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Towards a New Paradigm of Sovereign Power? Community Governance, Preventative Safety and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

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Abstract

This paper aims to introduce readers to the contemporary British experiences of crime prevention, crime reduction and community safety. The different terms used to depict the policies, practices, politics and theories geared towards the 'prevention', or failing that the 'reduction', of crime, and those strategies aimed at the promotion of 'community safety' are indicative of the changing and hybrid nature of the policy domain under scrutiny here. In part these different preventative logics and techniques arise out of criticisms of traditional 'reactive' criminal justice responses to crime such as punishment and individualistic treatment approaches. Both situational and social prevention approaches which came to the fore in the 1980s share a preoccupation with preventing 'criminality' *before* the event. Meanwhile, targeted crime 'reduction' approaches, based on the pragmatic evaluation of what can be measured and counted in terms of 'what works', have come to prominence since the late 1990s. The latter appear to be less concerned with 'prevention' and more focused on the manageable and seemingly 'rational', 'scientific' reduction of unacceptably high levels of crime and disorder. And finally, 'community safety' strategies appear to call for multi-agency partnership and community-based approaches in which a more expansive and broader project of social regeneration, social inclusion and communal 'responsibilization' is sought (see, Gilling, 1997; Hughes, 1998; Wiles and Pease, 2000)

The specific focus of this paper is on the significance of the rise to prominence of the 'partnership' approach in this policy domain. In order to do this the paper engages critically with one of the most influential criminological texts on contemporary crime control and criminal justice to be published in the past decade, namely David Garland's (2001) *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society.* The structure of this paper is as follows. First, a brief description of the main trends in current

British crime prevention and community safety policy and practice is offered. This is followed by a brief summary of David Garland's thesis on the rise to prominence of a new 'adaptive' and preventative safety strategy across a growing number of western 'late modern' societies. Third, and finally, a critical appraisal of Garland's thesis is offered, based on evidence from the accumulated research findings from across Britain in the last decade. We hope that the paper will stimulate further critical debate among the various constituencies involved in community safety and crime control policies.

The 'What Works' Paradigm of Crime Reduction and the Local Partnership Approach in Britain

In this section the crime reduction policy of the New Labour government in the first decade of the 21st century is discussed. This ambitious national-popular political project and programme of policy implementation is structured by two inter-connected governmental imperatives. Namely, the development and implementation of a national and centralised 'what works', evidence-based paradigm for crime reduction policy and practice; and the institutionalization of local crime and disorder reduction partnerships (henceforth CDRPs) through which responsibility for the production of community safety strategies against crime, disorder and the anti-social is seemingly handed over to a plurality of local actors.

If we accept that there is a new organizational settlement in crime prevention in the UK, then it is vital to recognize that much of its character and form was prefigured in the reforms and multi-agency initiatives sponsored and undertaken by the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s. This backdrop of reforms and intensified managerialization across the entire public sector since the 1980s alerts us to the danger of assuming that all is 'new' and distinct in the New Labour policy agenda (Clarke, *et al* 2000). Nonetheless, the intensity of New Labour's mission to modernize public agencies chiefly by the logic of managerialization and the promotion of an 'audit culture' is striking (McLaughlin *et al* 2001; Hughes, 2002b).

The Crime and Disorder Act (henceforth CDA) 1998 built directly on this thinking by stressing that for successful outcomes to be achieved, statutory responsibility for crime and disorder reduction and community safety should be devolved from the central state to a series of local partnerships, made up of statutory, voluntary and semi-private agencies. The CDA gave both the local authority and the police new duties and powers to develop strategic partnerships to formulate and implement strategies for area based reduction of crime and disorder. The most striking contrast with the previous models of partnership working which influenced New Labour reforms is that post-CDA partnerships have a statutory footing in England and Wales. Since 1998 all 376 statutory crime and disorder partnerships in England and Wales have had to: carry out audits of local crime and disorder problems; consult with all sections of the local community; issue three year crime and disorder reduction strategies based on the findings of the audits; identify targets and performance

indicators for each part of the strategy, with specified time scales; publish the audit, strategy and the targets; and report annually on progress against the targets.

