

Crime Reduction and Community Safety

Labour and the politics of
local crime control

**WILLAN
PUBLISHING**

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For Karen, Jack and Alfie

List of abbreviations

ABC	acceptable behaviour contract
ABI	area-based initiative
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASB	anti-social behaviour
ASBO	anti-social behaviour order
ASBU	Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
BCS	British Crime Survey
BCU	basic command unit
BSC	Building Safer Communities
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
CAD	Communities Against Drugs
CCT	compulsory competitive tendering
CCTV	closed-circuit television
CDP	Community Development Project
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CLP	community liaison panel
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPA	comprehensive performance assessment
CRASBO	anti-social behaviour order on conviction
CSO	community safety officer
DAT	Drug Action Team
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions

Crime Reduction and Community Safety

FPN	fixed penalty notice
GIS	geographical information system
HAT	Housing Action Trust
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
ISO	individual support order
LAA	local area agreement
LGA	Local Government Association
LGMB	Local Government Management Board
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MINC	mixed income and tenure community
MUD	moral underclass discourse
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NIM	National Intelligence Model
NOMS	National Offender Management System
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
NSNR	National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAT	Policy Action Team
PCSO	police community support officer
PCT	primary care trust
PDF	Partnership Development Fund
PND	penalty notice for disorder
PPO	prolific and other priority offender
PSA	public service agreement
PSU	Police Standards Unit
RED	redistributivist discourse
SARA	scan, analyse, respond and assess
SCI	Safer Communities Initiative
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SID	social integrationist discourse
SLCNG	Social Landlords' Crime and Nuisance Group
SRB	single regeneration budget
SSCF	Stronger and Safer Communities Fund
TMO	Tenant Management Organisation
UDC	Urban Development Corporation
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Preface

It was a dark and stormy night that preceded the day I first started working at an academic institution. I remember then reading a short document prepared by a colleague who had proposed, in anticipation of the impending research assessment exercise, that every member of staff should be producing at least a book every five years, along with a specified number of journal articles, book chapters, and so forth. I am sure his prescriptive views were not exceptional, and I am sure, having just 'Googled' him, that he would not be the first academic not to have practised what he preached. While I fail to be impressed by this way of measuring academic 'performance', and by the way such a mentality is transforming the academy into a forum for competitive entrepreneurial spirits whose existence attest to the 'successes' of the neo-liberal project, by his reckoning I am at least a couple of books down on my contribution. This book has been a long time coming, but it is time to make amends, and to pay my dues.

Between taking shape in my head, and appearing on the virtual paper of my computer screen, the ideas behind the book have suffered, but hopefully also benefited from, a number of translations. I had intended to offer an account of the domain that was much closer to the ground, focusing, for example, upon the auditing practices of local community safety practitioners; their efforts to put into effect something that amounted to evidence-based practice; their struggles in seeking to hold together Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) going through very turbulent times; and so forth. I also wanted to explore the different ways in which crime and disorder reduction was translated, for example between urban

and rural areas; or between neighbourhoods within the same local authority area. Furthermore, I wanted to examine what they did, in terms of the balance between situational and social crime prevention; the emphasis given to volume and low-level crimes; and the space accorded to less conventionally defined local crime problems, such as homophobic violence, or local corporate crime. But it didn't work out that way, in part because the evidence to write such a book is still a bit thin, and in part because I have been distracted by a felt need to understand the bigger picture of the New Labour project, and its place in the reproduction and governance of late-modern social relations. This bigger picture certainly speaks to the things that are happening closer to the ground, but for various reasons that are explored in this book, it is not reducible to them.

