Chapter 3

The preventive turn and the promotion of safer communities in England and Wales: political inventiveness and governmental instabilities

Adam Edwards and Gordon Hughes

Introduction

The preventive turn in England and Wales and across its diverse localities has had a longer institutional history and been the subject of more empirical research and conceptual social scientific debate than is the case for most European countries. Furthermore, and more contentiously, the preventive turn and its institutionalisation as community safety partnerships (in Wales) and crime and disorder reduction partnerships (in England), is at a more ‘advanced’ stage than the relative latecomers over the Channel in much of mainland Europe. Such developments in England and Wales in the past three decades point to both intense (even frenzied) bouts of ‘political inventiveness’ and consequences which may be termed ‘governmental instabilities’ (Clarke 2004; Hughes 2007).

This relative maturity in terms of multi-agency partnership work in community safety across every local government locality in England and Wales may, of course, be a source of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ stigma (forgetting for the moment the significant Celtic nations of the UK) to some European commentators. This is especially the case when the ‘British’ national model of crime prevention is interpreted by some European commentators as a metaphorical launching pad or in militaristic terms, an ‘aircraft carrier’ floating ominously off mainland Europe for the importation of
US-inspired neo-liberal and neo-conservative governmental practices into the seemingly more social democratic polities across Europe in the international policy transfer trade. Whatever the veracity or otherwise of this thesis, there is no denying that the English and Welsh experience is ‘particular’ if not ‘peculiar’ when compared to much of mainland Europe. Accordingly, this chapter aims in part to unravel and unveil the institutional realities and uneven development of the preventive turn across England and Wales in the recent decades.

There is already a voluminous body of published work on the recent history of crime prevention and community safety in Britain, stretching back to the early 1990s (see, for example, Crawford 1997, 2007; Gilling 1997, 2007; Hughes and Edwards 2002, 2005; Hughes 1998, 2007; Hughes et al. 2002; Stenson and Edwards 2004). Readers are encouraged to refer to this body of literature for detailed descriptions of the legislative powers, national policy developments, and formal local structures and strategies that have been implemented in England and Wales over recent years.

The chapter is organised as follows. Following a brief chronicling of the career of community safety, past and present, the chapter concentrates on unravelling the competing interpretations and different histories of current trends in this policy field which, as Adam Crawford (2007: 900) has noted, has been characterised by ‘hyper innovation’ and ‘hyper-politicisation’ alongside, we would add, a lack of any settled verdict not just on the success or failure of the policy experiment but with regard to the nature of the beast itself from social scientific commentary and research.

Any ‘history of the present’ in a society with a well-developed criminological research base, both in government departments and universities, necessitates a critical discussion of the competing intellectual translations of ‘community safety’ as a floating signifier. In other words, the telling of the competing stories of community safety is not just about describing institutional developments manufactured ‘out there’ by the state but is also about the relationship of this preventive turn to various proponents of the contemporary criminological imagination. Accordingly we need to consider the ways in which criminologists as academic social scientists and governmental experts have conceptualised, mapped and advised ‘expertly’ on the work done on the ground under the signifier of community safety. In particular, in this section of this chapter we argue that social scientists – including ourselves of course – have necessarily been engaged in both representational accounts (reflecting and capturing what has happened) and performative narratives (which help constitute and reconstitute the phenomena under study) (see Edwards and Hughes 2008a).

It is important in making sense of the institution-building in the community safety sector in England and Wales that such intellectual attempts at framing and problematising both the ‘plumbing’ of the new
institutional architecture and its ‘products’ receive consideration. The five non-exhaustive narratives about community safety discussed in this section suggest that it is specious to identify a single history other than an institutionally descriptive account of key laws, policy statements and agencies. Instead, when attempts are made to interpret the consequences of such institutional developments the stories become more contested, leading us to an investigation of the politics of the history of community safety as well as the contested politics of community safety. Accordingly, in this part of the chapter a reflexive interpretation of these narratives is provided.

Finally, the chapter draws on illustrative examples from the authors’ own realist conceptual framework and ongoing empirical research programme on the local politics of community safety. First, this highlights the polyvalence of the concept of community safety, pointing to its qualities as a floating signifier with no fixed referent but a multiplicity of significations, capable of being aligned with a spectrum of political positions on safety. Second, this final section also highlights some of the challenges for researching the preventive turn when the national frame is unsettled and other geo-historical contexts are acknowledged.

Community safety: career of a floating signifier

The last two decades in England and Wales have seen a dramatic shift in the local governance of crime and the politics of insecurity. More fundamentally, these developments reflect a re-articulation of powers and responsibilities in and between the state, private interests and civil society. It represents simultaneously a dramatic narrowing of the horizons of state ‘sovereignty’ and an attempt to reassert a form of control. (Crawford 2002: 14)

[T]his network of partnership arrangements and inter-agency working agreements is designed to foster crime prevention and to enhance community safety, primarily through the cultivation of community involvement and the dissemination of crime prevention ideas and practices. (Garland 2001: 16)

Our discussion begins with a brief resume of the talk and policy pronouncements regarding the ‘preventive turn’ and associated changes in governance of crime and insecurity across localities since the 1980s (highlighted in Crawford’s and Garland’s claims above). We then focus on the question of where we are at the different level of competing interpretations regarding the nature and consequences of policy implementation, actual practices associated with the policy mix of community safety, neighbourhood policing and local crime and disorder reduction, and the provocations that arise from these processes on the ground today. In
contemporary international policy discourses on crime control and prevention, there is much similar language used, and convergent political rallying calls made, across ‘Anglophone’ countries for policy change and innovation, whether it be ‘policing’ rather than the police, and ‘safer communities together’ (rather than crime prevention in the narrower sense of the word). This is captured neatly in both Garland’s and Crawford’s above diagnoses of the ‘dramatic shift’ in the governance of crime and insecurity in late-modern societies. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that the often bland translations and appeals for a common lingua franca around prevention and safety in policy discourses are less easily accomplished in non-Anglophone countries across Europe (Edwards and Hughes 2005a).