Closely related to the audit culture and the cult of performance management is central government's commitment to channel funding to 'evidence-based' projects and programmes. The everyday operation of local crime and disorder reduction partnerships has been massively affected by this paradigm of measurable 'success' in policy and practice. For example, the three year Crime Reduction Programme (1999-2002) based at the Home Office which was centrally financed to the tune of £250 million was intended to build on the 1998 CDA and 'harness' the activities of local CDRPs. The programme was premised on the conclusions of 'Reducing Offending', a Home Office report which highlighted the 'scientifically-proven' interventions most likely to provide the basis for a cost-effective, sustained reduction in the long term rise in crime (Goldblatt and Lewis, 1998). Questions considered by the authors included: how effective is an intervention and can the benefits be quantified?; what evidence is available on the likely costs of implementation?; what is the likely timescale for the costs and benefits?; and how strong is the available evidence on effects, costs and timescales? The Crime Reduction Programme was extended in April 1999 with the announcement of an extra £153 million for CCTV initiatives and other interventions aimed at reducing vehicle crime. This ambitious, nationally-directed 'evidence led' programme was also to be applied to interrelated programmes across the criminal justice system (Hughes and McLaughlin, 2002).

The Crime Reduction Programme was intended to make a significant contribution by ensuring that the Home Office was achieving maximum impact for money spent and that the impact is progressively improved. The programme hoped to promote innovation, generate a significant improvement in knowledge about effectiveness and cost-effectiveness and encourage the mainstreaming of emerging knowledge about 'best practice'. Home Office policy crime reduction policy thus emphasized the need for local policy makers and practitioners to act primarily on evidence-based scientific research that establishes 'what works' and to ignore alternative approaches considered uneconomic, inefficient and unproven in preventing crime and disorder.

Let us now move on from description of these policy developments to that of analysis and interpretation.

The Culture of Control and the Promise of the Adaptive Strategy

David Garland's book, *The Culture of Control,* represents one of the most sophisticated attempts to date to narrate both the key features and the unfolding implications of the new culture, politics and institutional rationales and techniques of crime control and criminal justice across western societies. Although Garland's text uses the USA and UK as his empirical exemplars of this new 'culture of control', the implications of his analysis are highly relevant to emerging debates in other European societies. According to Garland (2001), there is a two-fold and contradictory response to the collapse of 'penal-welfarism' in crime control systems across western societies at the end of the 20th century. The first response is that of 'adaptation' which involves greater rationalisation and commercialization of criminal justice functions and specifically a stress on multi-agency crime prevention partnerships including the agencies and actors of 'civil society'. As a strategy, 'adaptation' rests on a

'criminology of the self' seeing the criminal as a rational actor. For Garland, the policy developments described above in recent decades in the UK exemplify this international trend. By way of contrast the second response- a non-adaptive response of 'denial and acting out' – invokes conservative principles and is concerned with denying the crisis of record crime rates and the 'failure' of prison to reduce re-offending and promote rehabilitation. This response is underpinned by a 'criminology of the other' and conditions criminal justice institutions to act in an exclusionary and punitive manner, exemplified by the incapacitative potential of prisons and 'zero-tolerance' policing strategies of offending and incivilities. This paper examines the claims made by Garland for the first response – that of 'preventative adaptation'.

In an otherwise deeply pessimistic reading of the future course of late modern crime control, Garland makes ambitious claims for the new preventative safety strategy of crime control and public safety. He stresses that the new preventative infrastructure should not to be understood merely as an extension of the traditional criminal justice system:

> The new infrastructure is strongly oriented towards a set of objectives and priorities – prevention, security, harm-reduction, loss-reduction, fear-reduction – that are quite different from the traditional goals of prosecution, punishment and 'criminal justice'. So while the most prominent measures of crime control are increasingly oriented towards punitive segregation and expressive justice, there is, at the same time, a new commitment, especially at the local level, to a quite different strategy that one might call *preventative partnerships*. Today's most visible crime control strategies may work by expulsion and exclusion, but they are accompanied by patient, ongoing, low-key efforts to build up the internal controls of neighbourhoods and to encourage communities to police themselves (Garland, 2001: 17).