I would like to think that in the decade since I produced my last book I have grown up, that my analysis is more sophisticated, and my observations more incisive. Yet while I think I know more, I hope this book does not reveal that in a decade's ageing I understand less. Since my last book I have added to my family, and my family has added to the reasons the book has taken so long. The nappy days are behind us, but target-training can still be a bit of an issue. My family remains a beautiful distraction that I wouldn't and couldn't be without, and I would like to thank them all for enduring a sometimes stressed and short-tempered father and partner. They know by now that finishing the book won't eliminate that, though I continue to kid them that, like the First World War, it'll all be over by Christmas. Though the errors are all of my own making, I would also like to thank those people who have helped me along the way. We're a long way out of the loop down here in Devon, but I have nevertheless managed to benefit from contact 'abroad' with colleagues that include Gordon Hughes, Adam Edwards, Kevin Stenson, Tim Hope, Mike Maguire and Barry Loveday. Thanks also to those, such as Steve Savage, Ken Pease and Rob Mawby, who have helped me at various times along the path I have followed for most of my working life, except for the bits spent cleaning toilets and polishing brass cannons at Southsea Castle, although not at the same time. Thanks are also due to Lesley Simmonds, who helped me collect some of the source material on anti-social behaviour, to those who helped prepare the ground for a short sabbatical to write up much of this book, and to those at Willan, especially Emma Gubb, for putting together the finished item.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Crime prevention, community safety, crime reduction and the New Labour project

I regret that the concept in the subtitle of this book – *local crime control* – is somewhat vague, and does not help the prospective reader to map out the terrain that the book is intended to cover. Yet the choice of a vague subtitle is deliberate, because it reflects the essential ambiguity of the New Labour project in this particular area, as in many others. When New Labour came to power in 1997 after nearly two decades of Conservative government, they set out their stall with the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, which amongst its omnibus provisions laid out a set of statutory requirements for what, after the Act, came to be called *crime and disorder reduction*. Hence localities in England and Wales, based on district council or unitary authority boundaries, were required to establish Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), complete with three-yearly crime and disorder reduction strategies (Home Office 1998). For some of these 376 localities, mostly urban, Labour-controlled ones, this requirement for crime and disorder reduction came to be overlain on existing structures and practices that had, following the popularisation of the term in the 1991 Morgan Report (Home Office 1991), come to be known as *community safety*. Many of these localities preferred the term community safety as a description of their activities, and thus referred to their partnerships, even after 1998, as community safety partnerships, and referred to their strategies as community safety strategies. Indeed, in Wales, even in official discourse, the term Community Safety Partnership is the

preferred one for describing the statutory bodies established in the wake of the 1998 Act.

If crime and disorder reduction became, after 1998, the preferred official discourse for practices that had previously been conceived in terms of community safety, there was some great irony in this, because community safety itself had been a replacement discourse (van Swaaningen 2002) for *crime prevention*, a preferred term of the previous Conservative government. The Morgan Report (Home Office 1991) had been set up as a Home Office inquiry into the reasons behind the apparent slow local take-up of the crime prevention partnership approach which had been heavily promoted by the Conservatives since at least the inter-departmental *Circular 8/84* (Home Office 1984). Amongst its other recommendations the Morgan Report had suggested that this partnership approach would obtain broader appeal if the term community safety was used in preference to crime prevention. Crime prevention, the report argued, was too narrow a term which came with strong situational connotations which made it appear irrelevant to many agencies, particularly social ones, whose field of operations did not touch upon situational aspects of local crime problems, linked in the main as they were to issues of design, surveillance and target-hardening. Community safety, by contrast, was more inclusive, and more attractive to a broad church of interests, and thus it would be a better descriptor of the domain, and a more effective call-to-arms. Although this was not necessarily the most contentious of the Morgan Report's recommendations, all of its main recommendations, including this one, were nevertheless rejected by the Conservative government of the time, although as noted above some urban local authorities started to describe their work in such terms, quite possibly in deliberate opposition to the government's increasingly unpopular position. Many had expected New Labour, who in opposition had been far more supportive of Morgan's recommendations, to implement these recommendations when they assumed power in 1997, but as events transpired, New Labour preferred the nomenclature of crime and disorder reduction.

What's in a name?, as Shakespeare's Juliet puts to her familial arch-rival Romeo. My argument in this book is that the name matters. Since community safety came to be used by many in preference to crime prevention, and since crime and disorder reduction has in turn come to be used by the Home Office as its preferred term of use, we are left in a position of some uncertainty – hence the book's ambiguous subtitle of *local crime control*. What shape has this local crime control

taken under Labour's political leadership and direction? And why should this matter?

