done a comparative approach was taken, so that the data from the second data set could be compared, could contrast what was said by the first group, or could supplement what was argued by the first group, and by doing so a complete scene was created, as is was the goal of this method choice.

Overall the rigor with which this chapter has explained the approach taken towards the sampling, the interview guides, data collection, and the data analysis makes validates the research done for this thesis. Due to the choice to work with these steps described by Braun & Clarke (2006), a sense of consistency was created, and overall the description of every step that was taken increases the trustworthiness. A further way with which the validity of this thesis was increased was through the use of the voice recorder, since the interview could thus be transcript verbatim and read through as many times as necessary to create a results section that reflects what the interviewees have said as closely as possible (Baarda, Van der Hulst, & De Goede, 2012). While it would have been ideal if respondent validation would have been possible to further support the validity of this research as this could have checked if the interpretation of the data was done correctly (Silverman, 2011), this was not possible due to time restraints of the researcher as of the interviewees. One could argue that there is a way in which the validity could have been improved, namely if the interview with Raymond Kolsteren, and his colleague from

the communication department had been done individually. These two interviewees might have given different information if they had been interviewed individually, since people can influence each other (Baarda, Van der Hulst, & De Goede, 2012). In this case, since the choice was given to have the interview with both of them at the same time or with just one of them, having an interview with two interviewees was seen as the best option as more material could thereby be gathered. In conclusion it can be said that the chosen method did prove successful despite the problems of access to respondents as the type of information that was aimed for was indeed found, information that may not be generalizable but is still valuable for the depiction of a preliminary scene, something this thesis aimed at.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The analysis of the transcripts through the method of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) led to four main themes, namely Web 2.0, police communication, citizen participation, and visibility. How these themes can answer the sub-questions will be shown in this chapter. The conclusion will connect these themes and combine the answers to the sub-questions in order to answer the research question. The sections in this chapter will describe these themes based on the data gathered through the semi-structured qualitative in-depth interview and through this set the scene of the situation in the Netherlands. Furthermore, this chapter will connect the themes not only to the sub-questions but also to the existing literature discussed in chapter two.

### **4.1 Web 2.0**

As mentioned in chapter two Web 2.0 can be considered as the form of Internet that is used these days, namely Internet as a tool for everyone, where information can still be sent to others, but where interaction and citizen participation has obtained a key role. Since Web 2.0 was a key aspect in both the interviews with the police as with the interviews with the citizens who participated in online citizen initiatives, Web 2.0 was a major theme in the data that was collected. This theme will be described by looking at three subthemes, namely police presence on Web 2.0, the benefits of Web 2.0 for both the police and the citizens, followed by the downsides of the opportunities offered by Web 2.0.

#### ***4.1.1 Police Presence***

The official police presence on Web 2.0 is still a relatively new development in the Netherlands. Only three years ago the start was made with a social media project within the police force in Rotterdam, a project which has now become a national project. Before this, the police website was used to send messages, thus in a truly Web 1.0 fashion (Fuchs, 2008), but Web 2.0 opportunities of interaction were not used. In the period before the social media project some police members did act as pioneers with their own Twitter and Facebook accounts, however this was done on their own initiative, for instance by police sergeant Kevin van Bree. Essentially three years ago the decision was made to start making use of the potential Web 2.0 offers, as was argued by the project coordinator of social media within the Rotterdam police department Arnoud Grootenboer, since many citizens were already using it to their advantage. At that time the first

so-called neighborhood cops (“wijkagenten”) were asked to use Twitter to communicate about what they encounter and inform their neighborhood. These neighborhood cops are police officers who are the go-to persons for citizens from one specific neighborhood in a city. Essentially they are the people closest to the citizens in that specific neighborhood. As mentioned by Grootenboer, the implementation of Twitter cops led to more freedom for the neighborhood cops to communicate directly with their citizens, rather than only through press releases and in the offline world.

Facebook was added to the police communication tools soon after. While at first some police employees had a personal Facebook account which they used for professional purposes, with restrictions from Facebook and guidelines from the Public Prosecution Service, Facebook accounts from the police in Rotterdam are now corporate account for certain districts, for instance, Rotterdam Delfshaven or Rotterdam Oost. Where Twitter is more personal as this officer is mainly speaking for himself and can thus tell his own story, Facebook accounts are kept up-to-date by several police officers and differ in style and content. Consideration is put into how to use these mediums and which messages should be spread where. As explained by both participants connect to the social media project of the police, Twitter is seen as the medium that requires short real-time information, and has a limited life span, for instance information of a road closure due to an accident, as explained by officer Van Bree. Facebook on the other hand is for messages that are relevant for a longer period of time. Furthermore, as argued by Arnoud Grootenboer, the introduction of Facebook within the police organization has given a boost towards becoming more interactive, since on Facebook interaction is necessary. This belief thus corresponds with John’s (2012) and Fuchs’ (2008) views on Web 2.0. Due to this requirement of interactivity, responding to citizen’s comments and questions through Web 2.0 has thus become another facet of the police tasks.

Approximately two years ago another platform was added to the police communication strategy of one specific district, namely Rotterdam Oost. This district has been active on YouTube with the account PRO24/7 (Politie Rotterdam Oost 24/7) to show the range of police activities through videos. They have been using the innovative approach of filming with body cameras and posting the footage – after careful deliberation – to show the day to day tasks the police faces, as explained by one of the people responsible for PRO24/7, Nathan Okkerse. While they do make use of an interactive medium, it should be stated that Okkerse mentioned they only

send the videos to the citizens. The comments function, and thus the interactive features of YouTube has been turned off, due to a lack of manpower to monitor and answer these comments. Yet, by making cross medial links with their YouTube channel, Facebook page, Twitter account, as well as their Instagram account, social media platforms on which they do focus on interaction, Politie Rotterdam Oost is still able to have an open dialogue about PRO24/7 as well. While so far they are the only district making use of a YouTube channel, Kevin van Bree mentioned that Politie Delfshaven is looking into this as an option to expand their social media presence as well.

One final interactive form of social media that the police of Rotterdam uses is Instagram. Politie Rotterdam Oost already has an active account and Politie Delfshaven will be active on Instagram shortly as well. While this thus adds up to four interactive mediums that are used, next to these four interactive approaches on Web 2.0 the police still makes use of the national website, politie.nl, to send information to citizens in a Web 1.0 manner. Furthermore, some police officers make use of blogs, for instance interviewees Raymond Kolsteren and Arnoud Grootenboer, to show their sides of the story or their opinions, however, the focus here is once again on sending, rather than on interaction.

In answer to sub-question one it could thus be said that Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube are the Web 2.0 platforms that are used to communicate with citizens in an interactive way, while sending information in a Web 1.0 manner still occurs as well, for instance by providing information on criminals through politie.nl. The interviews did show that the presence of the police on the Internet is still evolving. According to social media coordinator Grootenboer, police personnel are still receiving training on the dos and don'ts of social media, as well as which messages are most appropriate for which platform. In these trainings, they are for instance made aware of the importance to communicate to the public that a dialogue with one certain citizen who has a complaint or a question continues in the offline world, or in a private chat. Thus to visibly show that the police is doing something. Furthermore, some officers at Politie Delfshaven, for instance still need to undergo training to be able to manage the corporate Facebook page to its best potential, rather than to use it like a Twitter account. Social media training is done through actual training moments, as well as through poster campaigns, like "Digibewust", in which police officers are simply made aware of what to post on their personal profile and what not, thus showing how the police itself tries to shape its visibility.

The interviews have also shown that there is still plenty of room for improvement in terms of Web 2.0 presence. Some districts are further along with implementing several social media tools than others, thus leading to a more visible and interactive police force in some regions compared to others. Two major changes that all police respondents called for was the implementation of web care and the increase in monitoring capabilities. With web care, responding to citizens faster will be made possible. Okkerse, the man behind PRO24/7 referred to this by comparing it to the situation when you ask a question to companies like Vodafone, who have a web care system. With Vodafone, even if you are not happy with the answer you get, you are still happy about getting a response within five minutes. With the police this is still left up to chance at the moment, similar to the monitoring of information in a proactive way. Furthermore, when something is said about the police, if this is seen now depends on whether or not a police officer happens to catch it when he is online, yet with a web care system this does not have to be left up to chance. Furthermore, at the moment police units are not ready for tips of citizens to be supplied through social media as was mentioned by officer Van Bree, which could possibly work better with a web care system, or rather, more manpower. Furthermore, all personnel will need to stay up-to-date in order to be able to follow the Dutch citizens and their online behavior. This also includes implementing new platforms to the police's social media presence if citizens also become highly active on these new platforms.

#### ***4.1.2 Benefits of Web 2.0***

Web 2.0 has several benefits according to the interviewees, many of which count for both the police and citizens active on the Internet. First of all, Web 2.0 offers the opportunity for sharing information and interaction. Web 2.0 interaction between the police and citizens can also make people communicate with the police faster. Part of this interaction is also the police asking for help of citizens, something that happens frequently as explicitly mentioned by three of the police respondents. As mentioned before, sharing is an important aspect of social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (John, 2012). This potential is also something the Rotterdam police makes use of. Since people want to share what they are doing or what they have encountered they tend to also share information with the world, that is useful for the police, for instance video footage of an incident. Furthermore, by sharing information themselves, the hope is that messages they post are actually shared as well so it can reach an as extensive network as

possible and thus be more visible. This thus shows that the sharing attribute of Web 2.0 influences police visibility as well as suspect visibility.