Let us examine in brief the particular career of community safety in England and Wales since the 1980s based on the ‘talk’ and ‘decisions’ dimensions of the policy process, as distinguished by Pollitt (2001). This brief account will also draw on Crawford’s (2002) overview of developments in the two decades up to 2000 which, like this chapter, was written with an eye to points of both convergence and divergence across European countries. Indeed, Crawford’s interpretation of developments, and in particular his emphasis on the contradictions around the governmental logics of (i) managerialism, (ii) governance through partnership, and (iii) nostalgic communitarianism, bears similarities to much of the analytical framework employed by the present authors in charting these developments since the 1990s and throughout the 2000s across the UK (see, for example, Hughes and Edwards 2005).

The origins of community safety in the 1980s are suggestive of the mixed parentage of this signifier. We should note, for example, the initial appropriations by, variously, ‘radical’ Metropolitan Police Authorities, who formulated local community safety plans as a counterweight to police-driven notions of public safety, the charity NACRO (National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) and its ‘bottom-up’ projects in marginalised local communities, alongside central government circulars and initiatives elaborating a new approach to crime prevention in this decade. However, the real discursive turning point at the national dimension in this decade was the Home Office Circular 8/84: this ‘key symbolic landmark’ (Crawford 2002: 16) being the first explicit official recognition of the limits to ‘go-it-alone’ policing and the capacity of constabularies to effectively prevent problems of crime without drawing on the resources (including expertise) of other key statutory partners and the wider public.

The next key discursive moment in this career was the 1991 Morgan Report, Delivering Safer Communities (Home Office 1991), with its social democratic ambition to conceptualise and manage holistically crime and disorder and their deeper roots through creative, democratically sensitive partnership arrangements led by local authorities rather than the police.
This report reflected an emergent consensus among academics and policy-makers that the ideal approach to prevention combines a package of both precipitating factors and predisposing influences (Crawford 2002: 21). Equally importantly, it gave the new approach a nationally recognisable ‘brand name’: community safety.

Crawford (2002: 23) suggests that the period 1991–97 which followed the Morgan Report was a period of ‘stagnation and ambivalence’. This is true when viewed from ‘on high’, from the national government policy dimension. However, it is not so valid when attention is paid to the local contexts in which community safety work was institutionalised and put into practice. Indeed, Crawford (2002: 23) admits as much by noting that, unlike the 1980s when ‘the’ government had done so much to stimulate enthusiasm in crime prevention, ‘activity and innovation had clearly shifted to the local realm of local organisations in the 1990s’ (see also Hughes 1998; Hughes and Edwards 2002).

Following the Morgan agenda, which was widely and influentially, if unevenly, taken up locally, the third key discursive moment was the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) in 1998. In retrospect the CDA helped inaugurate the New Labour ‘modernisation’ project associated with the three appeals to managerialism, governance through partnership and communitarianism. The effects of this central government project have continued to resonate into the late 2000s. This period witnessed both linguistic turns and policy decisions to shift the focus from ‘community safety’ to ‘crime and (eventually) disorder reduction’ made tangible as calculable, centrally defined, targeted performance measures. Again, Crawford (2002: 25) characterised the first three years of this period (1997–2000) as that of ‘rebirth and renewal focused around Disorder’. This focus was further consolidated in subsequent years by the much publicised flood of further crime and anti-social behaviour legislation, alongside a communitarian-inspired crusade around ‘Respect’ and the drive for moral authoritarian interventions against anti-social behaviour (see Hughes 2007: 119–25).

The broad verdict among many influential commentators on the possible consequences of the post-CDA agenda was that of a guarded optimism, as expressed by Crawford:

> recent developments potentially allow a fundamental shift in the way that crime and its prevention are governed. They represent a maturing of community safety and its movement into mainstream consciousness and service delivery . . . The CDA begins a long-overdue recognition that the levers and causes of crime lie far from the traditional reach of the criminal justice system . . . the new politics offers more plural understandings of and social responses to crime, drawing together a variety of organisations and stakeholders, in the public, voluntary and private sectors as well as from among relevant
community groups in ways which are problem-focused rather than defined according to the means most readily available for their solution. (Crawford 2002: 31–2)

Such optimism at the beginning of the 2000s was widely shared across much of the criminological academy. However, we also need to note Crawford’s own recognition of community safety as ‘sites of contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalence’, which we also shared at the time (McLaughlin et al. 2001; Hughes 1998, 2002; Edwards and Hughes 2002). Much of the subsequent career of community safety has confirmed the wisdom of this recognition of the contradictory and ambivalent tendencies associated with local partnership working and their narrowly targeted focus on measurable crime and disorder reduction (see Hughes 2007; Gilling 2007).