Names matter because their use infers the existence of approaches to controlling crime that differ in terms of what the problem is to be addressed, who does it, how it is done, and with what consequences beyond the obvious one of controlling crime. Inevitably, it is important to point out that the names refer to social constructions, the contours of which defy precise topographical description because their existence is intrinsically incomplete and contested. Consequently, in what follows we are drawing attention to tendencies and ideal typical characteristics that help us, for analytic purposes, to separate one from the other, rather than providing definitive accounts of each. The three variants of local crime control with which we are interested are crime prevention, community safety, and crime and disorder reduction. At this point it is possible to elaborate upon the core elements of crime prevention and community safety, because both are relatively well established. In order to establish the nature of crime and disorder reduction, however, we first need to explore the unfolding of New Labour's political project for this area of governmental activity, and since this is what much of the rest of the book is about, we will leave our discussion of it to the final chapter.

Crime prevention is most closely associated in the UK with the practices of local crime control that developed under the Conservatives from the 1980s onwards. Dominant as a theme amongst such practices was that of responsabilisation (Garland 2001), an attempt to disperse the responsibility for crime control beyond the narrow confines of the criminal justice system, where it has traditionally lain, and on to others, notably those within civil society who have been obliged to adopt a certain *privatised prudentialism* (O'Malley 1992) in their approach to crime, reflected in such practices as neighbourhood watch, and the private consumption of security goods and advice. This accords roughly with the primary model of crime prevention identified by Brantingham and Faust (1976), in which crime prevention is embedded in the routine activities of the general population, thereby addressing that part of 'the crime problem' that lay beneath the tip of the iceberg of detected crimes, which form the routine focus of the conventional criminal justice system's activities. This capacity of crime prevention, to address the vast majority of crime that lay beyond the reaches of the criminal justice system, was a major justification for the promotion of such an approach to crime control, and one that fitted the neo-liberal understanding of the limitations of state action, to which the Conservatives at this time subscribed.

Responsibilisation also disperses the responsibility for crime control onto those agencies whose interests and activities touch upon the causes of crime in one way or another. This recognises the centrality of the multi-agency approach to crime prevention, albeit imagined in a particular way which is best represented by the situational model devised by Home Office researchers in the 1970s (Gladstone 1980). This model valorised a problem-oriented approach to crime prevention which, in analysing the situation of the offence, inevitably led to the adoption of opportunity-reducing or target-hardening measures that sought to change criminogenic situations, often by means of 'technical fixes' that designed out crime, and that drew heavily upon a practical application of rational choice and routine activity theories. This is not to suggest that this aspirational vision of crime prevention was what the Conservatives always got in practice, but it was certainly their preference, and it fitted an ideological disinterest in social causation, even though local practitioners frequently found a way of working 'social' crime prevention back in (Sutton 1996).

In summary, then, crime prevention is taken to represent an approach to crime control that is based mainly upon responsabilisation that extends beyond the reaches of the traditional criminal justice system, and that draws upon situational measures that seek to block criminal opportunities and reduce risks either through problem-oriented partnership approaches, or through the efforts of private citizens.

Community safety comprises a much more expansive notion of local crime control. It accommodates situational crime prevention, but also moves beyond it to include social crime prevention, thereby recognising the need for a more holistic approach that may well block criminal opportunities, as situational crime prevention can do, but also addresses the criminal motivations that are likely to be frustrated by such opportunity reduction and that, without a complementary social approach, would probably lead to crime displacement. In this sense, community safety may best be seen as a welfare liberal critique of situational crime prevention, just as penal welfarism represents a leftist critique of retributive penalty. The aetiological focus of community safety, however, is not so much the individual of the rehabilitative ideal, but rather the local social context, emphasising in particular the family and parenting as sites of 'developmental' crime prevention for young people, and the neighbourhood as the site of 'community' crime prevention.