The police is not the only party who makes use of the interactivity and sharing potential of social media platforms. Citizens themselves make use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share messages to warn people or help other people out, as was confirmed by three respondents from the citizen interview group. WhatsApp is also gaining in popularity for these same purposes, and can essentially serve as a digital neighborhood watch in which people share information to increase safety and keep an eye out for each other as explained by both shopkeepers that were interviewed. All in all sharing is thus easy for both parties and leads to a larger audience viewing the message with minimal effort from the person sending the message. The ease of sharing messages on Facebook was enhanced by several police officers, for instance Kevin van Bree, as well as by the citizens participating in citizen campaigns, for instance by a shop owner, whom preferred to stay anonymous, who encountered a theft and posted a picture of the thief on Facebook. As mentioned by Van Bree, with social media you can inform more people in a limited time span online than by going from door to door. This benefit of Web 2.0 thus shows that messages are shared more easily and are therefore possible viewed by more people as well, thus making statements and calls for help more visible. The only downside this senior officer sees is that the effect of Facebook messages will stay somewhat limited as not everyone is on Facebook.

Another benefit of Web 2.0 is that this online world can provide valuable intelligence for the police. Monitoring the online world can provide police officers with a taste of the atmosphere in the actual offline neighborhood. Senior officer Van Bree for instance always views Tweets on Delfshaven to see what is going on in his district, who is meeting where and when for example, which can in some cases be interesting and may result in the offline presence of police officers at that time and place as well. Furthermore, Van Bree and an internet detective within the Rotterdam police force explained that tweets posted by witnesses can point the police towards those witnesses, of which they may not have known even existed if it had not been for social media monitoring. As explained by the internet detective, intelligence on the Internet is searched for by people like him these days, although often the search for information happens in a reactive manner rather than proactively. This respondent mentioned that after something has happened in the online or offline world he searches the Internet to find out who is behind that incident. In

addition, they can look into a suspects acquaintances, as this may proof that the suspect does indeed know someone even though he or she denies this in court, something officer van Bree encountered.

As argued by three of the police respondents, when Internet detectives, and more general police officers, have the time they also monitor the internet actively. One example of how the web is monitored on occasion is by looking through comments of citizens in reaction to, for instance, a “kopschopfilmpje”. As explained by detective Okkerse, it can occur that citizens mention to know the suspect as they are classmates, and say the suspects name is Kevin. If the police has not yet been able to identify the suspect, this may be a lead which can be followed up by contacting this person and asking him or her in which class he or she is in. Another way in which social media monitoring can make police work easier is when gang members make their real names and their nicknames visible in YouTube video’s, something the internet detective that was spoken with encountered. Instead of spending weeks trying to match nicknames with real names, evidence was supplied online which saved valuable time. Essentially this shows how the police can make use of material on Web 2.0 that is made visible to the public, thus also to the police.

The police respondents also confirmed the belief that Web 2.0 offers the opportunity to bypass traditional (news) media, at least partially, and thereby are less dependent, as was stated in previous literature. The police is able to communicate directly to citizens these days, through the use of social networking sites. This way they have control over the message they send. Before, the police was actually at the mercy of news media to have their story told to the public, often published with many corrections made and/or reductions made on the original message the police wanted to send as explained by officer Van Bree. With new media outlets added thanks to Web 2.0, this is no longer the case. Citizens also profit from this as was remarked by shopkeeper Leon Videler. On Web 2.0 platforms people themselves have control over the initial messages, where before you had to rely on journalists and on how they would frame issues. This thus implies that both groups have more control over their visibility these days, something that will be discussed further in section 4.4 in order to answer SQ2 and SQ4.

Next to an increased visibility of the police due to its online presence, there are many Facebook pages that function as secondary sources that share police information. Examples of these types of Facebook pages are Amber Alert, an organization tied to the police which sends



out messages to the public if a child goes missing (“Amber Alert,” n.d.), or that of Burgernet, an initiative that informs citizens of criminals in the area. Essentially these Facebook pages share news that the police itself would send as well, but may make police news more visible since there are people who follow sites like Amber Alert and 112 sites that provide information of the police, while they do not follow the actual police online. As argued by the interviewee who actively shares messages on Facebook, Facebook pages like this thus expand the network and reaches new people and increase the visibility of police messages.

Web 2.0, and the increased web presence of the police, with primary and secondary sources spreading police information, can be argued to impact the view of the police, as stated by Grootenboer and Okkerse, although this is hard to measure. One example in which the online presence of the police is evaluated, is through surveys in the case of Rotterdam Oost. Another example through which the view of citizens on the police is measured is through the safety index (“veiligheidsindex”). One downside of this index, as expressed by Grootenboer, is that it does not specifically say anything about the online presence of the police as this index is also influenced by offline visibility.

For the citizens using Web 2.0, it is possible to use social media as a weapon. The anonymous shop owner argued that “as an entrepreneur, as a citizen, you have to arm yourself. And social media is the ideal platform to do so” (“als ondernemer, als burger, moet je je bewapenen. En daar is social media de ideale plek voor”) These days people make more and more use of surveillance cameras and these images could thus be used as a weapon if need be, and are especially effective on Web 2.0 with its sharing potential. These images can be used as a weapon on all social media platforms, yet this shopkeeper argues that Facebook is the fastest and easiest way to inform people, as it does not require too much effort or technical knowledge, it is easy to upload images, and content on this platform is shared fast. Because of these Web 2.0 platforms, and in particular Facebook, are used by many to inform others. The medium is also used by citizens to look up information on crimes in specific according to this shopkeeper as “there is only one way to get to know something fast, and that is social media these days” (“Er is maar een optie iets te weten te komen, dat is tegenwoordig social media”).

Overall it can thus be said that Web 2.0 is extremely beneficial due to its possibilities to share something with a large group of people in a fast manner, and it increases visibility of information, posted by both citizens and the police.

### ***4.1.3 Downsides of Web 2.0***

One of the dangers of Web 2.0 is the lack of control one has over the online content. Because of this it happens regularly that content is placed outside of its context, or that the context is lost completely. As mentioned by the detective behind PRO24/7, in Rotterdam Vlaardingen a video was placed on Facebook on why police officers occasionally run a red light without using their alarms. A colleague reacted to this video with a separate post on the reactions citizens had posted leading to a whole discussion on how people reacted to each other, rather than still speaking of the actual video. Essentially this confirms what has been written on police visibility by Brighenti (2007), as it shows that police officers are highly visible and what they post can thus lead to large reactions by citizens and can lead to the disempowerment of the previous message. Not only the police encounters this loss of context, the same occurs with messages spread by citizens. In the case of Leon Videler's action, for example, the context was quickly lost once traditional media sources reported on his action. The context shifted from the theft itself to the action of Videler, and if the use of the digital pillory ("digitale schandpaal") was right or wrong. Not only can the context be lost, losing control of what one posts can for instance also mean that one's post is shared and copied so many times that even if the original post is removed, this is something that will not have left the Internet, something that also occurs according to the internet detective. Overall the interviewees thus argued that chances are that once something is on the Internet, it will most likely always stay on the internet, confirming the outlook of O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson (2011), and thus having consequences in terms of visibility as will be discussed further in section 4.4.

Another downside of Web 2.0 is that with the fast rate with which information is spread, false information is spread fast as well. This essentially corresponds with the interpretation of Starbird et al. (2014) and Marx (2013) on citizens providing information on the Boston Marathon bombing. Essentially when something happens that has a certain level of sensationalism, in the Dutch context, for instance after a "kopschopfilmpje" citizens who involve themselves with identifying the suspect can just as easily spread false information as correct information and can thus possibly make incorrect suspects visible. One important piece of information that was mentioned by two of the interviewees from the police is that the public has a false idea of the police having the power to easily correct the spread of false information. The Dutch police force, for instance, does not have control over what is or is not allowed on Facebook, outside of their

own accounts. The same essentially goes for weblogs such as GeenStijl. As mentioned by the social media coordinator, the communication advisor and the Internet detective, the police can place request to have something removed, but if organizations like GeenStijl, who are not pro-police, respond to this with removal of the post is not sure. All in all the public spread of incorrect information may thus be visible for a long time thus showing that increased visibility through the web 2.0 can have negative effects as well.

## **4.2 Police Communication**

Whereas the previous chapter already indicated which Web 2.0 platforms are used by the police much more information was gathered on police communication that this section will refer to in order to extensively answer SQ1.

### ***4.2.1 Traditional Versus New***

With the move towards Web 2.0 platforms a culture change in police communication towards citizens has taken place as well. Where before many departments isolated themselves and did not communicate at all, this now seems to be changing according to the internet detective as well as the social media coordinator. Communicating with the public was the job of the communication department solely and communication was done exclusively through press messages, information in newspapers and the television program *Opsporing Verzocht* – a program similar to the BBC's *Crimewatch*, focusing on finding or identifying suspect through sharing reconstructions as well as pictures and CCTV footage with the public. Furthermore, as explained by the communication advisor, communication about cases happened at the start and at the end of the case, and in between nothing was communicated, even if that period in between would take a year for example. Because of this, even though behind the scenes the investigation was actually continuing, people were given the impression that nothing was being done. This feeling can then lead to citizens taking action themselves which corresponds with the idea that if you do not visibly work on something as the police, support for vigilantism grows (Haas, De Keijser, & Bruinsma, 2013). Communication these days does focus on giving the public information in between. As mentioned by one of the communication advisors of the police department of Rotterdam, these days the idea of feeding the dog plays a role. The dog – a metaphor for the citizens – must be fed regularly. Information that may be interesting for the public and that can be

shared, thus must be shared. As argued by Officer Kolsteren the spread of information goes as fast as possible these days, while before this was not the case, and therefore the reason why cases that ended up in *Opsporing Verzocht* were often a year old. These days the help of citizens is no longer a last resort, but something that is asked for faster if internally no direct solution can be found. He and the communication advisor confirmed Marx' (2013) belief that new technologies have played a role in this increase in calls for help by the police.

