Respectable or respectful? (in)civility and the city

Jon Bannister a; Nick Fyfe b; Ade Kearns a

a Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow. 25 Bute Gardens, Glasgow, G12 8RS. UK
b Department of Geography, University of Dundee. Perth Road, Dundee, DD1 4HN. UK

To cite this Article: Jon Bannister, Nick Fyfe and Ade Kearns, ‘Respectable or respectful? (in)civility and the city’, Urban Studies, 43:5, 919 - 937

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00420980600676337
Respectable or Respectful? (In)civility and the City

Jon Bannister, Nick Fyfe and Ade Kearns

[Paper received in final form, February 2006]

Summary. Do we stand before a rising tide of incivility, of disrespect? Or, is this the latest moral panic? Examining (the UK) New Labour’s approach to incivility in the city, as manifest in the respect and urban renaissance agendas, this paper argues that the current zero-tolerance approach to incivility is based upon a confused understanding of anti-social behaviour and contradictory evidence of its occurrence and impact. Ultimately, it is proposed that a version of urbanity that endeavours to enforce respect and create the respectable city will prove counter-productive. Rather, respect and the respectful city require tolerance of, and engagement with, incivility.

George Washington’s first rule of civility and decent behaviour: Every action done in company, ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present (Washington, 1971).

1. Introduction: Back to the Future?

In Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears, Pearson (1983) begins by quoting the horrified press reaction to the riots that took place in a handful of British cities in 1981. According to the Daily Express

People are bound to ask what is happening to our country . . . Having been one of the most law-abiding countries in the world—a byword for stability, order and decency—are we changing into something else? (quoted in Pearson, 1983, p. 3).

As Pearson (1983, p. 3) observes, in this and other responses to urban disorder, we see a familiar story being constructed

Once upon a time . . . violence and disorder were unknown in Britain. The hallowed traditions of the ‘British way of life’ were founded upon civility, reasonableness and an unquestioning respect for law and authority . . . But all that is no more. Now violence and terror lurk in the once-safe streets. The family no longer holds its proper place and parents have abandoned their responsibilities. . . . A new generation is upon us of mindless bullyboys, vandals, muggers . . . toughs and tearaways who laugh in the face of the law, as we stand before the rising tide of violence and disorder with a Canute-like impotence (Pearson, 1983, p. 3).

Pearson’s observations provide a useful reminder that moral panics around issues of incivility and disorder in British cities are nothing new (although we might imagine them as new through romanticising the past). Indeed, by vividly revealing the long history of urban disorder in Britain’s cities, Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears successfully exposes the myth, articulated by successive generations of press and politicians, that the ‘British way of life’ is under threat by an
unruly minority. Having this historical sensitivity, helps to put the issues of incivility and urban development examined in this paper in some perspective. It illustrates the diversity of behaviours that are typically thrown together under the umbrella of ‘incivility’ and shows that the concern with ‘respect’, which has come to be one of the defining features of the Labour government’s third term in office, can partly be viewed as the most recent example of a long tradition of ‘respectable fears’ that

the streets of Britain have been suddenly plunged into an unnatural state of disorder that betrays the stable traditions of the past (Pearson, 1983, p. ix).

Moreover, the determination to address what is viewed as the problem of a ‘lack of respect’ via innovations in urban policy can also be viewed as part of a long history of attempts at moral improvement which stretches back at least to Victorian concerns with environmental reform (Whitehead, 2004).

Nevertheless, it is also important to engage with the distinctiveness of New Labour’s approach to address incivility in the city and the first part of this paper situates this within the context of broader economic and political concerns about urban public space. But just as past concerns with ‘hooligans’ or other ‘alien influences’ lacked conceptual precision, so too the government’s concern with ‘respect’ and ‘incivility’ reveals a similar lack of clarity, resulting in policy which, as the second part of this paper argues, is confused, contradictory and counter-productive. Indeed, in the complex intermingling of social and urban policy which has characterised the government’s approach to ‘respect’ and ‘incivility’, an important tension is emerging between the attempts to create the ‘respectable’ city, centred around policies of zero tolerance towards anti-social behaviour and the physical restructuring of urban space to create boulevards, plazas and gentrified enclaves, and the ‘respectful’ city, where, following Sennett (2003, p. 52), we take “the needs of others seriously”. This is a distinction we explore further in the Conclusion.

2. Respectability and the Urban Renaissance

In this part of the paper, we review the advancement of the Respect Agenda across government policies for the improvement of our towns and cities. First, we examine the Home Office’s Respect Action Plan, which seeks to empower majority groups to enforce respectability in public spaces of all kinds by removing forms of ‘intimidation’ and ‘tyranny’. The obverse of this ‘anti-social behaviour’, referred to as a ‘culture of respect’, is also mentioned but left ill-defined and without a route map to civility. In the second sub-section, we look at how a predominant form of consumption-based urban culture is supported in city centres through policies of privatisation, securitisation and purification to remove incivilities and alternative uses.

The third sub-section then considers how anti-social behaviour strategies have similarly been extended beyond city centres to residential areas, again to enforce respect. It is in the residential domain that a ‘culture of respect’ is to have its foundations, where civility towards our environments and fellow citizens is to be learnt. Then we identify several relevant limitations: first, many environments are not as ‘clean and decent’ as intended and hence not places that people can respect; secondly, facilities for young people which would engage them in what the majority would see as civilised activities are often lacking, contributing to undirected behaviours in public space which are seen as disturbing others; and, thirdly, residential mixing between social and cultural groups is weak, thus inhibiting the social learning required to support civilised social interactions and constructive engagement between groups. This part of the paper concludes by highlighting the contradictions between purification and diversification strategies: the emphasis on enforcing respect and conformity may reduce the possibility of ever achieving social integration in diverse societies.