The new criminologies of everyday life and the 'preventative safety sector'
It is important to note the emphasis given by Garland to the emergence of new ways of behaving and thinking in crime prevention. The new specialists in the preventative safety sector (such as those working for local authority-based community safety teams, community police officers, and health, probation and youth justice workers) are thus viewed as getting much of their ideas from what Garland terms 'the new criminologies of everyday life' associated with situational crime prevention, routine activities theory, opportunity theory and the new 'crime sciences'. It is claimed that officials in this emergent preventative safety sector recognise the elective affinity between their own practical concerns and this new criminological discourse. These new 'administrative' criminologies thus express some of the key ways in which crime control and public safety are being redefined and recast across the field. Whereas previously, official criminology saw crime retrospectively and individually, these new criminologies view it prospectively and in aggregate terms (Garland, 2001: 128). Put simply, everyone is a potential criminal and victim. Criminogenic situations, 'hot products' and 'hot spots', are the new objects of control. This then is a 'supply side' criminology focused on shifting risks, redistributing costs, and creating disincentives (Garland, 2001: 129).

A closely related element of Garland's thesis is the central importance of the private security sector and its actors and institutions to this new crime control context. It is

claimed that 'the present day world of private-sector crime prevention exists in a reflexive relationship to the theories and prescriptions of situational crime prevention. It is in this interchange – between the practical recipes of the commercial sector managers and the worked-out rationales of criminologists and government policy-makers – that one must locate the strategy of preventative partnership and the habits of thought and action upon which it depends' (Garland, 2001: 161).

Community governance and the responsibilisation project
Community governance may be loosely defined as being the process by which local neighbourhoods, groups, and localities are increasingly involved, empowered and responsibilised, alongside formal local government bodies, in the governance of communities. Garland sees preventative safety partnerships as both reflecting the new salience of community governance and offering the potential 'solution' to the loss of sovereign state power and its precarious monopoly over crime control in late modern conditions. Moreover, Garland appears to be normatively and politically supportive of this development given its potential to unleash and harness the forces of civil society to deliver crime prevention in a genuinely communitarian fashion. 'The effort to address these limitations, first reforming the state institutions and subsequently by mobilising and harnessing non-state mechanisms, has been the basis of the most innovative policies of the recent past' (Garland, 2001: 123). In the 1980s and 1990s in Britain these out-reach policies grew into the prominent governmental 'responsibilisation strategy' which is meant to result in 'an enhanced network of more or less directed, more or less informal crime control, complementing and extending the formal controls of the criminal justice state…The primary objective is to spread responsibility for crime control onto agencies, organisations and individuals that operate outside the criminal justice state and to persuade them to act appropriately' (Garland, 2001: 124-5). This shift of emphasis, for Garland, is nothing short of a historical watershed in modern crime control. Thus, instead of holding on to the myth of a sovereign state monopoly of crime control, there is a new vision of the 'dispersed, pluralistic nature of effective social control' (Garland, 2001: 126). Here he lends support to the valorisation of the 'local' in complex societies in a manner close to the 'Hayekian vision' of self-governing communities reliant on locally generated knowledge and resources.

Having provided an uncritical summary of Garland's diagnosis of the nature and importance of this new preventative safety sector across a growing number of western societies, a critical appraisal of its relevance for an understanding of the detailed and often messy and contradictory realities of multi-agency partnership work in England and Wales over recent years is now presented.