#### ***4.2.2 Different Sources that Communicate***

In the period before the start of the social media project in 2012 it could thus be said that nearly all communication was done by the communication department. While the communication department still is involved with most forms of communication in name of the police, these days there are several sources that can be identified. Ordering them by distance from the citizens, from closest to furthest away, these days the communication sources are the neighborhood cops (“wijkagenten”) in the form of Twitter cops and police officers involved in social media projects such as Kevin van Bree and Arnoud Grootenboer on Twitter, the corporate accounts of different units in Rotterdam on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, the communication department, and finally the press officer of the Public Prosecution Service.

Neighborhood cops on Twitter, communicate about issues that are directly relevant for the area in which this police officer is active. Furthermore, their messages are short, inherent to the platform they use, and often less formal than traditional media communication. There are several other police officers, who are not neighborhood cops but different types of officers, for instance police sergeants or people like Arnoud Grootenboer, involved in the social media project, who communicate in a similar way as neighborhood cops on Twitter. Kevin van Bree, for example, who is part of the social media project for Politie Delfshaven as well as police sergeant in that area thus communicates mainly about what is happening in his district – in a similar way as the Twitter cops do.

Through the corporate accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, specific departments, for instance Rotterdam Oost or Rotterdam Delfshaven, can communicate toward their citizens about cases that are relevant for the area and can also share messages send by the communication department. An example given by officer Van Bree is sharing a link about a murder in the area, when witnesses are still being looked for. If the case has also been on

television in or *Opsporing Verzocht* or *Bureau Rijnmond* – the local version of *Opsporing Verzocht* – links to videos of episodes or fragments relevant to the area can also be shared. Additionally, they communicate about day to day events that are encountered, and let the public know where they will be visible, for instance on an information night on a specific kind of scam of which older people are most often victims (“babbeltrucs”). Essentially they show what the police does and at the same time keep citizens informed of present-day local cases. Finally these accounts also communicate messages in name of the national communication department as stated by Van Bree. One can for instance think of messages on water safety and who is and is not allowed to drive a boat.

What these two first groups have in common is that the way of communicating is more in style with social media, namely less formal and with more humor. The communication department on the other hand is more traditional as is argued by Okkerse, Grootenboer, and Van Bree. While they, as people responsible for the social media output, strive for faster communication in innovative ways and interaction to create a bond with the citizens, an aspect that will be talked about more in a later section, the communication department is said to still focuses more on what cannot be communicated instead of finding ways to communicate as much as possible, as well as communicate in a more formal tone. A further difference between these groups, as argued by Grootenboer and Okkerse and confirmed by the communication advisor, is that the communication department still focuses more on sending information online and getting information back through tools in the offline world, for instance through a phone call to 0900-8844, rather than being interactive on the Internet.

It can occur that the police is not in a position to give information to citizens at all, this is where the press officer of the Public Prosecution Service comes in as portrayed by officer Van Bree, detective Okkerse and the communication advisor. Overall the divide can be made that the police can communicate with citizens as long as the investigation is still open, in order to find witnesses or find help with identifying suspects, while actual information on the case in particular will be given by the press officer of the Public Prosecution Service. Officers of the Public Prosecution Service, however, also have control over most of the communication done by the police. In the case of the videos of PRO24/7 for instance, the Public Prosecution Service has to approve the video before publication on YouTube is allowed. Overall one can thus say that the situation at present time is that the Twitter cops and the people behind the corporate account

stimulate the increase in pace in terms of sharing information and the increase in interaction, yet while the communication department is becoming faster in involving citizens, they do still hold on to protocols which involve consultation with the Public Prosecution Service, especially in more serious criminal cases.

#### *4.2.3 Different Cases*

The rate with which information is spread and what information is spread does depends not only on the source but also on the type of case that is being communicated about. The distinction between loaded (“beladen”) and lighter (“onbeladen”) cases is essential for this. As explained by Detective Okkerse, where lighter issues can usually be communicated about faster and PRO24/7 can thus easily share a message about giving a helpful citizen a bouquet of flowers, other cases require a discussion on what can be communicated with the communication department and most likely the Public Prosecution Service which slows the process down. An example of a loaded case which also shows the role of the Public Prosecution Service and the required teamwork of the different departments is when a murder investigation has to be conversed about. During the period in which interviews were performed for this thesis, the Rotterdam police was working on a homicide in Rotterdam Delfshaven. It was the task of the communication department to deliberate with the Public Prosecution Service on what could be conveyed to the citizens. In this case the decision was made to converse about the case through press messages and on [politie.nl](http://politie.nl) as well as on *Bureau Rijnmond*. Furthermore, they had to share with officer Van Bree what he could let the citizens of Delfshaven know about this on Facebook and Twitter.

As was mentioned by Okkerse, a loaded case can also be an assaulted dog. This is something of which citizens are informed of so that they can possibly provide information and on which many reactions come. The first time Okkerse and his colleagues encountered such a case, they did not expect the enormous amount of reactions by citizens that was the result and the picture of the assaulted dog was posted on Sunday night. This has thus taught the social media department of Rotterdam Oost that instead of posting a message like this on the Facebook page on Sunday night, these sort of posts need to be posted on Monday morning so that a team can respond to citizen replies directly, while lighter cases can still be communicated about on Sunday nights. What this shows is that the police is still getting used to the interactive communication with citizens and the power citizens have on the Web 2.0.

#### ***4.2.4 Goals of Communication***

Based on what was said by the police respondent it could be argued that there are five main goals of communication towards citizens, namely to inform citizens, to create a bond with citizens through interaction, to change the image of the police, to solve crimes, and to prevent digital vigilantism (“digitale eigenrichting”). As explained by social media coordinator Grootenboer, when informing citizens is a goal, the idea may be to inform citizens of what the police did right, for instance communicating about solving a major crime, such as the theft at the Kunsthal. Informing citizens can also occur in a different way. As stated by officer van Bree, the police these days has a project named “Terugmelden” which means that the police tries their best at keeping citizens who were involved with a crime, as for instance the victim, informed on progress in the case, thus essentially to give them feedback. In this case the police does not only inform the citizen, but most likely also improve the view of the police of this citizen in this specific case. This form of communication is, however, less visible to the general public.

Improving the view of citizens on the police is also an aspect in the second goal. By forming a bond with citizens through communication, the idea is that this improves the view of citizens on the police as well. Creating a bond with the citizens is mostly a goal for communication through social networking sites. Through going into dialogue with citizens, decisions made by the police can be explained as was mentioned by Grootenboer and Okkerse. Furthermore, through for instance videos on PRO 24/7, people will better understand the magnitude of police tasks, and thus may better understand why some cases have priority over others. Additionally, by asking people for feedback, they may get the feeling that their input matters and thus people get a greater feeling of engagement (“betrokkenheid”) - something which is the main aim of PRO24/7 according to Okkerse. It can therefore be argued that through increased interaction with citizens the police tries to create a sense of engagement and through this a greater willingness to report (“meldingsbereidheid”). Videos like those on PRO24/7 can also improve the overall perception of the police, thus not limited to the police in a certain area. They go against image the public is confronted with regularly or the police officer who is only there to write fines, as is shown in shows such as *Wegmisbruikers*. Where Doyle (2003) thus saw these sorts of police watching programs as a way for the police to be visible, Okkerse looks at those programs more negatively and hopes that by showing all the tasks of police officers through

PRO24/7, this may help change the overall perception of the police as people who only write tickets as well increase their online visibility.

The fourth overall goal that could be determined based on the interviews that were performed for this research is the goal of solving crimes. Essentially communication with citizens, through Web 2.0 or otherwise, can help when the police is in need of information or wants to find witnesses of a certain crime. The special department within the communication that focuses on communication of investigations in which the search for suspects plays a large role (known as “opsporingscommunicatie”), for instance has three aims of which one is solving the case and another involving the public. Communication with the public can thus lead to new information that can solve cases. This department within communication also uses visibility to their advantage in order to solve crimes. In the case of the “kuiprellen” – a riot started by supporters of soccer team Feyenoord in Rotterdam – pictures of rioters were placed online and in response to this heightened visibility of themselves the suspects turned themselves in. This thus shows how the Internet as a high-visibility place can impact solving crimes.

The final overall goal that could be found in the data was the aim to prevent or stop vigilantism (“eigenrichting”). Essentially this begins with what to communicate and what not. As explained by social media coordinator Grootenboer, some calls for help from the police only lead to vigilante actions and should thus be prevented. While these days the Politie24 twitter account provides descriptions of suspects and citizens are asked to be alert and warn the police if they encounter this person, cases that can be seen as sensationalist while at the same time endangering for citizens should not be communicated about right away. When someone is caught during a crime and run off carrying a gun, it is for instance inadvisable to notify citizens of this as it may lead to someone trying to stop this criminal themselves leading to unwanted results and essentially putting citizens at risk as explained by Grootenboer. Furthermore, by communicating that the police is actually also doing the best they can in investigating break ins and theft, for instance through project “Terugmelden” in specific terms or through videos on PRO24/7 in more general terms, it can be argued that the police can take away the motivation for vigilantism, both online and offline, based on the lack of police visibility. This implies that the police is aware of the importance confidence in the police of citizens and the possible effects it can have on vigilantism as explained by Haas, De Keijser, and Bruinsma (2013).



Another way in which digital vigilantism can be prevented or kept to a minimum is by taking a careful approach in terms of making images of crimes visible. Unlike the approach that was taken in Eindhoven with the well-known “kopschoppers” incident, in which the complete video of the assault was shown leading to collective outrage as well as digital vigilantism, the police in Rotterdam only shows the complete video if there is now other way. Essentially, the reaction to the first “kopschoppers” incident in Eindhoven has been a learning moment for the entire police organization in the Netherlands. Based on this, as well as on smaller cases in the Rotterdam area itself, the departments have learned what to communicate and what not as explained by Grootenboer, Okkerse, Kolsteren and the communication advisor. This, for instance, has led to the approach in which first the communication department and the criminal investigations department (“recherche” / “opsporing”) in Rotterdam try to have the suspects identified by only showing the footage before the actual assault, then show a little bit of the assault, and if it really is necessary they show the whole video. Essentially they try to limit the societal unrest and feeling of shock that could lead to (digital) vigilantism. If this stage is already past, an attempt at stopping digital vigilantism by the police can be done by communicating that the suspect is in custody. What this does is take away the motivation for many to continue their witch-hunt on Facebook and GeenStijl and when someone is incorrectly identified this can also be corrected by giving a limited description of the correct suspect such as gender, age, and place of residence. Overall the police thus has multiple ways in which it communicates, for different reasons, and with different goals – for instance, to ask citizens for help or to prevent digital vigilantism – all leading to different contributions to the visibility of the police, suspects and/or missing persons and different reactions by citizens. But how is citizen participation visible in the Dutch society specifically?