Crime control or social policy? Community safety as a ‘hybrid’ policy

Community safety as a policy approach sits at the intersection of attempts by the state to deliver welfare and security, and policing and control in local communities. We noted earlier that community safety emerged in the 1980s as a local government strategy that sought to move beyond the traditionally police-driven agenda of crime prevention. Apart from seeking to involve other ‘social’ agencies in crime prevention and in turn moving from single to multi-agency activities, community safety has also been associated with more aspirational claims. One particular claim has been to generate greater participation and leadership from residential communities in promoting ‘quality of life’, not just tackling those social harms classified as crimes. As a long-term outcome, community safety is often linked to the communitarian ambition of replacing fragile, atomised, fearful and insecure communities with ones confident enough to take responsibility for their own safety. At the same time, in the national politics of the 1990s and 2000s, ‘creating safer communities’ has been a crucial component of the Labour administration’s promotion of policies that could be ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’. In this sense, community safety straddles the fault line of repressive crime control (tough on crime) and more preventive, welfare-oriented, interventions (tough on the causes of crime).

In the discussion that follows the main features of the institutional infrastructure of community safety are sketched in brief. As will be evident from the earlier discussion, it is difficult to deny that there has been a highly prescriptive and directive central government shaping of the contemporary preventive infrastructure in England and Wales. This is indicative of a sovereign state strategy, which stresses greater central
Control (‘steering’) alongside the diffusion of responsibility for the delivery of crime control and the promotion of safer communities (‘rowing’) to a wide array of agencies and groups, both public and private, voluntary and statutory in character. For commentators like Rose (1999), these developments are part of a broader neo-liberal movement towards enlisting communities as the new and preferred sites of governance.

The emergence of community safety as a policy discourse is most usefully viewed as feeding off two interconnected features of government thinking, namely a political discourse of civic communitarianism and a ‘modernising’ public management project. To give one example, as a result of the CDA in England and Wales the aim to tackle disorder and anti-social behaviour through the establishment of exclusion orders was a central feature of this fused communitarian and public management project. It is important to note how moral or social transgressions as well as law-breaking came under the scope of the communitarian-inspired powers vested in local crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs), or community safety partnerships (CSPs) as they are known in Wales. Such developments are illustrative of the entanglements and possible contradictions associated with control and welfare in the field of community safety.

Between 1998 and 2008 all 376 statutory partnerships in England and Wales were legally obliged and empowered to:

- Carry out audits of local crime and disorder problems.
- Consult with all sections of the local community.
- Publish 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 timescales.
- Publish the audit, strategy and the targets.
- Report annually on progress against the targets.

Most CDRPs and CSPs have been characterised by very similar formal organisational structures. For example, there is a formal strategic/operational division; there are usually specific thematic or geographically based ‘action’ teams; the key statutory partners or ‘responsible’ authorities are made up of public agencies ranging from the local authority, police, probation, fire, police authority and health, alongside co-opted agencies from both the statutory and the voluntary sector. The ‘community’ is usually presented in the local strategies as a spatial and moral concept, emphasising locality and belonging and unity (albeit across consensual
diversity). However, there is also a common tendency to place certain groups outside the community due to their ‘anti-social’ activities, pointing to the key role of boundary and exclusion in representations of community. In turn, the community is usually ‘passively’ present in terms of being ‘consulted’ rather than an active participant in the planning and delivery of community safety (Hughes 2008).

There continue to be ongoing reforms of CDRPs/CSPs as the vehicles for community safety at the time of writing which have the stated aim to improve their performance at the local level. However, such partnership work remains substantively determined by the evolving central government agenda of targeted, evidence-based and measurable crime and disorder reduction, linked to specific negotiated priorities.

The priorities listed below are taken from the published strategies of the 22 CSPs in Wales for 2005–08, but they also reflect the typical priorities shared across partnerships across England and Wales. Research shows that those highlighted in bold were consistently the top priorities in local CSP strategies (Edwards and Hughes 2008c).

- **Anti-social behaviour**
- Arson
- Burglary
- Domestic abuse
- **Fear of crime**
- Hate crime
- Home safety
- Prolific and persistent offenders
- Property/business crime
- Road safety
- Rural crime
- **Substance abuse**
- Vehicle crime
- Violence
- **Youth offending**

The primary focus of community safety partnerships in terms of their stated priorities since the CDA has thus been on crime and disorder reduction. On the surface this suggests that they are primarily engaged in local crime control rather than in social policy work. However, the actual
outcomes of such control work may be preventive in character rather than purely repressive and enforcement-oriented, when examined in terms of problem-solving orientation and when studied empirically ‘on the ground’ (Edwards and Hughes 2008b).

The centrally propelled and Home Office directed drive towards the institutionalisation of community safety remains strikingly apparent across every local government authority in England and Wales. Such processes have seen an ever-increasing number of multi-agency community safety teams – managers, officers, project workers, police secondees, drug action/substance misuse teams, anti-social behaviour units, for example – which now form an increasingly salient, if still fragile, part of local government structures and processes.