2.1 The Respect Action Plan

A recurrent theme lying at the heart of New Labour’s law and order agenda over three
terms of government (1997–present) of the UK has been the drive to be ‘tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime’\(^1\). Over time, this stance has been broadened beyond crime to include a spectrum of incivilities or anti-social behaviour. At its core rests a simple message that has been relayed repeatedly: “Anti-social behaviour ... will not be ignored or tolerated any longer” (Scottish Executive, 2003, p. vii); there is to be a “no tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour” (Home Office, 2004, p. 10); “Disrespect and yobbish behaviour will not be tolerated anymore” (Blair, 2005); and, that there is a need to “bring back a proper sense of respect” (Home Office, 2003, p. 6). These statements appear to mirror the development of zero-tolerance policing in New York and the endeavour to target those ‘enemies within’, perceived as instrumental in fostering a sense of fear among ‘respectable’ New Yorkers (Smith, 1999).

In January 2006, New Labour’s approach was reaffirmed with the launch of the Respect Action Plan (Respect Task Force, 2006). This document outlines an extensive and wide-ranging set of strategies designed to confront and, ideally, to eradicate anti-social behaviour. These strategies include legislative reform of the criminal justice system, policing initiatives, parenting programmes, schooling initiatives, youth activities and so forth. The Respect Action Plan aims, through its constituent parts, to ‘enforce a culture of respect’. The precise nature of the culture of respect that the government wishes to enforce receives relatively scant attention. Respect is briefly and loosely defined as “an expression of something that people intuitively understand”, comprising “values that almost everyone in this country shares”, “which the majority of people want” and that “relies on a shared understanding and clear rules and is strengthened by people acting together to tackle problems and improve their lives” (Respect Task Force, 2006). Anti-social behaviour is described as “the most visible sign of disrespect” and portrayed as impacting upon the majority, whilst associated with the activities and behaviour of a minority. Thus, “too many people still suffer from the anti-social behaviour of a minority and feel powerless to stop it”. To this end, the Respect Action Plan aims to encourage the majority to engage actively in rescuing the public realm from the tyranny of the few, as this is a task that “can not be achieved by government alone”. Rather, “every citizen has a responsibility to behave in a respectful way and to support the community around them doing the same” (Respect Task Force, 2006). Hazel Blears, the Minister for Respect (in the Home Office), elucidates this further:

I want the decent majority to be able to take control of their neighbourhoods and communities. I want to return public streets, parks and shopping centres to the families, pensioners and young people who want to go about their lives free from intimidation. That is what the Respect programme is all about: helping people to change their lives and their communities and making neighbourliness, kindness and decency an everyday experience for us all (Respect Task Force, 2006, p. 37)

In considering the respect agenda, it is necessary to locate it with reference to a set of deep-rooted economic and political concerns about public spaces, which pre-date New Labour’s government of the UK. Moreover, it is necessary to recognise that the respect agenda is being enacted in conjunction with the government’s aim to provide ‘a decent place to live’ for everyone (ODPM, 2003a). This is encapsulated in the ‘Urban Renaissance’ agenda proposed by the Urban Task Force (1999) and distilled in the following urban White Paper (DETR, 2000). The desire for an urban renaissance, where urban living is more attractive and enjoyable, stems both from a wish to see the UK’s cities achieve the levels of quality seen in many European cities and beyond (with many references to successful European cities in the Task Force report) and from a declared need to stem the exodus from our cities and thus contribute to more sustainable communities (ODPM, 2003b). Thus the respect agenda is being
driven by policies emergent from both the Home Office and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (*The Guardian*, 2005). This can be viewed as ‘joined-up policy’ and as a ‘turf war’ that is being fought out across the city, in city-centres and residential neighbourhoods.

2.2 Respectability, Renaissance and the City Centre

Globalisation has undoubtedly led to the growing flexibility and mobility of capital. This has forced both nations and their constituent cities to compete increasingly against one another to secure capital investment, described by Harvey (1989) as ‘urban entrepreneurialism’. Here, attention has focused on the erosion of the economic role of public spaces in the city centre and the consequent negative economic, social and spatial outcomes of deindustrialisation that have led to the decline of many central urban areas. Concurrently, there has been a rapid growth of out-of-town retail and business parks, a development motivated, at least in part, by the intention to create an environment in which one can avoid the incivilities assumed to be present in, and fostered by, the dereliction of the city centre. Incivilities are believed to upset members of the public when undertaking the ‘respectable’ activity of shopping and are described by Beck and Willis as being manifest through unpleasant or offensive gangs of threatening youths; children hanging around in town centres and shopping centres; and distress caused by prostitutes, vagrants, beggars, drunks or buskers (Beck and Willis, 1995, p. 31).

Against this backdrop, national and local governments have engaged in an active role of trying to attract investment by private capital to stimulate economic regeneration (see, for example, Boyle and Hughes, 1995). This commitment to a more entrepreneurial position in the UK is evidenced by a wide variety of strategies that have been introduced (under the previous Conservative government and supported by the current Labour government) to reverse the economic decline and decreasing attractiveness to ‘respectable’ citizens (and capital) of city centres. Numerous strategies, promoted by central government—such as the financial support for public space closed-circuit television systems (CCTV)—and enacted by local governments (such as city marketing campaigns and the appointment of city-centre managers charged with improving security) can be cited to illustrate this approach. Lying behind these initiatives is the intention to improve economic attractiveness through improving security and public safety. Strategies aimed at public spaces have sought to recreate the perceived security advantages (attained through surveillance and policing) enjoyed by privately owned, but publicly accessible, spaces such as the out-of-town retail centres. Faced with criticisms that permissive planning regimes have contributed to the decline of city centres, governments have sought to redress the balance by promoting the respectable city centre.

This economic agenda was clearly illustrated via the installation of a CCTV system in Glasgow (Scotland) (see Fyfe and Bannister, 1996), a city in which employment in manufacturing almost halved between 1981 and 1991. Glasgow’s economic prosperity is now heavily dependent on the service sector, particularly office and retailing employment, concentrated in the city centre. As Spring observes

> The new Glasgow is a city of rampant consumerism—like Disneyland a magic world of eternal consumption (Spring, 1990, p. 54).