### **4.3 Citizen Participation**

Taking a closer look at citizen participation it can be said that their participation in police investigations in the Netherlands occurs quite regularly. Often this is done based on a call for help from the police as was stated by the internet detective interviewed for this thesis. This can for instance occur, when the communication department connected to criminal investigations (“opsporingscommunicatie”) shows images of a suspect on *politie.nl* as well as on *Bureau Rijnmond* which in turn leads to citizens spreading these images online and trying to identify the

suspect. Another way in which citizens help out the police is by sharing police messages on social media, thus expanding the reach of those messages, something done by the active sharer that was interviewed.

The initiative does not always have to lay with the police. It can, for instance, also occur that citizens inform the police. One example given by officer Van Bree is that it can occur that a citizen informs the police of a video of one girl assaulting another girl is posted on Facebook which leads to many online reactions and shares by tagging an online police account in the post. Another option in which citizens play an active role in the search for a suspect when people start their own initiatives. A shop owner can decide to post a video of a theft on Facebook as was done by Leon Videler, something that Walsh (2014) referred to as autonomization. What is also done is structurally sharing information on thefts, break ins and other crimes through Facebook and WhatsApp groups, something that occurred in the village of the other shopkeeper. According to the interviewees, sharing information like this is becoming increasingly normal. As mentioned by the shop owner whom preferred to stay anonymous: “that is the first priority these days. You all warn each other” (“dat is tegenwoordig volgens mij nummer een wat je doet. Je waarschuwt elkaar allemaal”). But how are decisions made on when to participate and how? What are the negative and the positive aspects of this phenomena from the standpoint of the police as well as of the citizens participating. Moreover, what are the aims and justifications of these activities? Furthermore, how does the police manage these activities? And finally what is the influence of Web 2.0 on this phenomena?

#### ***4.3.1 Emotional Versus Rational***

The decision by citizens to share information on the internet is seen by the police as an emotional one. A senior officer involved in criminal investigations (“opsporing”), Raymond Kolsteren argues, where for the police there is some sort of moral boundary, this is not the case with a shopkeeper who’s products were stolen. Furthermore, when someone breaks into your house and steals your belongings and you have camera images of the suspect and decides to share them, this is seen by the police as an act based on emotion rather than rational thinking. Emotions, and the need to share something that is sensational, also impact witnesses who share information online. It has, for instance, occurred that witnesses of a shooting had posted a picture of the shooting on Twitter. In a case described by officer Van Bree, this reaction to post a picture on Twitter, is

more based on shock and sensationalism, than that it is a rational decision. Detective Okkerse furthermore argued that in cases where digital vigilantism is the aim, the aspect of helping people disappears in favor of sensationalism.

What the interviews with two shopkeepers and a bar owner showed, however, is that these decisions by citizens to share information is not solely based on emotion. Leon Videler for instance, mentioned that although the decision to put something online was made based on frustration, the way he put it online was a rational decision. He thought things through, for instance that the video that he posted should not be longer than 20 seconds as this would increase the amount of viewers. By doing so he took into account one additional downside of Web 2.0, namely the short attention span. The bar owner that was interviewed described a similar pattern. While his decision to post a video on Facebook was largely based on frustration, the way in which he did it was not rash and some thought and time went into making the movie in such a way that it was more a humorous post than a real call for digital vigilantism did show that it was a rational decision. This pattern was also found with the second shop owner. He was irritated about what had happened, so this influenced his decision to post an image online. His decision to work with a picture rather than a video, however, was a very rational one. As was argued by him, videos can take too long, an argument that thus corresponds with what fellow shopkeeper Leon Videler mentioned. Furthermore, he claimed that a picture is more direct and more easily recognizable. As explained by him, the actual theft in this case was of something small and happened fast thus many people would not spot it and thereby making a picture the stronger option. Additionally, the conscious decision to not use Facebook to spread images of thieves with fellow shopkeepers and people in the city anymore these days, but rather to do so through a WhatsApp group was mentioned by Leon Videler. He did so because he noticed the potential Web 2.0, and in particular Facebook, has to put people on the pillory for the rest of their lives through the online version of the traditional pillory, since whatever is on the Internet will most likely not leave it anymore, thus sharing O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson’s (2011) view on material on the Internet.

#### ***4.3.2 Positive Aspects***

Citizen participation has several positive aspects. First of all, if the public is willing to help, or act by themselves, this can lead to many new people who can help with making the Netherlands safe.

When citizens share police information it may reach new groups who had not seen the initial police message, thus leading to new witnesses who come forward, or new people who can help identify a suspect as explained by the Internet detective. Furthermore, as mentioned by officer Kolsteren and his colleague from the communication department, with the wider spread of messages more people will be informed about missing person cases, thus leading to more people keeping an eye out, which can possibly lead to the discovery of missing persons. As argued by officer Van Bree, at the moment there are not that many police officers available, thus information spread and provided by citizens is essential. This spread of police messages even occurs in unexpected places, namely Facebook groups for digital vigilantism – in some cases after a request for this by the police - as was mentioned by the social media coordinator. This spread of messages thus increases the visibility of these messages, a reason for the police to see actions like this as beneficial and citizens participating in this as allies rather than a threat, information that thus give a partial answer to SQ5.

Secondly actions of citizens can provide useful information. They can help with the identification of suspects, but it can also occur that citizens make the police aware of cases they did not know about. Citizens can for instance come across a “kopschopfilmpje” online and the accompanying digital vigilantism campaign and inform the police of this. The police as an organization also promotes crowd-sourced policing in one specific way. Amber Alerts is an alert system for when children go missing and in which citizens are crowd-sourced on the initiative of the police (“Amber Alert,” n.d.), something that can be seen as a form of what Walsh (2014) calls responsabilization. In this case the police thus shows that they are aware of how crowd-sourced policing can lead to valuable information. All in all this thus corresponds with the view of Marx (2013) on how citizens provide valuable information that can be used to solve cases. The information they provide cannot only be useful for the police but also for citizens themselves. It can be argued that citizen activities based on sharing information on suspected criminals in the neighborhood through for instance platforms like WhatsApp, and thus essentially the idea of a digital neighborhood watch, can improve how safe people feel, as was done in the case of the second shopkeeper. The idea that everyone has their eyes open for suspicious things that happen in the offline world and share this in the online world, thus increases the feeling of safety.

Another way in which citizen initiatives can be seen as positive is by focusing on the proactive stance they take. As argued by social media coordinator Arnoud Grootenboer, instead

of pointing the finger at the police immediately, citizens more and more try to do something themselves as well, something he sees as a positive development. This idea thus corresponds with the findings by Van Steden, Van Caem and Boutellier (2011) that the public and non-governmental organizations could possibly also carry some responsibility for keeping the Netherlands safe and orderly, thus no longer seeing it as just the responsibility of the police and the justice department. It also shows that people within the organization see citizen involved in citizen initiatives as useful allies, something that was also confirmed by the five other police representatives.

#### *4.3.3 Negative Aspects*

Despite the several positive aspects of citizen initiatives, negative aspects can be found as well. One possible negative aspect connected to crowd-sourced policing in particular is the possibility of endangering a crime scene during a search for missing persons. The online spread of information in these cases usually forms no risk, however, when the activities take place in the offline world, for instance when citizens start searching the woods as volunteers, this could possibly lead to damaging of the crime scene as was mentioned by the communication advisor as well as by officers Kolsteren and Van Bree.

A negative aspect that can occur with crowd-sourced policing as well as with digital vigilantism is the loss of control and context, something that was already pointed out as a downside of Web 2.0, and confirmed in the data by Grootenboer and Kolsteren. Next to the examples given in section 4.1.3 on loss of control over content it can also occur that people active on Web 2.0 shift the context from a theft towards Eastern Europeans being criminals in general and what should be done to them as was the case with Leon Videler's video.

A further negative characteristic of digital vigilantism is that people are convicted without a trial, as would be the case when only the police is involved, which can have several results. Actions like these leave room for convicting the wrong person or sharing the wrong personal information while naming and shaming the suspect which confirms what Marx (2013) wrote, as explained in section 4.1.3 as well. Because of this it has occurred that the suspect was identified by the crowd and said to live at a certain address, digital vigilantes gathered there but it turned out the suspect did not live there as explained by Arnoud Grootenboer. This example, as well as other instances where citizens also act offline, can according to the internet detective thus lead to

the reaction to the crime by digital vigilantes demanding more time of the police than the actual crime itself. Moreover, digital vigilantism can also involve a call for violence in the offline world. While this hardly seems to happen so far according to the interviewees, the chance is high that this will happen in the future according to the detective behind PRO24/7.

Furthermore, digital vigilantism and specifically ‘naming and shaming’ can lead to reduced sentencing (“strafkorting”) and can thus mean that the criminal gets punished less by the actual judge as stated by four out of six police respondents. Van Bree explained this effect of ‘naming and shaming’. Essentially in the justice system making someone’s name public can be an additional form of punishment, for instance if you are a notary and committed fraud. Since this additional punishment does not exist for crimes such as theft, if naming and shaming has been a part of the online campaign against the suspect, this almost immediately leads to a reduced sentence (“strafvermindering”). Overall the data that was gathered thus shows more negative aspects connected to digital vigilantism than to crowd-sourced policing.