As a relatively novel set of institutions and experts, community safety work is set to remain a key feature of the local governance of crime, disorder and security in England and Wales. However, there are major challenges that lie in wait, not least those associated with innovations in the local policing of the terror threat and ‘radicalisation’; additionally, tensions exist in the nature and form of neighbourhood policing and the uneasy and unstable relations between such ‘police-ing’ initiatives and local community safety policy (see Hughes and Rowe 2007).

Narratives of community safety

In this section we undertake some initial steps towards a sociology of knowledge production, namely an exploration of how exponents of the criminological imagination have contributed to the development, framing and problematisation of community safety as a field of policy and practice. In what follows, we distinguish and critique four compelling narratives or histories of community safety (and their perceived consequences) before concluding with our preferred mode of conceptualising and researching built around the ‘necessary’ relations of power dependence in the policy field and practices of community safety.

Community safety as a progressive third way

We begin with the uses to which the notion of community safety has been put by a range of actors who may be grouped collectively as administrative or policy criminologists: the array of central and local governmental advisors, policy-makers, practitioners and research officers and consultants. The terms ‘administrative’ and ‘policy’ are not used in a pejorative sense here (see Hughes 2007: 201–7 on the different forms of criminological labour). We would include in this important intellectual grouping such writers as Lea, Matthews and Young, often collectively known as the ‘left realists’, and the work of such Home Office social scientists as Tim Hope.
and Margaret Shaw in the 1980s, and architects of the post-1998 crime reduction guidance, Nick Tilley and Mike Hough.

Alongside the work of policy criminologists noted above, the authors of the Morgan Report (Home Office 1991 and see pp. 00 above) used the concept of community safety to retrieve the gamut of dispositional theories of crime causation that constitute the principal sociological and psychological contributions to governmental criminology. These had been eschewed during the previous decade by a national Conservative administration critical of the social determination of crime and concerned to promote neo-classical principles of deterrent penal regimes for rational offenders and situational crime prevention techniques. The unsurprising rejection of the Morgan Report’s recommendations for community safety by this administration provided the Labour Party, then in opposition in Westminster, with a basis for reformulating its approach to law and order, specifically through Tony Blair’s now renowned concept of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. The influence of the Morgan Report and its translation into Labour Party ‘third way’ thinking can also be seen in the appeal made to ‘joined-up’ and holistic governance and the technique of partnership working, also pioneered by the social democratic-oriented ‘left realist’ criminologists. This partnership approach sought to unsettle and centre the dominant assumption of a single-agency solution to crime.

The political importance of Blair’s reformulation of crime control policy, during his tenure as opposition spokesperson on Home Affairs, both for his personal political career and for the subsequent electoral fortunes of the Labour Party, has been the subject of much analysis and commentary (Downes and Morgan 2002; Matthews and Young 2003; Tonry 2004). The key point about this narrative is that the concept of community safety enabled the Labour Party, at both national and municipal levels, to reassert the social democratic association of crime control and social policy while accommodating more immediate, palliative measures for reducing crime and addressing the needs of victims. It therefore provided a means of loosening the ‘hostages to fortune’ that had characterised the Labour Party’s depiction, by its political opponents, of being soft on crime, tolerant of civil disorders and more concerned with the welfare of offenders than the rights of victims (Downes and Morgan 1994; Gilling 2007).

From its origins in the political dynamics of national and local government in Britain, the very imprecision of community safety as a concept proved useful in instantiating the problem of crime as a composite of social causes, to be addressed through multi-agency policies on family support, employment and training, education and youth work, situational opportunities, support for victims and so on. In these terms, the intellectual coherence and internal consistency of the concept is less important and less interesting than its capacity to outflank and out-think
more reductionist narratives about crime control through either enforcement of the criminal law and punitive deterrence or social policy interventions.

*Community safety as a repressive state apparatus?*

Counterpoised to the admixture of criminological ideas found in official and policy-oriented narratives on community safety, some commentators working within the tradition of critical criminology have offered an altogether ‘smoother’ interpretation of this concept and what it signifies. Drawing inspiration from Marxist analyses of an earlier generation of critical criminologists, these commentators identify community safety as a set of particular practices that form part of a repressive state apparatus whose function is to regulate the conditions for capital accumulation via a strategy of ‘lockdown’ leading inexorably and inevitably to differential policing, discriminatory targeting, universal surveillance, criminalisation and escalation in the prison population (Scraton 2003: 31; see also Coleman et al. 2002; Coleman 2004, 2005).

In this narrative community safety is imagined as a set of repressive, ‘revanchist’ policing practices aimed at retaking public space (from the ‘anti-social’, for example) for the purposes of capital accumulation while obviating alternative conceptions of safety, such as youth work within disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Moreover, the narrow conception of community safety among urban elites is viewed as closing off action on other threats to public health, such as toxic waste disposal and allied corporate crimes that are excluded from the vision and horizon of community safety work. Accordingly, Coleman et al. (2002: 96) observe that ‘these inclusionary and exclusionary practices can be understood as part of a wider social ordering strategy which is legitimated by the moral and intellectual project of social and economic regeneration’.