When, however, a routine survey of economic activity in the city revealed that the economic costs of crime and the deterrent effect of the fear of crime (associated with the presence of incivilities) on visits by potential consumers was a cause of ‘business drift’ from the city, the Glasgow Development Agency—the GDA (now Scottish Enterprise Glasgow), a government quango for promoting economic development in the city—investigated ways
of tackling this problem. The GDA progressed
to forge a partnership between the public and
private sectors to finance the installation and
operation of a CCTV and warden system,
known as ‘Citywatch’. Indeed, in its campaign
to persuade businesses to meet some of the
capital and current costs, the slogan used
was CCTV “doesn’t just make sense—it
makes business sense”. It was claimed,
although never validated, that ‘Citywatch’
would encourage 225 000 more visits to the
city a year, creating 1500 jobs and an
additional £40 million of income to city-
centre businesses.

For Macleod, complex and costly systems
of surveillance in city centres are

seemingly designed to inculcate ‘accepta-
ble’ patterns of behaviour commensurate
with the free flow of commerce and the
new urban aesthetics (Macleod, 2002,
p. 605).

This interpretation echoes Christopherson’s
(1994, p. 409) account of ‘the fortress city’,
in which she presents two contrasting views
of contemporary urban space. On the one
hand, “urban space is a playful space”, a
realm of spontaneity, individual creativity
and interaction, a narrative that appears
“seductive and at moments even resonates
with our experience”, but it also, she claims,
is profoundly ironic in that urban space is
increasingly tightly controlled, manipulated
and segmented.

In critiquing the effort to improve the
design, appearance and feel of the city
centre, Williams (2004) argues that there are
grounds for being concerned about what he
terms a ‘neurotic’ attempt to recreate a lost,
civilised public life. Williams takes issue
with Richard Rogers’ conceptualisation of
“the public domain [as] the theatre of an
urban culture” (Rogers, 1997; quoted in
Williams, 2004, p. 233). The use of architec-
ture as a ‘stage set’ against which people
perform an urban lifestyle which somehow
enacts democracy, is for Williams flawed
because it is essentially one-dimensional: cap-
puccino culture has become a dominant per-
spective on urban culture (with urban design
to suit) and yet it is predominantly a bourgeois
culture involving consumption by the privi-
leged and leisured. If, as Williams (2004,
p. 235) argues, urban design “makes the city
self-conscious” in a way that people are
forced to play the part of performer or spec-
tator in an urban theatre, we must wonder what
place there is for those who are not part of this
particular play; those without the means or
desire to engage in visits to galleries,
museums, boutiques or cafes.

Thus, the ‘respectable’ city and the ‘revan-
chist’ city (Smith, 1996) are closely related:
anyone deemed to compromise the strict
ethics of consumerist citizenship risks
exclusion from the new downtown areas. For
example, Ward, investigating the redevelop-
ment of east Manchester (England), identified
a recurrent narrative in the local press
which explicitly linked issues of investment
and incivility, this being that

the redevelopment of East Manchester
would only be successful if ‘disorderly
individuals’ were physically removed
from the area and either relocated else-
where, or jailed (Ward, 2003, p. 122; see
also, Coleman, 2004).

In this way, the restructuring of urban space,
argued as essential to promote urban
renewal, has destroyed the sites of social gath-
ering for the citizenry as a whole. At the same
time, rigid land use zoning has robbed city
centres of their richness and diversity (see
Sennett, 1974). The city centre is being
cleansed of difference.

The commodification of public space is
closely allied to the political context of
public space at national and local levels. At
a national level, the New Right doctrine of
‘free economy-strong state’ (Gamble, 1988,
p. 28) which underpinned the Conservative
government’s political programme following
their election to power in 1979, demanded
that the state play a strategic role in securing
the conditions under which commerce can
flourish. The then Conservative government
introduced a series of measures to enhance
the powers of the state to regulate those
activities in public space that might disrupt
business and commerce and conflict with consumer citizenship (see Fyfe, 1995a and 1995b). The enthusiastic response of some local authorities to these developments illustrates how elements of the national law and order political agenda were mirrored at the local political level. Eager to manage out behaviour which might undermine the economic potential of their area, many local authorities introduced by-laws to outlaw anti-social behaviour. Reeve's (1996, p. 75) survey of town-centre managers found that a third of respondents “had new powers to ensure that inappropriate activities and uses do not occur”; these included restricting drinking in public places and other nuisance to residents and shop-keepers.

This agenda has been continued and broadened under New Labour, as it has engaged in the ‘politics of behaviour’ (Field, 2003). The behaviour of the unrespectable, non-consuming minority is portrayed as inhibiting the use of public space by the respectable, consuming majority. Thus the minority are regarded as not only holding economic regeneration in abeyance, but also as infringing the civil liberties of the majority in public space. For a space “to be truly public, a space must be orderly enough to invite the entry of a larger majority of those who come to it” (Ellickson, 2001, p. 21). Incivilities, or the improper use of public space, are assumed to hold a cumulative and detrimental impact, denying access to and enjoyment of public space facilities (such as park benches and public lavatories) by the respectable majority.

Taken as a whole, therefore, it is evident that the respect agenda taps into longstanding economic and political concerns about the vitality of city centres. There is a zero tolerance of those who are perceived as inhibiting the process of revitalisation, of deterring the consuming majority. The culture of respect is manifest largely as a mode of conduct—namely, consumption. The streets are being reclaimed through the exclusion of those who do not conform to this mode of conduct, but at what cost? Does a city centre cleansed of difference engender civility and promote respect at the societal level?

2.3 Respectability, Renaissance and Residential Neighbourhoods

Ward (2003, p. 122) emphasises that entrepreneurial urbanism under New Labour continues to involve heavy state involvement and he describes in vivid detail the ‘civilising’ of East Manchester (England) through the use of “heavy, time-intensive and intrusive in-your-face policing strategies”. However, he recognises that it does so now in different ways than in the Conservative government’s era, with local communities increasingly encouraged to become involved in their own redevelopment and regulation. This is not just a broadening of participation, however, but a widening of spatial focus to residential areas. Hence, anti-social behaviour “takes many different forms. But its effects are the same. People’s lives are made a misery. The fabric of our communities is degraded. Neighbourhoods are blighted” (Scottish Executive, 2003, p.1). The battle to confront anti-social behaviour is now fought out across the whole city—although as it reaches out into residential areas, the reasoning underpinning this battle as well as the policies aimed at securing civility differ, as we shall see. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998), part of the government’s Crime Reduction Programme (Newburn, 2003), made it a statutory obligation in England and Wales for local authorities to set up Crime and Disorder Partnerships and conduct an audit of crime and disorder problems within their area of operation, leading to the establishment of a series of interventions and reduction targets.