There are two more negatives that apply only to the police. First of all citizen activities can turn against the police, for instance by exposing the police, thus forming a threat to the police. Specific examples of this can be found in section 4.4.1. Secondly, digital vigilantism campaigns can happen 24 hours a day seven days a week. Campaigns can thus also happen at moment on which the police is hardly monitoring the online world, leading to a slow response to the information. If a “kopschopfilmpje” is shared Saturday night at 11pm the chances are that this is spotted by many citizens, but not by the police and could thus possibly lead to the digital vigilantes identifying the suspect(s) faster than the police.

#### ***4.3.4 Aims of Activities***

While with digital vigilantism it is argued that naming and shaming, and possible appointing yourself to judge are aims of these citizens action, in these cases of crowd-sourced policing this is not the case. The data did suggest three other main aims. One of the aims stated by the two shop owners as well as the bar owner, was to get attention for what happened. The idea here is that if you do not share, chances are nobody will know about what happened and criminals can continue what they are doing more easily. It can be said that keeping the neighborhood safe and keeping people informed and having them keeping an eye out it thus the aim of citizen activities as well, something confirmed by the active sharer on Facebook as well as by the anonymous shop owner

who stated: “it is only helpful that if we know this man does something that is illegal, that we inform each other” (“het is toch hartstikke goed dat als je weet dat die meneer iets doet wat niet mag, dat we dat van elkaar weten”). This way people can be alert and keep track of the person until he is arrested by the police. Posting information about a break-in and posting a humoristic video of the security camera footage, as was done by the bar owner, strengthen the tie with Facebook followers, next to keeping the neighborhood informed.

Another aim can be to catch the suspect, although this did not seem to be the main aim in two out of the three initiatives by the interviewees. With the theft at Leon Videler’s shop he was pretty sure that it was someone that was part of an Eastern European family that commits thefts in the Netherlands and had probably already left the country, and thus finding the suspect was not the main goal. In the case of the break-in into the bar, catching the suspect was only a secondary aim. This also could be determined based on the fact that the owner did not share the most visible frames he had of the suspect with the public. In the case of the second shopkeeper catching the suspect was a main goal. His aim was to locate the suspect and confront him in order to get the stolen product back. Essentially he would have preferred to get the product back, over the actual arrest of the suspect, this thus also being the reason why he started his online search first and only informed the police days after the arrest. Next to the aim to apprehend the suspect, it can thus also be the aim to locate the suspect in order to get the stolen product back, rather to really wanting the suspect caught in order to have him prosecuted or punish the suspect oneself.

A third reason to post this sort of materials online is that it can have a deterrent effect as mentioned by both shopkeepers. People become aware that if something is stolen from these places, it will be noticed and an online campaign may follow. As argued by the shopkeeper who preferred to remain anonymous, citizen actions like these may make thieves leave the area faster, and especially if these thieves are part of organized groups, may make the specific area known as a “no-go area” since they do not only run the risk of being caught by the police but also to be “hunted down” by citizens in the online and offline world. He, however, also noted that this may simply displace the crime elsewhere.

#### ***4.3.5 Justification for Activities***

Citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing, like the ones that were interviewed for this thesis, have different justifications for their aims and actual actions. People sharing messages of the

police, and secondary sources of information on police cases, often justify their actions by saying they are trying to help others. This, for example, as was done by the interviewee who frequently shares these sorts of messages. The idea of ‘sharing is caring’ plays a role in this context. If what they do can help solve a case sooner sharing should be done.

The shopkeepers and the bar owner, on the other hand, justified their actions, namely the sharing of a picture or video of the suspect, with the argument that what they share is the truth and should be shared in the common interest of society. Rather than giving a description of someone that broke in, which can lead to all kinds of wrongful identification or posting a picture of someone who was in the shop while the theft was committed but of whom they have no actual proof that this person was responsible, these citizens only posted these images since they had actual proof. As argued by the anonymous the shop owner “I can prove that it was that person ... In that case I think we should warn each other yes” (“Dus ik kan aantonen dat diegene het is geweest... Dan denk ik dat je elkaar moet waarschuwen ja”). He thus felt justified in his action.

Another reason for taking action themselves is the experienced lack of police effort and thus a lack of trust which lead to wanting to take action themselves, something that played a role in all four interviews. In the interview with the person who actively shares messages, she mentioned to have a problem with how slow police is with sharing information in missing persons cases. She argued that when she could share information obtained through a citizen initiative faster, she would partake in such an initiative rather than wait for the official channels. Shop owner Leon Videler did not trust the police to solve the theft. While he posted the footage on Facebook first and only after that reported it with the police, he belief in this specific case was proven to be right, as the police claimed not to have time to make his case a priority. The bar owner and the other shopkeeper spoke of their view of the police more thoroughly and will therefore be discussed in separate paragraphs.

The belief that the police does not have enough time was visible with the bar owner as well. After having encountered a break-in, death threats, an attempted robbery, in which some of the suspects were only caught because of his own actions, his trust in the police and in the legal system was already wavering. Then two subsequent break-ins by the same person occurred and the police did not (seem to) act, even though the bar owner supplied security footage on which the suspect was really visible and informed them of a paperboy who had seen the suspect and could give statement. Because of the lack of effort by the police, this bar owner felt justified in



posting a video of the suspect on his Facebook page. It should be mentioned that this citizen remarked that if the police only had more time, then cases like this could have easily been solved and he would not have needed to post such a video.

This belief that the police does not have enough manpower is shared by the shopkeeper whom preferred to stay anonymous. Based on experience he knew that certain protocols are in place that slow the search for a suspect down as well as that cases like thefts do not have priority with limited manpower. Because of this view on the police, and the lack of confidence that the limited police presence in the rural area in which he has his shop would be able to locate the thief rapidly this time, he felt justified in starting his own campaign. His view of the police based on previous cases thus influenced his view of the police in this specific case. Similar to Videler he was proven right in his belief, since after informing the police, he was told that his case was not a priority and the citizen campaign was the reason why the suspect was eventually arrested.

This idea of lack of police effort is closely connected to the frustration some of the interviewees showed with the process police officers have to work with. As the shop owners mentioned police officers have to follow protocols which slow process down and which therefore lead to a lack of trust in police officers catching criminals in cases of theft. The shopkeeper who preferred to remain anonymous and the bar owner connected this to the justice system and the Public Prosecution Service. The situation now, requires much effort by the police officers as well as by citizens who report a crime, something which according to the shopkeeper only stimulates citizen initiatives as it would save him time and money he now had to invest in the prosecution of the suspect through the justice system, in the form of testimonies, providing the video footage, and travel time and expenditures. This thus shows a potential new way in which the police could prevent citizen initiatives that could lead to digital vigilantism, namely by decreasing police protocols and lowering work citizens have to put into criminal trails and returning trust of citizens in the justice system. As it is now, however, this lack of fast and visible police action can be seen as one of the reasons for citizen initiatives, and thus provides one factor in answer to SQ6 next to the visible call for help of the police.

#### ***4.3.6 Management of Citizen Activities by the Police***

Within the police there is no official policy on how to respond to citizen activities. The interviewees did mention some occurrences that have occurred and which they think should be

part of a future policy. In the case of offline searches by citizens, the police should for instance try to coordinate the search, or at least brief the volunteers on how to act as mentioned by officer Van Bree. Additionally social media coordinator Grootenboer argued that the police should keep the dialogue open with citizens and show that digital vigilantism is not the way to solve things either, something that is done now but is still quite limited. Furthermore, he suggests citizen activities to be treated as an unorganized event. It is something that happens without a license and for which no investigation into threat escalation (“dreigingsescalatie”) has been done, so to which need to be responded as a crisis. Essentially the police already has the protocols on how to react to these citizen actions. These actions now only take place on a different platform and thus needs to find a place within the existing protocols.

While these are all reactive responses after something occurs in the online world, it is thus also important, as mentioned previously, to think of what can cause digital vigilantism, and consider if something should thus be communicated with citizens or not, for instance if video footage of an incident should be shared. For specific example see section 4.2.5. One could thus argue that by doing so, the police tries to limit the threat of visibility created by citizen initiatives and increase the way in which citizens can enhance wanted forms of visibility, for instance by sharing police messages and responding to calls for help.

#### ***4.3.7 Differences Between Digital and Offline Action***

Online action by citizens can be argued to be somewhat easier compared to offline action and can thus be a reason for more people to take part. As mentioned by the respondent who shared messages frequently, sharing a Facebook post is a matter of seconds, while offline action, for instance the spread of flyers, already asks for more of the citizens time, thus showing that online actions ask for less time of the citizen. Starting a digital vigilantism campaign is also seen as easier in the online world by Kevin van Bree. He makes the distinction between online contacts and warm contacts (warme contacten) – thus the contacts one actually knows in real life.

According to Van Bree in the online world it is easier to support someone due to the idea of anonymity and it is also easier to see as if there are a lot of supporters for a certain issue, “if necessary, you create your own in a manner of speaking” (“Uh, desnoods, maak je ze zelf aan bij wijze van spreken”). When one supports a warm contact in the offline world this is more visible, requires more effort, and may lead to reactions of other warm contacts. The active sharer that was

interviewed confirmed this belief and adds to this by saying that while online one is more likely to share messages from people you do not know, in the offline world this is something that is seen as more dangerous and ill-advised. In the offline world, crowd-sourced policing will thus most likely only occur if you actually know something, thus in case of warm contacts, for instance when someone living in the same street has lost something and you can help search for it. This thus also limits the amount of action that can be taken in the offline world.