Instabilities and Hybridisations of the Community Governance of Crime, Disorder and Community Safety

Performance management and the audit culture in extremis
Garland is only too aware of the pervasive influence of neo-liberal economic and managerialist governmental logics but he also argues that there is much creativity and rationality in the evidence-based endeavours of the preventative safety partnerships. Other commentators have concentrated more critically on the 'down-side' of this managerialist 'turn' in criminal policy and argue for its dominant influence over much of the work of CDRPs, far in excess, for example, of the rhetorical calls for

community participation and innovative problem-solving (Hughes, 2002, McLaughlin *et al*, 2001). There is of course a long history of auditing as processes of financial accounting in relation to the provision of public services. However, of late there has been an intensification and transformation of such processes in Britain. Auditing has moved relentlessly into the area of assessing organisational and professional achievement. In this world of CDRPs, Crawford (1997) has noted the fixation with 'outputs', both organisationally defined and often stage-managed for local and national stakeholders. The influence of audit culture has certainly not declined since Crawford'work in the mid-1990s. Rather, the process has intensified and become more rigid and centrally controlled whilst local CDRPs are forced in a competitive environment of league tables and selectivity to tell audit stories of achievement even in the face of declining resources.

The state's intention is thus to replace 'old' criminal bureau-professional arrangements with multi-functional, multi-tasking partnerships whose performance will be dominated by the requirement to produce ever more arduous measurable and quantifiable outputs and cost-effective outcomes. Professional practice is also being shifted more and more towards a technical process in which risk assessment is determined by standardized statistical prediction models. At the same time there are resistances to these pressures, not least among the new 'technologists' of community governance and social control, such as community safety managers and officers in local partnerships (Hughes and Gilling, 2004).

The limits to community involvement and responsibilisation
Garland suggests that greater community involvement is constitutive of the preventative safety sector. Certainly this current enthusiasm for *appearing* to govern in, through and by communities, as part of the 'New Localism' and 'Neighbourhood Renewal' agendas, is particularly marked in the sector. However, to date there has been a lack of research on the ways in which both partnership and community governance have been constructed, interpreted and enacted in policies, strategies, organisations and in political and occupational cultures *across* different localities. A more accurate assessment of the realities of community governance is that this type of communitarian participation, never mind leadership, remains a lofty and often politically righteous aspiration that is not realised in practice in the work of CDRPs. The limited research to date that has been conducted suggests a tension between evidence-based administration of crime reduction and political representations of the demand for order in specific localities (Hughes and Edwards, 2002). Furthermore, Garland largely side-steps the major instabilities associated with community governance through the preventative partnership approach. It is these instabilities that are highlighted in the following discussion.

As John Clarke (2002: 5) has observed, in the present conjuncture, 'community appears in multiple guises: it is the site of governance, the mode of governance and the (intended) effect of governance'. Perhaps what is most new and distinctive about the shift towards recruiting 'communities' to governance is that the community supposedly acts as both the site and the agent (see also McLaughlin, 2001; 2002). They also require the attention, respect and interest of statutory, voluntary and private governmental agencies. Meanwhile, communities are the vital repositories of values and resources which *may* be 'activated' in the process of co-governing. And

increasingly these new forms of local governing are constituted through a 'partnership' discourse.

The instabilities of 'community' as a site and mode of governance are manifold and represent an ever-present challenge for all actors involved in mobilising such collective energies.[2] For example, communities are difficult to 'find' when you need them; it is difficult to decide on who are their 'usable' and 'legitimate' representatives; and when they do 'materialise', they are often plural, contradictory and extremely unruly entities. In turn, communities defined by geographical place are often constructed and fissured by different identities and interests. On the other hand, communities defined by identity are themselves riven with divisions and tensions regarding their seemingly 'essentialised', 'authenticated' identities and the role of community 'leaders' in embodying and representing these qualities. It is difficult to form communities and hold them stable for the purposes of governance. In practice, if not in rhetoric, communities are generally weakly bounded and leaky systems in our late modern conditions.

The extent to which governmental practitioners and local actors in this field confront these issues routinely in their discourses and practices of governance needs to be fully examined as a central question in this policy domain. It would appear that Garland's characterization of the nature and extent of community involvement – not to say leadership - in this preventative governmental experiment seriously underestimates both the instabilities of and barriers to, as well as dangers of, local communitarian social control such as vigilantism and the naming, shaming and expulsion of the deviant and disorderly of various kinds.