Interest in capturing the concept of community safety and using it to signal the need for public protection against a variety of harmful activities perpetrated by corporations against vulnerable working-class communities has increased among critical criminologists (Tombs et al. 2007). Again, this demonstrates both the polyvalence of the concept and its focus for political contestation over the definition of ‘safety’ for different communities of interest. However, our particular concern here is in the relationship between the performative and representational aspects of this critical narrative. In problematising community safety as an exercise in securing the conditions for capital accumulation strategies (such as the regeneration of post-industrial cities around retail consumption during the day and alcohol consumption at night), this narrative frames community safety as a repressive apparatus and channels the vision of the social researcher on to those policing practices that fit this initial problematisation.
To what extent this imagination also provides an accurate and/or exhaustive representation of community safety in the case study area in question (Liverpool) as well as further afield is a moot point. In our view, it is questionable because of the messy, capacious and often disorganised conceptions of community safety revealed through empirical research into the dispositions of community safety workers themselves (Edwards and Hughes 2008b; Hughes and Gilling 2004) and into the practice of partnerships in other localities in England and Wales (Hallsworth 2002; Stenson 2002; Foster 2002; Hughes 2007).

Community safety as a neo-liberal political rationality?

Whereas critical criminology was, at one time, synonymous with the kind of Marxist political economy advocated by Coleman and colleagues, it now accommodates the work of those influenced by a very different intellectual tradition associated with Foucault’s study of power, particularly his concept of governmentality. The latter concept examines the role of political rationalities in defining objects of control and prescribing how these objects so defined should be interpreted and acted upon (Foucault 1991; Garland 2001; Smandych 1999).

In Britain arguments about the meaning of crime prevention and community safety have provided a focal point for this tradition of thought, in particular David Garland’s thesis about the contradictory political rationalities at play in late-modern strategies of control. Specifically, the episodic bouts of punitive display by sovereign states anxious to legitimate their authority through various ‘wars’ on crime, drugs or terror exist in tension with the sotto voce admission that state authorities lack the effective capacity to govern crime and disorder alone. This limit to the sovereign state and in turn the normality of high crime rates provides the real world conditions to which governing strategies must adapt by ‘responsibilising’ citizens and other private actors more actively and more prudentially to participate in their own governance. Central to this adaptation is the promotion of measures for identifying and reducing the opportunities for crime and disorder generated through the everyday routines of citizens (Garland 2001; see also Crawford 2006; Johnston and Shearing 2003).

In these terms, community safety is counterpoised to various forms of punitive display, such as zero tolerance policing, ASBOs, parenting orders, and allied to a new logic of prevention and risk management that ‘instead of pursuing, prosecuting and punishing individuals . . . aims to reduce the supply of criminal events by minimising criminal opportunities, enhancing situational controls, and channelling conduct away from criminogenic situations’ (Garland 2001: 171). Here, as Garland goes on to note, community safety ‘becomes the chief consideration and law enforcement becomes merely a means to this end’ (2001: 171).
Community safety is consequently allied to a certain neo-liberal political rationality in which state intervention, even in the core competence of order maintenance, is rolled back as private citizens are required to act as individualised, responsibilised and prudential actors, better insuring themselves against future risks of criminal victimisation. What, for Garland, is eclipsed in this interplay between punitive ‘criminologies of the other’ and adaptive ‘criminologies of the self’, is the social democratic criminology that had prevailed in the mid twentieth century and which privileged collective risk management and welfare state interventions, particularly those aimed at the education, training, employment and recreation of young people.

As noted above, however, empirical research studies suggest that community safety has been regarded, notably by community safety workers themselves, as a means of resuscitating a more social democratic vision of control (Hughes and Gilling 2004). The smooth elision of community safety with neo-liberal politics has also been challenged for obscuring the increasing accommodation of punitive strategies within community safety work, most notably through the pressure put on multi-agency partnerships to use exclusion orders, such as ASBOs, which was present at the outset of the local statutory partnerships in 1999 and further intensified following the passage of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

An arboreal vision of control?

The fourth narrative on community safety is arguably the most provocative and destabilising exercise in the criminological imagination of all those considered here. It draws its inspiration from the work of the post-structuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), whose broader critique of western philosophical traditions challenges the common preoccupation with producing ‘arboreal’ knowledge, as exemplified by the historical device of genealogical or family trees. For Deleuze and Guattari this is a specious exercise which misconceives the more inchoate, protean, multi-directional and unpredictable qualities of social relationships, which are better envisaged in terms of the botanical metaphor of the ‘rhizome’. This metaphor captures the heterogeneous mutation of social relationships and their osmosis into one another, creating in turn further mutations, for example in the assemblage, breakdown and reassemblage of non-nuclear families. The point of the metaphor is that it expresses the kind of thinking that is needed to apprehend the dynamic qualities of social relationships and how this thinking has been debilitated by the rigid conceptual hierarchies and categorisation associated with, for example, modern, positivist social science.

This opposition between arboreal and rhizomatic thinking has been imported into criminological thought by those interested in innovations in
The control of crime and disorder often associated with community safety (see Haggerty and Ericson 2000; Hallsworth 2002, 2008). According to Hallsworth’s research in London on street crime and its (attempted) control, there is a dissonance between the rational problem-solving activities which community safety workers are asked to undertake, in order to render problems of street crime and disorder intelligible and measurable for the purposes of their subsequent remediation, and the protean qualities of these problems, which escape precise definition and calibration. Arboreal visions of control are subverted by the rhizomatic qualities of both control itself and the street crime and disorder that are the focus of much control. This narrative suggests a basic contradiction in community safety work, namely the struggle to delimit the limitless.