Another difference that was brought up by the bar owner is that the chances that online actions lead to legal consequences for the citizens participating in digital vigilantism or crowd-sourced policing are smaller, than when you take offline action, for instance by performing a citizen arrest. This belief is in part confirmed by two of the police respondents as they mention that people who actively participate in digital vigilantism or crowd-sourced policing in the online world hardly ever need to worry about legal consequences since the police does not have the capabilities to police the whole web. This decreased risk may also motive people to participate in online actions, while they would not participate in offline actions. What these paragraphs thus show is that Web 2.0 is indeed seen as a platform on which citizen participation is easier and which is thus done faster, supporting previous research.

#### **4.4 Visibility**

While previous literature focuses on visibility of the police as well as that of suspects, the data gathered through the interviews also showed two other groups who have become more visible due to police and citizen activities on Web 2.0, namely the people participating in crowd-sourced policing and/or digital vigilantism as well as missing persons. This section will look at these four groups in more detail and thereby provide more answers to sub-questions two, three, and four.

##### ***4.4.1 Police Visibility***

Based on the gathered data it can be argued that the Rotterdam police departments are making themselves more visible to the public. Next to traditional forms of communication, and thus police visibility, for instance, through *Opsporing Verzocht*, they especially work on their visibility through social networking sites. Neighborhood cops (“wijkagenten”) on Twitter, corporate accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and initiatives such as PRO24/7 increase their visibility while at the same time aim to give a more realistic view of police tasks. While the

online visibility may be increasing, this does not mean that the police is becoming more visible in its entirety. The fact that officer Van Bree is involved with social media 40% of the time at the moment, for instance, impact his offline visibility. It is thus of great important to note that visibility should be maintained, and possible improved, in the offline as well as in the online world and that one is not a substitute for the other.

Moreover, it can be argued that police visibility in the online world only consists of what the police and the Public Prosecution Service want to make visible. Videos on PRO24/7 made with body-cameras, as explained by PRO24/7 expert Okkerse, have to confirm to strict rules and be approved by the Public Prosecution Service. One could thus argue that material that may not be favorable for the police will not be made visible. While this may be something that the police and the justice department can control in their own communication, Web 2.0 can be seen as a tool for citizens to fight against this. Web 2.0 opens up opportunities of 'naming and shaming' the police in the case of police failure and thus making this visible for the entire society. This potential of Web 2.0 was also a main reason why the Public Prosecution Service was scared of increasing visibility with the addition of Twitter cops as argued by officer Van Bree, as essentially it increases the possibility for public failure that can be highlighted by citizens. As explained by Van Bree, Twitter cops, are also being followed by the press, and Tweets send out by police officers thus often end up in news articles. While the sharing of police messages should be considered as beneficial it can also lead to increased attention when something is posted that should not have been shared which can thus cause extra exposure for the failure of the police.

One example of how increased visibility created by citizens can work against the police was given by an internet detective at the Rotterdam police. He talked of a case in which a police officer used his Facebook profile in an ill-advised manner. After watching a video of someone being stoned this person showed negative sentiment towards Muslims on his personal Facebook account, an account which showed that he worked for the police. This person went to sleep and deleted the message the next morning, but by then it was already too late as it was shared 480 times and used by newspapers. Control of the message was thus lost. As argued by the Internet detective, due to how visible this incident was, the police had to communicate about it to show the public that something was being done and informed the public that the officer responsible had been suspended for the duration of the investigation. This thus show how citizens active on Web 2.0, and the resulting exposure in traditional news media can lead to an increased visibility of the

police, also in a negative manner, and confirms Goldsmith's (2014) beliefs on how police officers presence on social media networking sites can possibly harm the reputation of the police and can therefore be seen as a threat to the police. Another way in which failure of the police becomes visible is when they communicated about a thief who had stolen and used debit cards but added the picture of an incorrect person. This often leads to news articles on this mistake which then circulate the web again as explained by the communication advisor that was interviewed. While these example can be seen as negative, they can also be interpreted as learning moments by the police and showcase the empowerment that is given to citizens in making police failure visible as well.

#### ***4.4.2 Suspect Visibility***

As mentioned previously, the police is becoming more and more willing to share information about suspects with the public, at an earlier stage in investigations after careful consideration if it is necessary. This, however, is not the only reason why suspect visibility is increasing. Suspects are making themselves more visible, for instance when gangs post videos of themselves as explained by the internet detective. Citizens also contribute to the increase in suspect visibility. Actions, like those taken by three out of four interviewees, where images or video footage of suspects were shared on Facebook increase suspect visibility. As argued by the two shopkeepers, search for a suspect often work with images since it provides proof to the readers, but also makes it more likely that people read the post, thus increasing suspect visibility by adding something visual. As mentioned by them pictures simply say more than a thousand words and thus speak to people more. When these posts are then shared by other citizens the exposure grows even more. Suspect visibility can increase even further if new media pays attention to the case, as this provides yet another platform on which the suspect becomes visible to a (new) group of citizens.

Based on the interviews it could be argued that these days some suspects are lucky not to be made completely visible by citizen initiatives. More and more groups of people create WhatsApp groups to warn each other of thieves for example, groups both shopkeepers are part of. While the suspect picture is shared, it is a restricted visibility to the people in that group rather than to everyone active on Facebook. Furthermore, some people responsible for citizen initiatives that make suspects visible, for instance the bar owner that was interviewed, deliberately decide to work with images on which the suspect is not the most visible and keep the footage on which he

was most visible for the police. Overall, suspect visibility by citizen initiatives could thus be increased further.

Furthermore, as confirmed by the interviewees, publishing names to make suspects even more visible is something citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing choose not to do. The bar owner, for example, described this as a conscious decision. In one of the cases of a break-in he encountered, he knew all the personal information of the criminal responsible, and thus had the opportunity to start a naming and shaming campaign, but refrained from this. This can thus be seen as confirmation of the definitions used in this thesis for crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism, one of the main differences being the use of ‘naming and shaming’. Furthermore, it shows that some citizens have the potential to increase suspect visibility but refrain from doing so. Not only many citizens refrain from using names, the police is hesitant in spreading names as well. As mentioned by the interviewee of the communication department this is only done when suspects are on the national list of wanted people (“nationale opsporingslijst”). It can therefore be said that the situation here is still different from the situation in other countries. Kolsteren, for instance, compared it to the situation in the United Kingdom, where suspects are published in the paper with picture and full name as well as the committed offense. This is a situation which both he and his colleague do not see any benefits in and do not see happening in the Netherlands.

One more point that should be mentioned in connection to suspect visibility is that these days once a suspect is made visible on Web 2.0, he or she will most likely always stay visible. Where in the past suspects may have been made visible in newspapers, newspapers in most cases end up as trash. These days, however, suspects are (also) made visible on the Internet, a medium that can contain material for infinity as argued by the Internet detective, and what thus corresponds with O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson’s (2011) view. Because of this, where before criminals did their time and where released from prison, these days what they did remains visible and thus even after they return to their normal lives they will remain visible as a criminal as argued by the Internet detective. According to him, it has even occurred that, due to this high-visibility, convicted criminals change their names in order to live a normal life again.

#### ***4.4.3 Visibility of Missing Persons***

Police and citizens do not only try to identify suspects, they also try to find missing persons. Where in the past police communication on missing persons was done through *Opsporing*

*Verzocht* and possible through new media, it could be said that nowadays missing persons are being made more visible on Web 2.0 as well. The police communicates about missing persons cases more, through for instance corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts, but also through Twitter accounts of the police officers involved with the case. Another way through which the police makes missing persons cases more visible in the case of underage children is through a systems like Amber Alert. This system spreads information about a missing child and a picture to citizens through for instance Facebook, Twitter but also through SMS text messages and website banners (“Amber Alert,” n.d.).

Next to the spread of picture, name and other personal information by the police, Web 2.0 has also made it possible for concerned families and friends to start their own online search through for instance Facebook, where people willing to help can interact as well as share information. Whereas the police often has to wait a mandatory period of time, citizens can make the case visible to many people before the police can communicate on it. Since sharing is inherent to social media, and especially to Facebook, this thus provides a change to make the case visible and increase the chance that he or she will be found. According to two of the citizen participants increasing visibility can thus also be a specific reason for citizens to share messages.

Similar to the idea that criminals remain visible for a long time after the incident, the same can be the case for missing persons. Social media coordinator Grootenboer expressed an example of a person who had been a missing person and who years after the fact had trouble getting a job since Grootenboer had put a Tweet out when he had been missing, also containing the information that he was a mental patient, information that was still out there years later and what withheld employers of hiring him. This thus shows how online visibility can also impact lives of formerly missing persons year later.

#### ***4.4.4 Citizen Visibility***

As mentioned previously, Moulton (2011) points out the idea that Web 2.0 offers anonymity to digital vigilantes. This can indeed be the case. Often digital vigilantes, active on weblogs such as *GeenStijl* and participating in naming and shaming on that platform, operate under avatars. They are thus largely anonymous, even for the police, who will most likely only reach the identity of these people through court cases to requisition (“vorder”) the information as mentioned by detective Okkerse. Many citizens, however, post material online based on the belief that they are

less visible. People reacting on, for example, “kopschopfilmpjes” on Facebook, are not as anonymous as they may think according to Van Bree, Okkerse, the Internet detective. People exposing themselves in comment sections of online newspapers also occurs. This seemingly anonymous area can thus turn in such a way that names are added in a discussion of people who were not suspects of a crime, but do become suspects because of these comments. An example was given by the internet detective that was interviewed. He had been following a comment section where a former employee reacted to an article on his former employer, a company that had just been exposed for illegal practices, by saying that he was not surprised. This reaction was replied to by another employee who eventually posted the name of the former employee and accused him of having been connected to those felonies himself while he was an employee as well. This discussion online led to the former employee also becoming part of the investigation of the company. His assumption that he could comment to the post and staying anonymous, was thus wrong since he was posting on a public site. Overall one could thus say that while Web 2.0 still provides the real opportunity for anonymity, it more so provides a veil of anonymity which in reality can lead to a greater visibility.