Rethinking evidence-based policy and the 'what works' paradigm.
We noted earlier that the work of preventative safety partnerships was supported by Garland (2001: 131) in large part due to the 'high level of administrative rationality and creativity' associated with their problem-solving efforts. There is obviously much to be said for evidence-based policy and practice and 'what works' criteria will have a key role to play in the ongoing reform and improved performance of public services. However, there has not been a particularly creative and expansive conception of, nor debate about, 'what works' and what is actually counted. Those working in the crime reduction field and in community safety partnerships are uncritical, in public at least (Hughes and Gilling, 2004), of what is in reality a highly prescriptive top-down approach from central government. But is this micro-managerialism conducive to undertaking imaginative, creative crime prevention and community safety work? It is becoming increasingly obvious that 'success' in the reduction of crime and disorder is, in the short term, largely synonymous with what can be simply counted, readily audited and easily targeted. In turn, there are institutional and intellectual challenges around learning, knowledge acquisition and training for practitioners and policy makers facing strategic dilemmas in the field of community safety. This work is not just about techniques but also involves normative and political questions for every practitioner 'doing' community safety. To date, much of the push on training seems to emanate from 'above', is Home Office driven and often comes neatly if simply pre-packaged as 'toolkits' on 'making 'what works', work'. There may be a need to move urgently beyond the 'off the shelf' or its latter day equivalent of 'off the web' naïve emulation and evaluation in crime reduction policy and practice, both in Britain and internationally. This is a specific area where

Garland's view that 'creativity' is to the fore in preventative work requires serious qualification and review.

Partnerships and the de-monopolising of crime prevention

We have noted that community engagement in, never mind leadership of, local safety strategies remains at best rhetorical in nature. There is limited evidence to date that the bottom-up concerns of communities are of much significance to partnerships, other than in the formal requirement to 'consult' local communities (Hughes and Edwards, 2002). Meanwhile the influence of private business is not overtly pronounced in local CDRP work and especially in their public proceedings. However, much of the mobilisation of private forces may occur 'behind the scenes' and may be of growing importance in many cities (see for example, Coleman *et al*'s (2002) research on the political connections between regeneration and safer city strategies in Merseyside). The role of the private sector and 'capital' may well differ depending on the specificity of local contexts and political and economic histories, particularly in the major connurbations. That said, in the British context the crime reduction sector is still largely a 'top-down', central state-driven project rather than being networks of interlaced agencies drawing from the public, private and voluntary sectors as 'the bedrocks of the new governance' (Crawford, 2001: 60).

The symbolic ownership of the crime reduction problem locally is still in the hands of the public police in most localities despite a greater pluralisation and privatisation of policing (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Crawford *et al* 2004). Most partnerships may be characterised as corporatist duopolies led by the police and the local council. There appear to be severe limits to the extent and degree to which responsibility and thus de-monopolisation has been spread out to new actors and agencies. Indeed, 'responsibility' for developing and implementing strategies is still largely in the hands of beleagured and demoralised small community safety teams in local authorities, supported and in certain cases effectively sustained by the local police. CDRPs are dominated by operational police concerns and to a great extent, the work is targeted crime and disorder reduction rather than more expansive, social as well as situational crime prevention-oriented, community safety promotion. That noted, local crime control and policing disorder is undoubtedly a much more crowded and contested space when compared to previous decades. What is likely is the prospect that local authorities and their community safety/crime reduction teams across Britain will take on increasing amounts of the lower level local policing with the proliferation of community support officers, community safety, neighbourhood, estate and street wardens and anti-social behaviour orders enforcers.