According to this narrative, the problems of mirror imaging – by which public authorities project their own ways of thinking on to their subjects of control – can be discerned throughout the intelligence-led, problem-solving approaches that community safety officers and police crime analysts in particular are required to undertake by the statutory duty to return annual strategic assessments of their work. Despite the persistence of extant traditions of social democratic and sociological thought among community safety practitioners, as noted earlier, the predominant intellectual traditions underpinning the routine analysis of crime patterns in these strategic assessments are those of rational choice, routine activities theory and situational crime prevention. In turn, these delimit street crime in terms of discrete ‘events’ that can be enumerated and mapped to reveal their concentration in time and place (Clarke and Eck 2003). In doing so, the antecedent conditions and ‘upstream’ causes of these events are forgotten and the meaning of street violence, for its ‘rational’ protagonists, is bracketed off.

If the hot-spot, situational analysis of crime patterns imposes an arboreal vision of control upon inherently rhizomatic processes of crime and disorder, as Hallsworth contends, it follows that other intellectual traditions are required for the cultivation of a rhizomatic imagination. To this end, Hallsworth identifies the promise of the phenomenological methods of ‘cultural criminology’ (2008: 13). In place of ‘voodoo statistics’ (Young 2004), qualitative research methods are required that render intelligible the ‘ecologies’ of street crime and the rules of violence as understood by protagonists themselves. (Hallsworth 2008: 8ff.).

Deleuzian criminology as translated in our fourth narrative is essential-ly performative, preoccupied as it is with deconstructing the over-rationalised, patterned and structured imagery of crime and disorder and its control found in official and in much critical social science as a means of promoting an alternative rhizomatic vision of control. It is clear, however, that Hallsworth’s ‘violence ecologies’ are also offered as superior representations of crime, disorder and control; superior, that is, to the official and critical criminologies they have first deconstructed and
dismissed as arboreal. In our view, it is questionable if it is possible to ever escape arboreal representations of social life. Does a non-arboreal representation of the ‘inherent contingent amorphous volatility of street life’ or the ‘rhizomatic expansion of surveillance’ (Haggerty and Ericson 2000) imply an inherently contingent amorphous and volatile or rhizomatic method of inquiry and argumentation? How can the mutable, open-ended quality of the social relations signified by the idea of community safety be represented in ways that avoid the structuring devices of social science, including, ironically, those of post-structuralist thinkers?

**Power-dependence**

The final narrative of community safety considered here is that associated with our own research into the unfinished politics and necessarily unstable outcomes of the struggle for security and safety (Edwards and Hughes 2005b). Central to this research is the concept of ‘power-dependence’, developed by political scientists to build theory about changes and continuities in governance (Rhodes 1997). The concept of power-dependence identifies a central paradox of political power: those who possess the potential to govern are not powerful when they are not actually governing, but neither are they when they seek to govern because they are dependent on others to carry out their commands. The difference between the potential to govern and actually governing is always the actions of others.

It follows that ‘would-be sovereigns’ are necessarily in a relationship of power-dependence with those through whom they must govern and with whom they must enter into exchange relationships to win and maintain a governing coalition. This dependence is what necessitates political competition and the consequent gaps between talk, decisions and action in any particular policy field as some actors resist recruitment and/or are interested by competing coalitions. The content of this competition, however, is contingent on the political vision, acumen and resources of the competitors, which we expect to differ among particular centres of power (national administrations, local governments, supranational organisations such as the European Union, and so on). Whether the substantive content of security politics, or any other governing project, actually differs among different centres of power is also a question for empirical research. We suggest, on the basis of case study research reported on security politics in various localities in Western Europe (Hughes and Edwards 2002; Edwards and Hughes 2005b), that this proposition has yet to be falsified, although this case study research was cross-sectional and so prospective convergence in security politics cannot be ruled out. Complete convergence in actions as well as decisions and talk would, however, be remarkable, indicating the total collapse of political competition and capacities for resistance which, certainly in
liberal democracies, and other ‘differentiated polities’ (Rhodes 1997), we suggest, is highly unlikely.

The resources associated with relations of power-dependence are unevenly distributed but no single actor is ever completely resource-less. For example, even poverty-stricken voluntary organisations at the subnational level have the capacity for political representation to governors anxious to ‘engage’ them; whether this capacity is actually realised is a contingent consequence of other factors, particularly acumen in campaigning. As a consequence, the political competition to translate talk into decisions and then decisions into action is structured by asymmetrical (rather than zero-sum) relations of power-dependence. Rhodes (1997) suggests five dimensions of power-dependence, which we have found useful as a basis for building theory about the uneven outcomes of security/safety politics in different centres of power: constitutional-legal, financial, informational, organisational, and political.

When we apply this conceptual framework to the words, decisions and actions associated with the politics of community safety in England and Wales, we are able to discern better the real terrain of (delimited) political contestation and action, (constrained) plurality of outcomes and (bounded) spaces for contingency, that has characterised the history of our floating signifier.

We now consider some of the key emergent challenges facing the hybrid policy field of community safety raised in our ongoing empirical research, alongside the opening up of potentially new research agendas when the national frame of reference is unsettled and the uneven local distribution of various asymmetric governing resources is centred in sociological and political analysis of this still evolving policy terrain.