In Scotland, the Scottish Executive (1999) launched Community Safety Partnerships (although this was not a mandatory initiative) with a similar organisational framework to that of Crime and Disorder Partnerships. Whilst in theory aimed at a broader range of safety issues (including road and domestic accidents and fire safety) than Crime and Disorder Partnerships, Helms (2003) notes, for example, that broader social disorder
maintenance issues dominated the Glasgow partnership. In a similar vein to Community Safety Partnerships, the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 (building in part on the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 and mirroring aspects of the Crime and Disorder 1998 Act) placed a mandatory duty upon councils and chief constables to publish plans to deal with anti-social behaviour in their area of operation as well as providing a set of tools to address its occurrence, including anti-social behaviour orders (explored in depth by Flint and Nixon, in this Review Issue), enabling the police to designate dispersal zones and disperse groups, establishing parenting orders against parents of badly behaved young people, and extending electronic tagging to under 16s.

Taken as a whole, these legislative and policy advances under New Labour’s law and order agenda have not taken place without attracting substantial criticism. At the very least, they have been suggested to blur the boundaries between criminal and civil issues, through the intermingling of criminal and other forms of social control (Brown, 2004). For Hughes (2002), the community safety agenda can be characterised as the ‘criminalisation of social policy’ in that the focus of policy attention is placed upon behaviours and activities of certain groups rather than the underlying socioeconomic causes of distress. Cohen (1985), over 20 years ago, identified the commencement of this change in the language and nature of social control. He noted a decreased emphasis being placed upon the endeavour to change the social conditions that lead to crime and disorder. In its stead, he noted a growing emphasis upon the management of criminal behaviour sequences. Crime is seen as normal and inevitable (Coleman and Sim, 1996) and crime control has shifted its focus from normalisation and rehabilitation, towards the imposition of a particular ‘mode of conduct’ (Soja, 1995). In other words, there is an attempt to eradicate the use of public space by certain groups rather than questioning the factors that lead those groups to want to, or have to, use that space more than others. NACRO, responding to the government’s anti-social behaviour strategy in general, and the power of the police to enforce dispersal zones in particular, commented

It would be churlish to deny that anti-social behaviour is anything but a serious concern warranting close attention. But the Government’s strategy is limited. It is limited by a heavy-handed and unnecessary emphasis on enforcement and punishment. And it is limited by its own clumsy definition of what it actually takes anti-social behaviour to be ... the measures aimed at dispersing groups of children congregating in public places, risk criminalising behaviour that at most could be said to be undesirable, that in many circumstances might actually be entirely innocent. In using the full weight of the criminal justice system against people who have committed no criminal offence, the government risks stigmatising them and risks damaging community relations (NACRO, 2003, p. 1).

Drawing upon Mitchell (2001, p. 7), it appears that government (both national and local) in its drive to revitalise the city and promote ‘livability’ has turned to “the annihilation of space by law”; it has turned “to a legal remedy that seeks to cleanse those left behind by globalisation and other secular changes in the economy by simply erasing the spaces in which they must live”; it is engaged in a purification of space both commercially and residentially. How do these trends interface with urban policies that endeavour to revitalise residential space? The drive to provide ‘a decent place to live’ (ODPM, 2003a) for everyone is evident in the government’s White Paper on ‘Delivering an Urban Renaissance’ (DETR, 2000) which argued that

We want our towns, cities and suburbs to be places for people—places that are designed, built and maintained on the principle that people come first. They should contribute to the quality of life and encourage healthy and sustainable lifestyles (DETR, 2000, p. 41).
In order to reduce incivility, one might argue that environments need to be civilising. Under the theme of ‘Looking after the urban environment better’ the urban White Paper set out a number of steps to be taken to this end, including funding Home Zones in residential areas, introducing Best Value indicators on cleanliness within local authority reporting systems and establishing a fund to create green spaces within communities. However, the evidence indicates that a significant minority of people are not currently provided with decent living environments. The General Household Survey 2000 reported twice as many people in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England (45 per cent) as having poor local facilities as in the least deprived areas (Coulthard et al., 2002). The biggest problem reported by residents is lack of facilities for young people, precisely the group blamed most often for incivility: around half the adults in Great Britain rate their local area as poor for facilities for teenagers, whilst 30 per cent consider teenagers hanging around on the streets to be a problem (Couthard et al., 2002, Tables 6.2 and 6.3). If, in addition, civilised living environments should be clean, safe and free from obstacles to their use such as heavy traffic, then we must consider whether there is evidence of progress on these fronts in recent years. Certainly, there has been a decline over the period 1994 to 2002 in the number of people citing vandalism, crime and graffiti as problems in their local areas, although people in deprived areas are twice as likely to report crime as a ‘serious problem’ as people in other areas (ODPM, 2004).

However, there has been little change in the incidence of problems with street cleanliness (litter and rubbish) and slight increases in the reporting of problems with noise and traffic in local areas (ODPM, 2004). The contrasts between deprived and other areas are quite stark here. Independent assessments rate 1 or 2 per cent of suburban homes to be in neighbourhoods with problems of litter and rubbish, ‘scruffy’ gardens, neglected buildings and vandalism, but for poor neighbourhoods this is true of between 1-in-6 and 1-in-4 homes (ODPM, 2004, Figures 5.1 and 5.7). Clearly, a significant minority of households are living in ‘uncivilised’ residential circumstances and, in fact, only 1-in-10 households considered that their neighbourhood had improved in the past 2 years (ODPM, 2004, Figure 7.3).