The habitus of the new professionals and the new criminologies of everyday life

Garland's claims for the growing influence of the 'new criminologies of everyday life' on the routine work and thinking of the new experts in CDRPs are over-stated. This is not to deny that situational crime prevention's influence in particular is very evident in both the strategy texts and everyday tactics of crime and disorder reduction. However, if we dig deeper and talk to local actors there is often an unsettling of this apparently dominant paradigm. The practices promoted by the new criminologies of everyday life certainly sit alongside 'quieter', specialist work on hate crime, substance misuse and youth offending. On the basis of both textual analyses of local audits and strategies, questionnaire surveys and ethnographic interviews with the new community safety experts (Hughes and Gilling, 2004), it is evident that critical

criminological and social democratic discourses remain institutionalised in the habitus of the new specialist, often co-existing alongside the technicist narratives of situational reduction. In fact the influence of feminist and related anti-oppression work is evident in the local strategies for all to see in the prominence given to zero-tolerance to 'domestic' violence against women, children and other vulnerable groups. Furthermore, claims about the role of social deprivation and social exclusion as both causal factors in criminalisation and narratives of concern have not been expunged as issues in CDRP work, despite the pressure for quick, situational rather than longer-term structural 'wins'.

As 'professionals' mediating between the multi-levelled state and multiply voiced communities, the new experts in the community safety field remain also potentially vulnerable to different senses of obligation and trust:

- to the state: as employer and as 'sovereign will';
- to the client: as embodied public, as need and as purpose;
- to the emergent 'profession': as colleague and peer;
- to 'rational' evidence-based approaches: as policy change and learning;
- to popular fears over crime and disorder: as 'democratic' responsiveness (Clarke, 2002; Hughes and Gilling, 2004).

Furthermore, as practitioners located in new 'joined-up' institutional sites and working interstitially between both organisational and professional forms of authority and discipline, these practitioners of community governance have to manage themselves in an overlapping series of potentially contentious relationships: between the local, the regional and the national; between agencies; between conflicting policy objectives and discourses ('regeneration', 'crime reduction', 'fear reduction', 'community safety', 'zero tolerance' etc.); and between conflicting representations of 'the community' ('unitary', 'diverse', 'inclusive', 'exclusive', 'cohesive', 'divided' etc.). Policy advocacy coalitions and different ways of thinking are likely to emerge which will seek to 'problematise' policy and practice agendas in ways which may at times run counter to the central government project (Hughes and Gilling, 2004).

Adaptation and denial in CDRPs
The final theme to this paper contends that the contemporary politics of crime control and public safety in Britain is less simple than the choice of either a punitive politics of vengeance and penal exclusion or a rational problem-solving adaptive strategy associated with Garland's analysis. In the current context of CDRPs being cajoled by both central and local political pressures to 'tool up' in increasingly coercive and expressive ways following New Labour's media orchestrated crusade against 'the anti-social' in its myriad forms, Garland's conclusion looks prematurely optimistic. Rather, CDRPs appear to be being manoeuvred by central government, as well as often willingly being recruited in some cases, as the new local branches of the culture of vindictiveness towards the dangerous and 'awkward' members of the 'underclass', such as vagrants, sex workers, drug users, street drinkers, rough sleepers, loitering youths and problem families. Noting the well-acknowledged balance between social and situational measures, seeking respectively to prevent the propensity of people to offend and those looking to restrict opportunity by target hardening or surveillance, Allen (1999) discerns an emerging third preventative component which he terms 'coercive crime prevention'. This new component involves the local and flexible use

of the police and the courts to deter, remove or displace the seemingly intractable problems caused by 'difficult', 'unruly', 'disruptive', 'irresponsible', and 'dangerous' people. Measures first piloted in the CDA such as the Anti-Social Behaviour Order, the local child curfew, the power to remove truants and so on all added to the arsenal of existing local authority powers to deal with ant-social tenants. Before the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act (ASBA), many councils declined the offer to use repressive banning orders against anti-social behaviour available in the powers vested in them by the CDA. However, in the aftermath of the rushed through legislation of ASBA, councils and CDRPs are being encouraged to develop and advertise their coercive armoury, following the mandate to be much more visibly tougher on disorder. And of course there will be resources available for investment in the new anti-social armoury and expertise which is likely to sweeten this 'coercive pill' for otherwise under-resourced community safety teams.