Web 2.0 also increases citizen visibility of people behind crowd-sourced policing initiatives, like the two shop owners and the bar owner interview for this thesis. Their messages were shared and thus visible for a large number of Facebook members. In the case of Leon Videler, the attention the post on Facebook received was something he never imagined. Next to the views of the video, the likes, comments and shares, these cases gained the attention of traditional news media as well, thus making the owners and the shops and bar even more visible. This thus not only shows that citizens themselves can become very much visible, it also shows that while traditional media these days many no longer be as needed for the initial message, they can still increase visibility of citizens, as well as that of the police, suspects and missing persons. Where Videler was interviewed by all the local papers as well as by a national one and was asked to be interviewed by *Hart van Nederland*, a Dutch news program, the bar owner, was interviewed for the eight o'clock news coverage (“*achtuursjournaal*”) and was present in several talk shows to talk about what had happened in his bar. While this can be seen as free publicity and use something negative to your own advantage, as was done by the bar owner, it can also lead to an overwhelmed feeling as was the case with shopkeeper Videler. Making someone else visible can thus greatly impact one's own visibility.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Discussion**

This research project looked into how the online presence of both police and citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism influences each other's activities and how these activities contribute to social visibility of the police, citizens, suspects and/or missing persons. Data gathered through in-depth interviews with police representatives as well as with citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing has provided a preliminary view on four main themes, namely Web 2.0, police communication, citizen initiatives, and visibility. What the data connected to these themes confirmed is the initial understanding that was worked with as stated in the introduction – namely that the increasing online presence of citizens on the internet means that the police also needs to be visible on the Internet, since a lack of visibility may lead to valuable intelligence being missed as well as a lack of trust in the police by its citizens and an increase in support for citizen led campaigns. The gathered data showed that the police has acknowledged the need to be visible both in the online and offline world, both to prevent negative ways in which citizens participate in solving crimes as well as to benefit from their activities, and intelligence provided by citizens and suspects. Furthermore the data showed that the phenomena of citizen activities are not only enhanced by the opportunities offered on the Web 2.0, but also by the increased communication and calls for help by the police. Citizens are thus increasingly seen as allies for the police.

The change in communication of the police also means that more information is shared leading to a perceived increase in suspect visibility, as well as in police visibility as they are visible on more platforms. While this increase in police visibility can lead to more people sharing messages of the police in their own network and increasing visibility and thus attention for, for instance, missing persons cases, it can still occur that in particular cases the police does not communicate (fast) enough, does not seem active enough, or communicate something that can cause collective outrage, which can cause citizen initiatives. These citizen initiatives in turn add to the visibility of suspects and/or missing persons, as well as to their own visibility, and can potentially make police failure or inactivity visible.

Based on the data the preliminary answer that can be given to the research question is that Web 2.0 added new platforms on which both citizens and the police can post and share material such as pictures and videos easier which makes the police, suspects and/or missing persons, as

well as citizen involved in crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism, more visible, while at the same time offering (a veil of) anonymity to citizens as well. The change in communication practices by the police has furthermore created an atmosphere in which citizens are included more in police work as they can further spread police messages, while at the same time focuses on benefitting from citizen initiatives. While lack of visible police action in certain cases, for instance with theft or break-ins, can still lead to citizen taking action themselves, within this context it can be argued that citizens action should be seen more as a supplementary action to hasten the process, rather than as a way to act outside of the legal system and take complete control over the search as well as the prosecution of the suspect. Partly because of this, while the police is aware of the risks of these actions, overall citizens are seen as allies, rather than as threats.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Where before it remained unclear how the concept of online visibility tied in with the phenomena of crowd-sourced policing digital vigilantism as well as with the way in which the police functions in the Netherlands, this thesis provides a preliminary view based on information provided through qualitative interviews with six police representatives from the Rotterdam police department and four citizens from different parts of the Netherlands involved in Web 2.0 activities concerning crimes and missing persons cases. The gathered data from these interviews confirmed as well as challenged some of the existing literature mentioned in chapter two. It supports the idea that Web 2.0 services as the facilitator of digital vigilantism and crowd-sourced policing as expressed by Prins (2010), and on the other hand supplies further information on how Web 2.0 is used by the police that ties in with the work of Downey (2012) and Deneff, Bayerl, and Kaptein (2013), as it shows the slow incorporation of social media platforms within police-citizen communication. Furthermore the data shows agreement with Starbird et al. (2014) view of citizen participation as a valuable partner for the police, while at the same time does not disregard the risks portrayed by Marx (2013). The data furthermore pointed out that Web 2.0 possibilities indeed play a role in the choice for crowd-sourced policing – thus showing agreement with John (2012) – as does a lack of visible action taken by the police – as argued by Haas, De Keijser and Bruinsma (2013) previously.

Disagreement with the existing literature can also be found. Although many contribute anonymity as one of the aspects of Web 2.0, as for instance done by Moulton (2011), this research has shown that it is plausible to think that Web 2.0 also has the power to make citizens more visible, especially when Web 2.0 is paired with traditional news media, as was seen in the situations with the shopkeepers and the bar owner. Additionally, while the data thus confirms Brighenti's (2007) idea of mediated place as places of high visibility, it can be argued that visibility while exposing suspects is not as uni-directional as portrayed by Thompson (2005), as it also requires an increase in visibility by the police or can lead to an increased visibility of citizens who expose suspects through crowd-sourced policing. It is therefore plausible to argue that visibility is not merely a uni-directional double-edged sword in those cases, but a multi-edged weapon which can empower and disempower different groups in several ways within one act.

It should be made clear that the performed research faced some limitations. One way in which this research was limited was in the access to participants. Essentially digital vigilantes could be seen as a hidden population that was incredibly hard to reach. While citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing were also hard to access, the application of a multi-modal mode of recruiting, for instance by following up a Facebook message with several phone calls, led to four participants that were recruited. Together with experts interviews with Rotterdam police representatives found through snowball sampling, as well as the slight change of focus from digital vigilantism more towards the police and crowd-sourced policing this led to a sufficient sample for a comprehensive preliminary view on the situation. It is important to note that due to the chosen method, namely non-probability sampling, generalizing the data is not possible. While the chosen method may limit the generalizability it did provide the wanted information, namely motivations and experiences that created a clearer image of the connection between the police and citizens who partake in crowd-sourced policing initiatives and digital vigilantism as well as examples of how Web 2.0 has a great impact on visibility of the police, citizens, suspects and/or missing persons. If this connection is visible in other areas of the Netherlands requires further research, but since Rotterdam should be seen as a test site in terms of online communication it is likely the case that this view is not completely transferable to the whole of the Netherlands just yet.

Not only would it be interesting to follow up this study in a similar manner focusing on a different police department in order to form a more complete view of the situation in the

Netherlands, the gathered data has also shown some other avenues for further research. One possibility is a study focused solely on police communication in the whole of the Netherlands and thereby concentrate on the differences in online communication. What the data of this research implies is that the police is very much a fragmented organization in terms of communication since the implementation of communication through Web 2.0. Therefore, doing further research into this by looking at how different police districts throughout the country differ in their levels on social media implementation, would add to the existing literature as well as add to police knowledge. Another avenue for further research is to focus solely on the perception of citizens active in crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism on the police as well as on the justice system as two of the citizen respondents argued that the justice system is a deterrent for actually going to the police to solve crimes. Finally, it may also be worthwhile to redo this research in 5 years to see how the landscape has evolved. Not only will new Web 2.0 applications exist, a new law is being proposed at the moment which will make the online publication of security camera images by citizens legal, something that could thus possibly lead to an increase of citizen initiatives.

In conclusion it can thus be said that while this research made a valuable contribution to showing what role visibility plays in police communication, and in the possible reaction to this (lack of) communication by citizens, – in the form of crowd-sourced policing and digital vigilantism – further research is still beneficial to create an comprehensive understanding of the situation in the Netherlands and to look further into the multi-edged weapon that is visibility.

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## Appendix A: Overview of Interviewees

### Police respondents:

1. Arnoud Grootenboer / Coordinator “Project Sociale Media” / Male
2. Harry Smit (Pseudonym) / Internet detective / Male
3. Nathan Okkerse / Detective at Politie Rotterdam Oost and officer responsible for PRO24/7 / Male
4. Raymond Kolsteren / Police team leader for large investigations with knowledge of communication procedures towards citizens / Male
5. Bianca Pel (Pseudonym) / Communication advisor / Female
6. Kevin van Bree / Senior officer at Politie Delfshaven, part of “Project Sociale Media” as well as police ambassador / Male

### Respondents from group of citizens involved in crowd-sourced policing:

1. Leon Videler / Shop owner who uploaded video of a theft on Facebook / Male
2. Herman Berg (Pseudonym) / Bar owner who uploaded a video of a break-in / Male
3. Jessica Jansen (Pseudonym) / Citizen participating heavily in sharing on Facebook / Female
4. Richard Deen (Pseudonym) / Shop owner who uploaded a photo of a thief on Facebook / Male

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide Police Respondents**

### ***Introductie:***

- Wat is uw functie binnen de politie?
- In hoeverre ligt de focus op het Internet binnen uw werkzaamheden?
  - o Gaat het dan vooral om hoe de politie actief is op het internet en zichzelf zichtbaar maakt, of op wat burgers op internet doen en hoe jullie hier iets mee kunnen doen?
    - Waarom is dit?
  - o Denkt u dat de Internet aanwezigheid van de politie vooral gericht is op het naar buiten brengen van informatie of op interactie met de burger?
    - Wat vind u hiervan?
- Met de toename van mogelijkheden op het Internet en het aantal smartphones in Nederland, op welke manieren leidt dit tot een verandering binnen de politie?
  - o Sinds wanneer zijn jullie echt bezig met online zichtbaarheid?
  - o Hoe wordt social media gebruikt door jullie?
  - o In hoeverre heeft dit invloed op specifieke zaken?
    - Kunt u een voorbeeld geven?