The Urban Task Force argued that neighbourhoods should contain mixed communities, specifically referring to mixed income and mixed tenure, on the basis that this would support better local goods and services and promote community stability. Others have argued that communities which are mixed along these lines would also offer other social and civilising benefits such as enhancing aspirations and motivation among weaker groups through role-model effects and improving the socialisation of children (see Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000, for a review). This policy argument raises two questions for us: to what extent are neighbourhoods mixed along income and tenure lines? And, does mixing have the social effects suggested? On the first question, an analysis of the 2001 Census at ward level shows that two-thirds of people live in wards heavily dominated by owner-occupation (i.e. where owner-occupation is 70 per cent or more of the tenure mix); half the wards in the country have around 10 per cent or less social rented housing; and 60 per cent of wards have less than 10 per cent private renting in their mix. Thus, whilst most wards are mixed to some extent in tenure terms, many parts of the country have little rented housing. Moreover, a recent study of economic segregation in England reported that segregation by housing tenure was greater than that by other social divisions such as by employment or educational attainment, with the highest levels in the North and Midlands (Meen et al., 2005).

On the second question, a recent review by Atkinson (2005) revealed that a number of studies of mixed-tenure housing estates (either council estates where tenure had been diversified or estates built as mixed tenure) had failed to find much evidence of social interaction between owners and renters and hence no evidence of social capital and role-model
benefits for social renters. This was partly due to the clustering by tenure inherent in the layout of the estates and the distinctive designs applied to social and private housing; partly due to the poor-quality facilities on estates which owners were reluctant to use (hence emphasising once again the importance of local amenities); and partly because the income gap between owners and renters is sometimes too great to foster common interests. Thus, whilst attempts are being made to mix housing tenures within more residential areas, there are reservations to be expressed about this: social distinctions are still being maintained through design and layout in ways which inhibit social integration; social interactions across tenure divides depend upon raising the quality of amenities and facilities in local areas; and more mixing of tenures has yet to be attempted in predominantly owner-occupied neighbourhoods—until this happens, tenure mixing will not be seen as the norm in Britain. Even if there was a greater mix of tenure in residential areas, it is questionable whether this, in and of itself, would result in greater social integration and cohesion.

The above observations match Graham and Marvin’s (2001) contention that urban life is becoming ‘splintered’ or fragmented along social lines with élites retreating from engagement with others (Sennett, 2000). In their commentary on the growth of gated communities in the UK, Atkinson and Flint (2005) give an account of what they term ‘dynamic segregation’ whereby the affluent separate themselves not only at home but also in their modes of travel and destinations, such as exclusive leisure clubs or security-controlled office buildings. They talk of urban life becoming less transparent and less accessible; elsewhere, Atkinson has labelled these things processes of ‘incubation’ and ‘isolation’ (Atkinson, 2006).

Lastly, we must address the issue of ethnic mixing, something the Urban Task Force was silent on in its consideration of ‘mix’. This is an increasingly important issue in Britain, where the non-White population grew by 53 per cent between 1991 and 2001 to 4.6 million people (ONS, 2004). To a limited extent, this growth in the ethnic minority population has been accompanied by greater residential mixing in some wards (Simpson, 2005). The level of segregation between Whites and Asians in 40 out of the largest 56 cities in England, however, is at least ‘moderately high’ and in a few cases ‘high’ (Parkinson, forthcoming). Segregation is also ‘high’ or ‘very high’ in some cities in the North of England, and especially in the Pennine towns, which experienced racially linked disturbances in 2001 (Home Office, 2001). Thus, there are reasonable grounds for thinking that civility between ethnic groups may be related to residential mixing. If this is the case, and if ethnic residential mixing is far from the norm in most cities, then we might wonder whether mixing in other situations can compensate for the lack of mixing in people’s home neighbourhoods.

Particular hopes are held out for the role of education as a forum for interethnic mixing. Recent research on the pupil composition of secondary schools in England (Burgess et al., 2005), however, indicates that levels of school-based segregation are generally high and that where Indian or Pakistani groups are more numerous, the segregation of children at school is higher (the reverse is true for Black students). The government has resisted recommendations aimed at breaking down school-based segregation (Home Office, 2001) and thus reliance must be placed on further and higher education as venues for mixing. One problem with this is that young people may well have developed entrenched racist views by the time they reach 17 years of age or older. Whilst levels of self-reported racial prejudice have fallen slightly over the past 20 years, to 30 per cent in 2003 (McLaren and Johnson, 2004), they have risen since 2001 among people below-degree-level qualification (Rothon and Heath, 2003). Many more Whites (44 per cent) than Asians or Blacks think that prejudice will get worse in the next few years (Attwood et al., 2003).

In summarising this section, it is evident that the zero-tolerance approach to social disorder has been extended to encompass the residential neighbourhood and that
comparable tools to those long established in the city centre, and designed to enforce a mode of conduct, are being applied to this end. The emphasis is once more upon creating respectability. There are, on the other hand, some key contrasts to the situation in the city centre. Whilst there is an endeavour to exclude those that do not conform to an appropriate mode of conduct, there is quite literally nowhere else for these groups to go. This places more import on strategies designed to address the causes of such behaviour (also included in the Respect Action Plan). Whilst the tools of exclusion have been made available, the benefits of revitalisation are not as readily apparent. Incivilities are disproportionately encountered in the more impoverished neighbourhoods and residential (and other) forms of segregation are deeply embedded; the streets have not been reclaimed just yet. There is also a clear disjuncture between the respect and urban renaissance agendas, between cleansing and mixing. In city centres, it seems clear that civility is founded on the removal of ‘otherness’ or contrary actions and behaviours. In residential areas, the picture is more ambiguous and confused. On the one hand, communities are being encouraged to use similar tools of purification and regulation (supporting respectability), but at the same time social mixing is being promoted as a means of generating civility and respectfulness. However, the evidence presented here appears to suggest that policies and preferences for purification and homogenisation are holding sway over integration. Taken as a whole, do these trends help to engender respect?

3. Respectability and Renaissance: Confused, Contradictory and Counter-productive

In the light of the preceding account, it is appropriate to reconsider the nature, extent and consequences of incivility. In so doing, we question the extent to which anti-social behaviour is a confused concept, whether the evidence for its occurrence is contradictory, whether it holds a universally negative outcome and whether the eradication of all incivilities will necessarily result in the creation of a respectful city.

3.1 Incivility as a Confused Concept

What do we mean by incivility? As stated previously, disrespect has been framed by the Respect Action Plan as most commonly evidenced through the perpetration of anti-social behaviour. Yet, what precisely is anti-social behaviour? And when does anti-social behaviour occur? Legg et al. suggest that anti-social behaviour includes annoying but relatively minor events like children playing games in unauthorised areas. There are also serious matters such as burglaries, muggings and extreme racial harassment (Legg et al., 1981, p. 14).