Further research across different localities is still required to know if the problem-solving measures collectively known as social crime prevention will be squeezed between the situational and the coercive. Much of the routine work of local CDRPs in Britain does appear to be associated with a narrow brief of controlling specific types of street crime rather than other harms, such as corporate crimes and corporate incivilities (e.g fraud, and health and safety harms), and an authoritarian, quasi-communitarian posturing on controlling street incivilities and disorders. Partnerships may have the potential to encourage 'a stronger and more participative civil society' but it is just as probable, if not more so, that they will promote 'a defended exclusivity' (Crawford, 1997), particularly given the news media-fuelled moral panic over an array of threatening 'others' (Hughes, 2004a). Interventions against crime and disorder provide acid tests of community governance because the emotive sentiments associated with victimization can easily segue into popular support for direct, vigilante action (Edwards and Hughes, 2002). Present local conflicts are also being influenced by an emerging grass-roots populist 'community' politics around law and order which is usually but not exclusively 'far-right' in political orientation. It would appear that the CDA-inspired partnership ethos is unable to handle this but this local politics of belonging and othering is pressing hard on local councillors who in the 'modernised' local government context, as elected representatives, are the community's political conduit (see Home Office, 2001). The growth of populist politics around crime and disorder and community 'belonging' and 'identity', associated with banning, exclusion and curfew orders, shaming techniques etc. for offenders, appears to constitute a key process that is likely to shape the current politics of community safety. Particularly significant is a revamped politics of race and immigration, mixed toxically with fears over asylum seekers and new migrants, post 9/11. The relatively recent emergence of evidence-based policy-making thus forms part of the attempt to 'modernise' public administration and argues that policies ought to be premised on evaluative research findings. However, this approach competes with the trend in the political representations of the 'law and order problem' since the 1980s in the UK for electoral and mass media advantage (Downes and Morgan, 1994; McLaughlin, 2002). Whereas the former trend argues for a rational approach to policy-making that is explicitly informed by the long-term accumulation of social scientific knowledge, the latter is often driven by short-term responses to perceived popular anxieties about safety, often in the aftermath of traumatic events such as the sexual assault and/or murder of minors and high profile instances of public disorder (Edwards and Hughes, 2002). Given these contradictory trends, the

prospects of a socially inclusive preventative and rights-based approach, never mind a genuinely 'pan-harm reduction' paradigm of community safety do not look promising in Britain.

Conclusion

What is the likely role of the growing 'army' of partners in the processes by which new discourses of safety, crime, insecurity, disorder etc. are articulated and fed into the ways in which the new governance of community safety will be constituted? Despite the ascendancy of a Home Office-informed agenda across much of England and Wales, it is likely that there will continue to be competing advocacy coalitions of actors operating both at the different tiers of governance and in different spheres of governance which will have different powers and liabilities (Edwards, 2002). We can expect there to be a multitude of tangled networks through which the problems of safety and crime control are defined and governed. The differentiated UK polity – not least in the context of greater devolution to the regions and countries – is likely both to enable certain 'translations' of public safety and crime control, whilst disabling others. Accordingly, it is vital that social scientists examine the contested nature of the knowledge, skills and values base of the work of community safety partnerships as currently experienced by actors *in situ* across different locales. A crucial element of the argument here is that the politics of articulation concerning what constitutes community safety 'work' remains both unfinished and highly unstable (Hughes, 2004a). The locality-based, multi-agency partnership approach to the governance of crime and safety remains indissolubly linked to political and moral questions about the nature of the relationship between the state, public authorities, the private sector, citizens and communities. Accordingly it is reducible to neither good managerial practice nor to technical efficiency, however important these may be.

Notes

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[2] The discussion which follows is indebted to the work of our colleague, John Clarke (2002) on the instabilities of community governance across the public sector.

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