### ***Burger betrekken:***

- Met welk doel wordt er gecommuniceerd naar de burger vanuit de politie?
- Komt het naar uw weten vaak voor dat burgers betrokken worden bij het oplossen van zaken?
  - o Kunt u een voorbeeld geven?
  - o Wat voor hulp wilt u in dit soort gevallen van de burger?
  - o Wat voor betrokkenheid wilt u juist niet?
  - o Is de reactie van de burger iets wat makkelijk valt te controleren?
    - Zo ja, hoe?
    - Zo nee, waarom niet?
  - o Gebeurt deze oproep voor hulp tegenwoordig vaak via het internet?
    - Zo ja, waarom?
    - Zo nee, waarom niet?

- Wordt dit gedaan door de communicatie afdeling of plaats u zelf ook dit soort oproepen?
- Bestaat hier een protocol voor?
- Denkt u dat de burger de politie goed weet te vinden op het Internet?
  - Waarop baseert u dit?

***Burger initiatieven:***

- Komt het naar uw weten voor dat burgers zelf initiatieven starten om een zaak op te lossen?
  - Kunt u een voorbeeld geven?
  - Ziet u dit als iets negatiefs of juist als iets positief?
    - Waarom?
- Is de digitale schandpaal iets waar u vaak mee in aanraking komt?
  - Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een zaak waarbij dit het geval was?
  - Vanaf welk moment begon u in contact te komen met dit soort acties?
- Zou u zeggen dat de digitale schandpaal en eigenrichting op het internet meer zichtbaar is voor de politie tegenwoordig?
  - Omdat de politie zich meer richt op het Internet of omdat het simpelweg vaker voorkomt?
- Is de digitale schandpaal iets waarmee u vaker in aanraking komt dat traditionele eigenrichting?
- Wat is de impact van de digitale campagne(s) van burgers op de zaak/zaken van de [zaak waar deze persoon bij betrokken was]?
  - In dit specifieke geval, vond u de online campagne door burgers een gevaar voor het onderzoek of een waardevolle aanvulling op het politiewerk?
- Hoe beïnvloed de digitale schandpaal politiewerk over het algemeen?
- In hoeverre worden dit soort campagnes actief gevolgd door de politie?

***Positieve aspecten en negatieve aspecten:***

- Wat zijn de positieve kanten van dit soort (online) acties van burgers?
  - In uw visie helpen dit soort acties ook echt bij het oplossen van incidenten?

- Wat zijn de negatieve aspecten van dit soort (online) acties van burgers?
  - o Kunnen dit soort digitale campagnes leiden tot ondermijning van de sociale orde?
- Zou u zeggen dat de positieve aspecten zwaarder meewegen dan de negatieve or juist andersom?
  - o Waarom?

***Verschillende types:***

- Wordt er voor zover u weet onderscheid gemaakt in het soort incidenten waarop digitale campagnes reageren, van minder ernstig zoals foutgeparkeerde auto's naar ernstigere delicten zoals kopschopfilmpjes, wat betreft de manier waarop de politie handelt in deze zaken?
  - o Waarom?
  - o Zo ja, heeft dit onderscheid ook invloed op welke campagnes de politie ziet als nuttig en welke niet?
    - Zijn sommige reacties meer in proportie met de ernst van het incident dan andere?
  - o Heeft dit alleen impact op of/hoe de politie reageert op de burgerinitiatieven of heeft het ook impact op de zaak zelf?
    - Waarom?

***Band met de burgers:***

- Heeft u wel eens aan een zaak gewerkt waarin de politie werd beschuldigd door burgers van het feit dat ze niet genoeg deden?
  - o Kunt u hier iets over vertellen?
- In hoeverre denkt u dat de zichtbaarheid en openheid van de politie burgerinitiatieven beïnvloedt?
  - o Waarom?
  - o Denkt u dat er meer burgers gebruik maken van de digitale schandpaal als de politie weinig zichtbaar is?
    - Kunt u dit uitleggen?
- Wordt de digitale schandpaal ook gebruikt tegen de politie voor zover u weet?

- Kunt u een voorbeeld geven?

***Dynamiek online en offline wereld:***

- Heeft digitale eigenrichting een andere politiestrategie nodig dan traditionele eigenrichting?
  - Heeft u beide vormen van eigenrichting wel eens meegemaakt in uw carrière?
  - Wat zijn volgens u de grote verschillen?
  - Is er volgens u een algemene benadering van de politie naar digitale schandpaal campagnes?
    - Zo ja, is deze adequaat or ziet u liever nog wat veranderingen?
      - Wat voor veranderingen?
    - Zo niet, denkt u dat een bepaalde strategie nodig is?
      - Denkt u dat zoiets in de nabije toekomst gaat komen?
- Denkt u dat er een relatie is tussen online en offline eigenrichting?
  - Kunt u een voorbeeld geven?
  - Heeft dit consequenties op de reactie van de politie?
    - Heeft online of juist offline eigenrichting een grotere prioriteit?
      - Waarom?

## Appendix C: Interview Guide Citizen Respondents

### *Introductie*

#### *Specifieke geval:*

- Waarom besloot u zelf actie te ondernemen?
- Van welke platforms heeft u gebruik gemaakt?
  - o Waarom?
- Tot wat voor online reacties heeft uw actie geleid?
  - o Was dit ook uw doel?
- Tot wat voor offline reacties heeft uw actie geleid?
  - o Was dit ook uw doel?
- Tot wat voor positieve resultaten heeft het geleid?
- Tot wat voor negatieve resultaten heeft het geleid?
- Was u zich bewust van het feit dat u de verdachte met uw actie zichtbaar maakte voor de samenleving?
  - o Zo ja, heeft dit meegewogen in uw besluit om een foto of juist een video te gebruiken?
  - o Wat is de reden voor u om de beelden nu nog steeds op Internet te laten staan?
- Was het voor u de bedoeling om de verdachte zelf te berechten via het Internet?
  - o Was 'naming and shaming' een doel van u om de verdachte te straffen?

#### *Acties anderen:*

- Bent u iemand die ook meedoet aan dit soort acties van anderen?
  - o Op welke manier helpt u mee?
    - Waarom doet u dit (niet)?
  - o Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een campagne waar u aan mee heeft gewerkt?
- Als de politie vraagt om hulp van burgers met identificatie van dieven bijvoorbeeld, bent u dan ook geneigd hierbij de helpen?
  - o Waarom (niet)?



***Digitale schandpaal:***

- Denkt u dat burgerinitiatieven die leiden tot het zetten van de verdachte aan een digitale schandpaal kunnen leiden tot de ondermijning van de sociale orde?
  - o Zo ja, op welke manieren?
  - o Zo nee, waarom niet?
    - Ziet u het als een positieve gebeurtenis?

***Positieve aspecten en negatieve aspecten:***

- Wat zijn de positieve kanten van dit soort (online) acties van burgers?
- Wat zijn de negatieve aspecten van dit soort (online) acties van burgers?
  - o Kunnen dit soort digitale campagnes leiden tot ondermijning van de sociale orde?
- Zou u zeggen dat de positieve aspecten zwaarder meewegen dan de negatieve or juist andersom?
  - o Waarom?

***Verschillende types:***

- Maakt u onderscheid tussen het soort incidenten waarop de campagnes reageren, van minder erg naar heel ernstig?
  - o In hoeverre beïnvloedt dit of u een online campagne gerechtvaardigd vindt?
    - Beïnvloedt dit ook in hoeverre u het gebruik van een digitale schandpaal gerechtvaardigd vindt?
  - o In hoeverre beïnvloedt dit uw besluit om mee te werken aan een campagne?
- U zei mee te hebben gedaan aan de campagne tegen [campagne die de participant genoemd heeft], maar zou u ook mee willen doen aan een campagne tegen [een minder ernstig, of ernstiger incident]?
  - o Waarom in die specifieke gevallen wel/niet?

***Relatie met de politie:***

- Hoe was in uw specifieke geval de relatie met de politie?
  - o Ziet u de politie meer als bondgenoot of als oppositie?
    - Waarom?

- Heeft dit uw besluit tot het starten van een burgerinitiatief beïnvloed?
- Ziet u uw actie meer als een echte actie om zelf de zaak op te lossen en af te handelen of juist als een hulpmiddel voor de politie?
  - Waarom?
- Verschilt uw blik op de politie per incident? Of heeft u een beeld van de politie die altijd geld?
  - Kunt u uitleggen waarom?
- Heeft de zichtbaarheid van de politie in reactie op een incident invloed op of u een burgerinitiatief steunt?
- Welke rol denkt u dat de politie moet spelen bij incidenten die leiden tot online burgerinitiatieven?
- In hoeverre zie je de politie in de online wereld als je meewerkt aan de digitale schandpaal campagnes?
  - Kunt u een voorbeeld geven?
  - Vond u dit positief of juist negatief?

***Dynamiek online en offline wereld:***

- Denkt u dat de toenemende mogelijkheden op het internet, zoals sociale media, en nieuwe technologieën zoals smartphones, campagnes tegen diefstal en geweld opgezet door burgers alleen maar zal doen toenemen?
  - Waarom (niet)?
- Over het algemeen, denkt u dat wat er in de online wereld gebeurt ook echt effect heeft op de offline wereld?
  - Op welke manieren denkt u dat uw online acties een offline effect hebben (gehad)?
    - Heeft u daarmee uw doel bereikt?
- Deed of doet u zelf mee aan dit soort campagnes die plaatsvinden in de offline wereld in plaats van op internet?
  - Zo ja, kunt u het verschil uitleggen tussen dit soort campagnes online en offline?
  - Zo niet, waarom niet?