In between these two extremes, of course, a wide variety of other forms of behaviour may be termed as anti-social. The Scottish Affairs Committee suggested that anti-social behaviour occurs when

the problem is a direct result of behaviour by one household or individuals in an area which threatens the physical or mental health, safety or security of other households and individuals (Scottish Affairs Committee, 1996, p. 1).

Statutory definitions of anti-social behaviour are contained within the Crime and Disorder Act (England and Wales) 1998 and the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003. These definitions identify an individual or group as engaged in anti-social behaviour if they “pursue a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress to at least one person not of the same household as them”. Of course, whether or not an action is likely to cause someone distress depends as much on his or her status and condition as on the behaviour of the perpetrator. Taken as a whole, these definitions propose that any behaviour that violates an individual’s well-being and falls outwith prevailing standards of behaviour (or outwith the law) can be classified as anti-social. Wood (2004, p. 8)
suggests that defining an act as being anti-social will vary according to the specific social context in which it occurs, as it “will depend (at least to a degree) on the norms of a local area and the values of individuals”. This astute observation serves to highlight the potentially dynamic and contested nature of anti-social behaviour and poses a challenge for the consistency of its identification and measurement through space.

In response to this, there has been an effort to develop typologies of anti-social behaviour, with the intention of classifying different types of behaviour and the locations in which they might occur. One such typology was proposed by Wood (2004), based on the categories employed in the British Crime Survey, with anti-social behaviour being grouped under four headings, these being: misuse of public space; disregard for community or personal well-being; acts directed at people; and, environmental damage. Similarly, Millie et al. (2005) identify three categories, these being: interpersonal and malicious (such as intimidation); environmental (such as graffiti); and, restricting the shared use of public space (such as street drinking). Once again, these typologies serve to illustrate the wide-ranging nature of anti-social behaviour. In a sense, however, anti-social behaviour remains a catchall phrase. Its broad statutory definition supports this. The definition of anti-social behaviour enables almost any act, if it alarms or distresses us, to be termed anti-social behaviour. Such a broad-based definition serves a key political function. It helps to convey a populist message; we are all required to combat anti-social behaviour, as we all experience it. Similarly, it serves to support the introduction of a wide range of strategies. However, it is important to strive towards clarity of definition of (each act of) anti-social behaviour, as anti-social behaviour strategies can “curb the freedoms on whom they are imposed” and different behaviours can require quite distinct intervention strategies to be deployed (Millie et al., 2005, p. 2). In summary, we must question whether anti-social behaviour is a confused concept. It is evident that incivility can take innumerable guises and become manifest in a vast range of localities and interactions. Dependent upon the observer, any activity or behaviour containing an element of the unknown, a dimension of uncertainty, can be translated as being anti-social. The permeation of the term anti-social behaviour into our everyday language provides an easily reached hook upon which to hang (all?) uncertainty.

3.2 Contradictory Evidence of Incivility

Turning to consider the incidence of specific acts of anti-social behaviour, it is perhaps surprising to note that the British Crime Survey (Wood, 2004) identified speeding traffic as the most common problem, cited by 43 per cent of the surveyed population. In addition, at least one-quarter of the surveyed population identified rubbish, parked cars, fireworks, vandalism, teenagers hanging around, drug use or dealing and uncontrolled dogs or dog mess to be problems. Plotting trends in the perception of these specific types of anti-social behaviour, Wood (2004) noted that there have been significant falls since 2002/03 in the proportion of respondents perceiving each category of anti-social behaviour to be a very or fairly big problem. This finding contrasted sharply, however, with the observation that 42 per cent of respondents considered anti-social behaviour per se had got worse in the previous two years, with only 8 per cent feeling that it had got any better. Thus, there may be a general anxiety about anti-social behaviour that persists despite experience to the contrary. Moreover, people’s concerns do not match ‘precisely’ onto the government’s priorities. Millie et al. (2005) commissioned part of the monthly Office of National Statistics omnibus survey to ask the question: what do you think the government means by anti-social behaviour? It was found that the most common responses (to a checklist) were ‘rowdy teenagers’ (71 per cent), drug dealing (63 per cent), noisy neighbours (44 per cent) and mugging (44 per cent).

Perhaps one of the most fascinating findings of Wood’s (2004) research was in
relation to the reactions to anti-social behaviour. The majority of the surveyed population (61 per cent) stated that anti-social behaviour incidents did not hold a bad effect upon them. The activities of young people, vandalism, drunks and rowdy behaviour held a limited effect, more likely to be annoyance, frustration and anger if the problems persisted. Only around one-quarter of the sample reported heightened fear and stress. Interestingly, although a gathering of young people was classified as an indicator of anti-social behaviour, 43 per cent identified that the young people were ‘just being a general nuisance’ and a further 6 per cent that they were ‘not doing anything in particular’. In addition, in over a third of incidents, those perceiving a gathering of young people as a problem acknowledged that the young people were ‘not deliberately being anti-social’. So when asked to consider matters further, people are aware that ‘problematic’ behaviours are not always intended to be anti-social.

The vast majority of academic and policy literature exploring the spatial manifestation of anti-social behaviour concentrates on the distinctions that occur between residential spaces. Taking two examples, the Scottish Affairs Committee (1996) reported that serious anti-social behaviour “is more likely to be found on poorer housing estates than in leafy suburbs”, whereas Wood (2004) identified that those living in ‘hard-pressed’ areas were more likely to mention problems than those living in areas characterised by ‘wealthy-achievers’. Hard-pressed areas were described (according to the ACORN geodemographic tool) as comprising low-income families, residents in council areas, people living in high-rise and inner-city estates. That residents of the most disadvantaged housing areas report a higher level of anti-social behaviour is not in question, echoing a previous section of this paper.

In summary, whilst the perception of the incidence of specific types of incivility has fallen, this contrasts with the perception that incivilities as a whole are worsening. We need to question the foundation of this perception. Are we probing the wrong types of anti-social behaviour? Or, and more likely, is the latter finding tapping into broader anxieties about urban living? Perversely, it may also be the case that government attempts to ‘enforce respect’ have the unintended effect of heightening anxiety about so-called disreputable behaviours. In turn, this may erode the basis on which respectful interpersonal relations can be built. Does this make us increasingly intolerant of difference?