Unsettling the ‘British nation’ as a unit of analysis

I Researching community safety in the partially devolved polity of Wales

Most research studies, as well as nationwide surveys of and commentaries on the preventive turn in British criminology, have tended to take the ‘British/English’ national model of crime prevention and community safety as their taken-for-granted frame of reference even when discussing ‘UK’ developments. Alistair Henry breaks with this tradition in part by discussing the specific characteristics of the preventive turn in Scotland (see Chapter 4, this volume). It is also evident that things are different in Northern Ireland, although we lack a firm empirical research base for drawing any subtle or firm conclusions both about the recent emergence and future direction of community safety strategies in this province. It is also often assumed that the term ‘England’ subsumes Wales and there has been a tradition for the ‘and Wales’ part of the descriptor to be ignored.
This was unsatisfactory in the past, but it is now seriously flawed to presume that processes of change and adaptation in the localities across Wales, in this case with regard to community safety and crime prevention, will simply reflect the tendencies of its larger neighbour (England) given the partial devolution of powers since 2000 to the Welsh Assembly Government.

Since 2000 the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has had a range of statutory powers relating to the policy and practice of community safety, including local government, health and social services, and education. This is one example at the national and local levels in Wales of what we term the constitutional-legal dimension of power-dependence. At present, its powers do not extend to policing and criminal justice per se (unlike Scotland) but issues of crime prevention – for example, through tackling substance misuse, youth crime and annoyance, and promoting ‘youth inclusion’ – do fall within the Assembly’s constitutional-legal and financial remit. Considered as a distinct policy area, community safety was until 2007 a responsibility of the Assembly government’s Department of Social Justice and Regeneration,1 emphasising at the level of political rhetoric the Assembly government’s interest in locating issues of ‘crime and disorder’ prevention within a problematic of social rather than criminal justice. That local partnerships in Wales have retained the prefix ‘community safety’ rather than the officially designated ‘crime and disorder reduction’ partnerships in England is, in the light of recent research findings (Edwards and Hughes 2008b), also more than a semantic difference. The distinction between CSPs in Wales and CDRPs in England has performed an important symbolic political function in (as one of our research respondents put it) ‘dragonising’2 the policy area as well as further emphasising – at least at the level of ‘talk’ and ‘decision’ if not as yet proven ‘action’ – the social policy orientation of responses to crime and disorder in Wales as distinct from the intended central government direction for CDRPs in England. Whether such symbolic differences in the naming of the organisations tasked with delivering community safety in Wales (i.e. the organisational dimension of power-dependence) translate into radically different practices of control and outcomes for communities between England and Wales remains a moot point for the kind of comparative research that we would advocate (Edwards and Hughes 2005b) but which, to our knowledge, has yet to be undertaken systematically and comparatively.

Powerful pressures for convergence across English CDRPs and Welsh CSPs (associated with financial, informational and organisational dimensions of power-dependence) clearly include the role of the Home Office in establishing certain performance targets for CDRPs and CSPs and linking the two main funding budgets hitherto dedicated to partnership work and dispensed from Whitehall (the Basic Command Unit Fund and the Building Safer Communities Fund) to success or failure in meeting these targets.
The new informational technologies from central government departments associated, for example, with the police-driven National Intelligence Model (NIM), annual strategic assessments and the establishment of annual police and community safety statements and 34 national outcome and indicator sets for community safety in 2008 are suggestive of further penetrative processes of convergence and conformity across CSPs and CDRPs in England and Wales. That noted, findings from our survey of all 22 CSPs in Wales (Edwards and Hughes 2008c) suggest, however, that the Assembly government provides the overwhelming proportion of funding received by the Welsh partnerships, accounting for between 60–80 per cent of their annual budgets. In turn this funding is allied to a very particular post-devolutionary politics in Wales that is suggestive of a potentially important break with the direction of crime and disorder reduction in England since 1998. The WAG Safer Communities Fund established in 2004, for example, is dedicated to reducing problems of youth exclusion and promoting youth inclusion through social crime prevention and diversionary interventions. These are objectives of an ‘old’ social democratic impulse to engineer social integration through more intensive welfare state interventions sitting somewhat uneasily alongside the risk factor prevention paradigm of the England and Wales Youth Justice Board (Hughes et al. forthcoming).

Indeed, broader commentaries on post-devolution government in Wales have emphasised the political goal of reasserting the importance of social democracy and creating a ‘high-trust’ polity in which disillusioned citizens are reconnected to more accountable and responsive public authorities through the democratisation rather than commercialisation of public services. The Beecham Inquiry into public service delivery in Wales noted the commercial conception of citizens in England (as consumers of services delivered through quasi-market competition) could not be replicated in Wales, both because of political opposition to the very idea of commercialising public services and because of its impracticality given the problems of sustaining alternative competitors in a country with a highly dispersed demography, particularly in the rural and valleys areas (Beecham 2006: para. 2.13). This broader political context is significant for a discussion of any putative British ‘ASBO nation’ (Squires 2008) because ASBOs have been regarded by some key elite decision-makers in the Welsh polity as the epitome of low-trust state–citizen relations, inimical to the post-devolutionary project of building a more inclusive society and thus to be used only as a last resort (Edwards and Hughes 2008b).

2 Researching local negotiations and contestations of anti-social behaviour control

Let us exemplify such local struggles with the example of the resistance we found among lead community safety officers in most of the 22 localities across Wales to any uncritical implementation of the anti-social
behaviour agenda promulgated from the Home Office in the mid 2000s (see Edwards and Hughes 2008b). This discussion alerts us to the importance of the 'subnational' as brought to life in specific geo-historical contexts and local practices and politics in situ.

