New Labour, New Danger: Moral Communitarianism and Coercive Disorder Control

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ABSTRACT
The proliferation of crime prevention partnerships is viewed by many criminologists as forming part of a bifurcation in criminal policy between conventional crime and disorder, in which the ‘enforcement approach’ of the penal system is being focused upon serious crime and a non-penal ‘partnership approach’ advanced for the control of disorderly behaviour. This positive picture of the potential of crime prevention partnerships is made problematic by growing resort by local authorities to governing disorder through civil orders, however. The ‘partnership approach’ runs a risk of becoming an extension of and not an alternative to the ‘enforcement approach’ of the penal state, and the local runs a risk of becoming a new site for governing disorder through law.

This paper is taken from research recently submitted for a doctorate in criminology, which focused upon implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in England and Wales. Rather than presenting the results of the primary research or analysis made of the structural changes that underlie the incorporation of civil orders into penal policy, the paper focuses on the immediate political climate surrounding the development of the ‘partnership approach’. It is demonstrated that the use of civil orders as a coercive response to the disorderly behaviour of the economically and socially marginalised is not a questionable objective in current political discourse in England and Wales. Central and local government support for the use of civil orders as coercive tools of crime control was evident from the mid-1990s and is now unequivocal.