The holism of community safety extends beyond the combination of the situational and social 'sides' of the crime prevention political

divide, because it also drags crime into the broader domain of what might be referred to as 'unsafety'. As an ideal, community safety is potentially pan-hazard, incorporating a panoply of threats to safety, from traffic to waste management, from pollution to workplace safety, and more radically, from discrimination to disadvantage brought about by social inequalities. While some might subscribe to such a pan-hazard view, seeing community safety as the overarching social good of all social goods, such a pan-hazard domain remains a virtual one residing in the imagination of its idealistic proponents, because community safety has been born into and largely remains a creature of the crime control domain, and this has endowed it with a certain path-dependency that narrows the scope of its greater potential. Thus, while some may still hold out for the hope that community safety provides a means of 'socialising' the discourse of crime control in multifarious ways, in practice community safety has tended to restrict its understanding of unsafety to crime-related matters, notably the fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

The focus upon the fear of crime, and upon disorder, takes community safety into left realist terrain, and perhaps it is no coincidence that those local authorities that most trumpeted the cause of community safety in the 1990s were also those that drew heavily upon left realist crime survey methodology. In anchoring itself to left realist crime survey methodology, community safety ends up positioning the fear of crime as a 'rational' response to the everyday risks of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour that attach themselves to contemporary urban living, particularly in deprived areas. And in so far as this approach opens itself up to support for measures of law enforcement that address such disorder issues, then community safety also countenances an enforcement orientation that can steer it into the right realist path trodden by the likes of James Q. Wilson, whose 'broken windows' approach (Wilson and Kelling 1982) strongly supports a law enforcement approach targeted at minor disorders and nuisances, under the premise of 'nipping crime in the bud' and helping the 'respectable majority' to regain control of the streets.

Like crime prevention, community safety also places considerable faith in the potential of a multi-agency or partnership approach, although this may be seen less as a means of realising a problem-oriented approach (as it is under situational crime prevention), and more as a means of addressing the reality of crime through the left realist analytic device of *the square of crime*, which requires a comprehensive approach towards both understanding and

responding to crime, through a combination of formal and informal social controls, and measures to address victim vulnerabilities as well as offender motivations, which include the distinctly welfare liberal idea of relative deprivation. This brings us back to the combination of situational and social crime prevention, but it is important to note also that the left realist justification for partnership also acknowledges the capacity of such partnerships to exercise more in the way of democratic control over the activities of law enforcement agencies than opportunities provided by existing mechanisms of accountability. Particular prominence is attached here to the role of local government.

In summary, then, community safety is taken here to represent a progressive approach to local crime control that calls upon a partnership approach to provide a more holistic and democratic response to crime that combines situational and social crime prevention, and that, along with local crime problems, directs attention to the fear of crime and disorder as problems in their own right. For some critics this dilutes the practical and indeed the scientific purity of situational crime prevention, while for others it opens up the scope for a more comprehensive approach to the problem of crime.

There are particular and personal reasons for my interest in the development of local crime control under New Labour. Firstly, for me, as an adult, a Labour government has been something of a novelty, now an enduring one. After nearly two decades of Thatcherism and the build up of a socially injurious but never complete neo-liberal hegemonic project, I was more than a little interested in the capacity of an apparently left-of-centre political party to turn back the tide in favour of a more progressive politics of local crime control. Aware that New Labour's status as a left-of-centre political party is itself the subject of debate, and that there are many who would see Tony Blair's governments as little more than a mark II version of Thatcherism, I was nevertheless interested to see what New Labour's vision would inscribe upon the practical field of local crime control.