It became clear from this comparative, translocal research on Welsh CSPs that the occupation of community safety manager was often a tortuous process of bargaining between implacable partners, especially with regard to the political and culturally emotive issue of governing young people's use of public space. In occupying this position, community safety managers were not in a position to act as some simple interlocutor for the Home Office's 'Respect' agenda, or foot-soldier for the government's Respect unit, if they wanted to retain the involvement of those partners primarily concerned with the welfare of children and young people. As noted earlier, there has been substantial investment of resources, financial as well as political (and symbolic), in a more social democratic, welfare-oriented approach to crime and disorder in Wales, allied to the rhetoric of a citizen-centred model of public service, for which the prolific use of 'low-trust' measures such as ASBOs is anathema. As a consequence, this broader post-devolutionary project places a considerable pressure on community safety managers, reinforced by funding streams from the WAG that account for the overwhelming share of their annual budgets, to counterbalance the 'Manchester tendency' (the local authority area with by far the highest number of ASBOs in recent years) with strategies that place a premium on the social inclusion of young people. However, there is also evidence of variation in local CSPs' adherence across Wales to this social democratic project, with some notable advocates of ASBOs as an economic and highly effective means of restoring order.

Such uneven contestation emphasises the local political agency of community safety managers and the partnerships they co-ordinate, the consequences of which cannot be articulated within the smooth narratives of disorder that have predominated in both official and academic discourses. The conception and governance of anti-social behaviour is a complex and unevenly developed practice both in its 'doing' by practitioners and in its apprehension by social researchers. The greater concerns of community safety managers across many localities in Wales are focused on efforts to prevent or at best to manage disorder and local feelings of fear and insecurity. Much of this work is profoundly influenced by a social democratic ethos that belies seductive but simplistic official narratives of ASBOs as a progressive palliative for 'feral' populations.

What we have termed the 'resilient Fabianism' (or social democratic and socialist ideological orientation) of local community safety managers' accounts of their own work also disturbs narratives of social control in critical social science, which are in danger of believing the hype of the very political projects they seek to challenge. The distinction between the
The preventive turn and the promotion of safer communities in England and Wales

neo-liberal and neo-conservative impulses constituting the ‘free economy, strong state’ project of New Right politics has animated critical commentary on British government for too long, obfuscating the complex interdependencies between state and civil society that both necessitate political agency and enable local resistance. The incorporation of this distinction into criminological research, notably through the work of David Garland (1996, 2001) and Nikolas Rose (1999, 2000), has further obscured an understanding of social control as an emergent, necessarily contingent, product of the struggle for sovereignty over territories and populations.

As such, grand narrative themes, such as the eclipse, even death, of social democratic ‘criminologies of everyday life’, underestimate the complex interplay between local priorities and extant political traditions over social order and those emanating from both Whitehall and the WAG. In this way, our research suggests that it is both conceptually flawed and empirically misleading to speak of a unitary ‘British model’ or ‘ASBO nation’ that governs populations through sanctioning anti-social behaviour, particularly when the impact of the devolved polities of the UK on policy responses to crime and disorder is recognised.

A larger challenge for research and policy in this field is to explore both the broader conditions of social integration, which explain the generation of these new forms of disordering, and their anti-social consequences, as lived experiences for the populations most ravaged by the loss of old stabilities around previous divisions of labour at the workplace and in the home. To paraphrase Paul Willis (1977), what does it mean, especially for young men, to ‘learn not to labour’, given their actual and prospective ejection from stable, full-time employment?

Conclusion

Throughout the discussion in this chapter it has been argued that any adequate social scientific interpretation of both the broad trends and specific realisations of community safety must centre on the following issues:

- The distinction between security and safety talk, decisions and actions: specifically, the gap between intended governmental projects and their actual outcomes.
- The role of relations of power-dependence between (would-be) sovereign actors in causing gaps between talk, decisions and actions.
- The consequent political struggles over safety and security and their uneven outcomes in particular places and moments or geo-historical contexts.
Our discussion of current tendencies and consequences, and their interpretation, suggests that the field of community safety is marked by contradictory and unstable forces. Across England and Wales we currently lack a systematic comparative research programme into the kind of security politics produced by community safety work, at both national and subnational levels, and especially across English localities. That noted, the rediscovery of political agency implied by the concept of geo-historical context makes visible and salient the ongoing struggles to govern. The outcomes of these struggles derive from the diverse as well as comparable political, economic and cultural trajectories found in ‘British’ localities.

Notes

1 Following the Assembly election in May 2007 the department was restructured and renamed the Department of Social Justice and Local Government. Community safety remains within this department. The emphasis on social rather than criminal justice approaches to reducing crime and disorder is, if anything, likely to be further enhanced following the agreement, in July 2007, between the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru (the nationalist party of Wales that adopts a relatively left-wing stance on social policy issues including those of crime and disorder) to form a coalition government.

2 A reference to Y Ddraig Goch or the Red Dragon that is the national symbol of Wales.

References

The preventive turn and the promotion of safer communities in England and Wales


Crime prevention Policies in Comparative Perspective


The preventive turn and the promotion of safer communities in England and Wales