Further, it is evident that incivilities do not always hold a negative impact and that identifying groups of people as anti-social may be based upon a reading of the government’s agenda rather than an urban reality. There is a clear need to distinguish between anxieties born out of the confrontation with difference (primarily associated with the presence of young people) and those that result from urban decay or criminal behaviour.

3.3 The Goal of Cleansing of All Incivilities as a Counter-productive Force

We must begin by noting an important caveat to the following discussion. We recognise that the severity and scale of incivilities that are currently being experienced, by some, hold a significant and detrimental impact upon the quality of life. Thus crime-related incivilities and the concentration of environmental degradation, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods, require to be confronted. Further, the victims of these incivilities do not have the option of relocation or avoidance (as most middle-class communities do), nor do they possess the social, political or economic resources to deal with incivility through any other means than an attempt to exclude the perpetrators. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that the politically expedient and broad-brushed definition of anti-social behaviour is confused and results in some stark contradictions. Essentially, that which is not the preference of the majority, or the powerful, in any given locality becomes labelled as anti-social, as an expression of incivility. In this section, we argue that the endeavour to
eradicate such differences from the public realm is counter-productive.

The eradication of all incivilities is counter-productive in the sense that it will ultimately lead to greater public anxieties about incivility being generated (perhaps already being demonstrated, as noted above) and that encounters with such incivilities will hold a greater potential to escalate into conflict. Millie et al. (2005), provide a useful reference point here. In probing local narratives in an attempt to account for anti-social behaviour, they determined three vignettes, these being: social and moral decline (associated with changing family values); the disengagement of youth and families from wider society; and ‘kids will be kids’ (a reflection of the age-old tendency for young people to get into trouble). The first two narratives assume that problems of anti-social behaviour are getting worse, whilst the third does not assume that things are getting worse but that the context of ‘youthful misbehaviour’ is changing and, as a result, people are more likely to perceive young people’s behaviour as anti-social. As Millie et al. (2005) discern, all three narratives can co-exist, indeed intertwine. The question that we would like to pose, however, is whether the successes and failures of the respect and urban renaissance agendas, as defined in their own terms, serve to feed these explanations.

In what follows, we question these narratives and that version of urbanity that emphasises the role that incivilities play in generating crime and the fear of crime among the general population. We go on to explore an alternative version of urbanity wherein anxiety and engagement with incivilities, ‘otherness’ and uncertainty play a positive role in maintaining social order and social relations. Key to this, as we shall see, is the nature and extent of social interaction. We propose that the greater danger of incivility arises when we become unfamiliar with it.

The presence of incivilities has been interpreted as “signalling a breakdown in the realisation of conventional norms about public behaviour” (Skogan, 1988, p. 48); as an outcome of a collapse of both formal and informal social control in that space. In a classic article, Wilson and Kelling (1982; see also Kelling and Coles, 1996) advanced the theory that if incivilities, such as low-level crime and disorder, remain unaddressed then they could stimulate a cycle of decline, engendering an environment in which more serious forms of crime are nurtured. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999), however, challenged this proposition. In their own research, they found no evidence of a causal link between incivilities and more serious crime. Instead, both low-level and more serious crime and disorder were evidenced to be more closely related to neighbourhood deprivation and a lack of ‘collective efficacy’, the ability and will of the community to engage with and manage incivilities and crime. Collective efficacy, it is argued, is derived through the development of mutual trust and solidarity between residents. Whilst it is questionable that incivilities can trigger more serious crime, an extensive criminological literature is less equivocal on the relationship between incivilities and the fear of crime. Innumerable studies have plotted an association between a range of incivilities and the incidence of the fear of crime. In essence, such work proposes that the public read urban environments to determine the likelihood of criminal risk and the likelihood that others will intervene on their behalf should a potentially dangerous situation arise. But how do we actually read the urban environment to derive this conclusion?

In interpreting public space, people may utilise the visual presence of incivilities as a key tool, but they also draw upon a range of other sources of information such as their own familiarity with the space and the people who use it, the news media and gossip. Incivilities receive a greater weighting when these other sources of information are absent. When we are forced to rely upon the visual, we are prone to stereotype. Thus, the incivility we encounter and engage with every day—in other words, with which we are familiar—holds a more limited potency than the incivility observed on rare occasions and with which we do not engage. Central to
this interpretation is the recognition that our sense of insecurity or security, fear or well-being, is negotiated through interaction with others and the quality of our own use of space. Drawing on Giddens (1984, p. 50), our sense of security is derived through “expressing an autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines”. Self-evidently, interaction that is not routinised is by definition less predictable and more threatening.

At this point, we turn to consider one of the oldest themes in modern culture and the urban studies literature, that being the ‘celebration of urban vitality’ and the richness of experience that is gained from interaction and intermingling with strangers (Berman, 1982). At the very core of this literature is the recognition that to live in the city is to ‘live in the presence of difference’ (Kasinitz, 1995). The arena in which difference is experienced is the street. The street, as public place, is frequently depicted as the medium through which the totality of ‘modern material and spiritual forces’, are co-joined (Berman, 1982). Indeed, Jacobs (1961) describes ‘streets and their sidewalks, the main public spaces of a city’, as its ‘most vital organs’. The diversity to be found in the city rests in its large populace playing fragmented social roles brought about by a complex division of labour under advanced capitalism (a further consequence of the economic forces depicted in section 2 of this paper). This fragmentation, according to Kasinitz (1995), leads to frequent interaction ‘for better or worse’ with a myriad of beliefs and values as embodied in the residents of the city themselves.