Secondly, my previous book (Gilling 1997), written over a decade ago, was completed at a time when the sun was setting over John Major's conflict-ridden and beleaguered government, just as it is in 2007 over Tony Blair's government, and over the New Labour project more generally, although its fate at the time of writing still hangs in the balance. That book charted the development of crime prevention policy under the Conservatives, as crime prevention moved, not only in the UK, from the very margins of crime control policy to the mainstream. Where, in the 1960s, crime prevention had failed to take

a hold because it was 'swimming against the tide' (Heal 1987) of dominant paradigms of crime control, by the end of the 1980s it was confidently surfing the waves of the newly established neo-liberal hegemonic project. Yet in the 1990s crime prevention policy in the UK stagnated under Conservative governments that were unprepared to accept the recommendations of the Morgan Report, and that preferred to fall back on a populist punitive discourse, epitomised in Michael Howard's unsubstantiated claim that 'prison works'. They may well have been pushed to adopt such a position in a vain attempt to keep New Labour's office-seeking hounds at bay, but the relative lack of attention given to local crime control, beyond initiating the closed-circuit television (CCTV) explosion that began in the mid-1990s, left a lot of unanswered questions about the future direction of local crime control. Would crime prevention be left behind as government turned increasingly to reassert its punitive sovereign authority through the prison, and a national objectives-led police service? Or would New Labour come to claim the local as the rightful domain of community safety? New Labour's preference for the term crime and disorder reduction obscures the picture, and necessitates the kind of enquiry engaged in over the following pages.

Another book, written by Gordon Hughes (1998) at much the same time as my first offering, but benefiting from an exposure to more of the then unfolding New Labour project, provided an insightful prognosis of three different future scenarios that potentially lay ahead for local crime control. The first of these was a model of 'privatism and exclusion', which effectively takes the privatised prudentialism of crime prevention to its logical limits, giving to those who have the resources and the property interests, including not just private citizens but also the proprietors of mass private property spaces such as shopping malls, the power to defend their interests, through exclusionary risk management techniques, against those 'others' who are perceived in one way or another to threaten them. If New Labour's crime and disorder reduction policy is characterised by such a dystopian model, and is realised in practice, then it will be achieved largely through the pursuit of a discourse of crime prevention: crime and disorder reduction will be little more than the unfolding of the Conservatives' model of neo-liberal local crime control.

The other two scenarios identified by Hughes reflect different tendencies within, and possibly readings of, community safety. The second scenario, that of 'high-trust authoritarian communitarian societies' is one of strong moral communities combined with, and

supported by, a strong authoritarian state. This is the model that Hughes discerns through the obfuscating mists of third way rhetoric, and this makes it, therefore, the front-runner in predicting the likely course of New Labour's policy of crime and disorder reduction. Unlike neo-liberal crime prevention, such a model recognises the social, but only in a neo-conservative way, where the state projects a normative view of a socially unequal moral community, and civil society is coerced and cajoled into performing as such a community. This reflects core elements of community safety such as the apparently progressive rebalancing of situational crime prevention with social crime prevention (albeit of a particular kind), and an emphasis upon law enforcement targeted at disorders and other problems that have a disintegrative impact upon communities.

The third and final scenario is that of 'inclusive civic safe cities', which offers a more radical reading of the potential of community safety. This particularly emphasises the democratic potential of the partnership approach, which as noted above is an important ideal typical feature of community safety. The democratic potential is not only construed 'negatively', in terms of holding state agencies – and particularly the police – to account, but also 'positively', in terms of building pressure to address crime problems through more expansive political, social and economic strategies. In other words, this speaks to the pan-hazard potential of community safety, and particularly to its potential role in socialising the discourse of criminal justice. Hughes may not discern strong whiffs of this scenario in New Labour's third way rhetoric, but as he would probably agree nor is it entirely absent from some of the associated discourses of social inclusion, civil renewal and community cohesion which emanate from other parts of New Labour's political programme, but which alight at various times on the domain of crime control, and which are explored in later parts of this book. Moreover, given the potential of community safety to be steered as much from below as from above, nor would he and Adam Edwards rule out the possibility of local advocacy coalitions being able to push local crime control more in this radical direction (Edwards and Hughes 2005).

To summarise this section, then, we have a New Labour approach to local crime control which has been conceived as crime and disorder reduction, thereby providing a terminological break with the past, where the Conservatives spoke mainly in terms of crime prevention, and their critics, and particularly those from a more progressive local government constituency, spoke more of community safety. The trajectory of crime and disorder reduction is consequently uncertain.