For some commentators, living in the presence of difference and engaging with uncertainty represent necessary ingredients for individual and social development. In other words, difference and uncertainty can hold a beneficial impact upon the quality of urban life. For Simmel (1971/1995), difference stimulates intellectual development; our existence is dependent upon it. Encountering difference has also been identified as nurturing public sociability. Sennett (1996) identifies the value to be accrued through engaging with the ‘otherness’ that the city contains, ‘to go beyond one’s own defined boundaries of self’. What appear to be disorderly and painful events (located in difference) are worth encountering for Sennett, because disorder and painful dislocation (the very essence of the city) are regarded as central to any civilised and civilising social life. Disorder here is about a readiness to be out of control, to be confronted by uncertainty, but holding a maturity to negotiate its consequences. In other words, through experiencing the ‘other’ we learn of its different values and forms of expression, the uncertain becomes fixed and known and thus less threatening. But more than this, we learn how to interact with otherness to secure a sense of well-being as we move through urban space. This sentiment is echoed by Robins.

At its best, urban culture involves some kind of accommodation between provocation and stimulation, on the one hand, and security and stability on the other. For this to be achieved, it is necessary to acknowledge the significance of passions—both creative and destructive—in urban culture (Robins, 1995, p. 49).

Fear (low-level anxiety or discomfort) is not always a bad experience; rather, it is an emotional stimulus and provides a necessary provocation if we are to avoid, both individually and socially, stagnation and stasis. In this sense, according to Robins (1995, p. 60), “ordinary fear may be seen as functional, and even a creative element of urban culture”. It is important to emphasise that our usage of the term ‘fear’ relates to its generic sense—i.e. anxiety engendered through confrontation of difference, associated more broadly with the condition of urban living—rather than a specific crime-related anxiety (as we noted previously). Drawing this material together, it appears that to live in the city, to benefit from diversity, we need to accept also the uncertainty that is embodied in otherness. For Jacobs (1961), the task of negotiating the ‘public peace’, safety in the presence of uncertainty, is to be undertaken by the public themselves. People, are the ‘natural proprietors’ of the
street and it is through ‘voluntary controls and standards’ that they secure a sense of security whilst interacting with others. However, high levels of public concern about the presence of otherness in public spaces appear to indicate that, even if they ever existed, these conditions have lapsed (although in stating this we recognise that interaction with others is contingent on a familiarity with the space in question and its uses at different times of the day and night). Berman believes this decline to be associated with the consequences of modernity, and its impact upon the qualities and role of public space.

Ironically, within the space of a generation, the street, which had always served to express dynamic and progressive modernity, now came to symbolise everything dingy, disorderly, sluggish, stagnant, worn-out, obsolete, everything that dynamism and progress of modernity were supposed to leave behind (Berman, 1982, p. 149).

Returning to our assessment of the consequences of the cleansing of the public realm, Madanipour (2003) considers the problem of maintaining stable relations among strangers where sociability has been transformed into mediated ‘performative exchange’. But whilst Madanipour identifies the problem as particularly affecting large, non-Western cities, another version of this problem of cohesion may exist in Western and British cities where the only ‘civilised encounters’ that people are familiar with are those of exchange and where some groups are excluded from the predominant forms of exchange through lack of resources or a divergent culture.

Perhaps, therefore, the consequences of this trend extend beyond the exclusion of the ‘unrespectable’, to impact upon the quality of social interaction between those that remain. Hunter (1985/1995) (drawing on Goffman’s (1963) analysis of Behaviour in Public Spaces and Loftland’s (1973) observations on A World of Strangers), identifies an emerging asymmetry between public rights and duties, wherein public rights are perceived to outweigh public obligations, which are increasingly defined as voluntary. This is clearly in-line with the growth of consumption citizenship. In other words, public spaces are merely utilised as conduits in order to complete consumption tasks. The promotion of city-centre public space as an arena of consumption has potentially conveyed a powerful message to the public, that the city centre is a place to shop, not a place to engage with otherness, not a place in which a responsibility to withhold the public peace is held. Putnam (1995) has also plotted the decline of civic engagement and argued that the networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-operation and mutual benefit have also been dangerously eroded at the neighbourhood level. Perhaps the neighbourhood is also something to be consumed as an individual, without a responsibility to one’s neighbours.

For Ellin (1996, p. 145), form follows fear in the contemporary city. Of course, individuals and communities sometimes have a strong desire to purify experience as they become fearful of confusion and disorder (as they are manifest in difference) and thus it is completely understandable that they attempt to shield themselves from such disruptive influences (Sennett, 1996). But at most, this affords only a short-term solution. In the long term, this disengagement can be argued to accentuate fear by increasing paranoia and distrust among people, through inhibiting the creation of mutual trust and solidarity. By decreasing social interaction in public space, through the destruction of “any truly democratic urban space” (Davis, 1992, p. 156), the streets are far from being spaces that encourage “encounters between people of different classes, races, ages, religions, ideologies, cultures and stances towards life” (Berman, 1986, p. 484). Sennett warns us of the consequences of removing difference from the urban experience. Individuals and communities with so little tolerance of disorder in their own lives, and having shut themselves off so that they have little experience of disorder as well, the eruption of social tension becomes a situation in which the ultimate
methods of aggression, violent force and reprisal, seem to become not only justified, but life preserving (Sennett, 1996, pp. 44–45).

4. Conclusion: Towards the Respectful City?

It is too early to assess what difference Labour’s ‘Respect Action Plan’ and its related policies for tackling incivilities will have on the experience and perception of urban disorder and the public realm. Nevertheless, those who have examined the ‘moral geographies’ of contemporary British urban policy (Whitehead, 2004) are pessimistic. Whitehead, for example, questions the validity of the moral associations which are being made between neighbourhood spaces, community care and cosmopolitan tolerance (Whitehead, 2004, p. 71).

He highlights the work of Jacobs (1961) and Sennett (1974) on how urban neighbourhoods can be “as divisive as they are unifying” (Whitehead, 2004, p. 72), “barricaded communities” just as much as “territorial communities of intimacy”. We would underline the dangers inherent in the government’s attempts to create the respectable city through adopting a zero-tolerance approach to incivility, manifest through various strategies that serve to facilitate the purification of the public realm. In part, this is because the civilising version of urban vitality, that which entails engaging with ‘otherness’, is lost. It is also because in the sanitised version of the city, we become less tolerant, more fearful and increasingly prone to overreact to minor representations of difference. Moreover, the vision of the ‘respectable city’, based around zero-tolerance policies and the physical restructuring of urban space to create squares, parks and boulevards also risks marginalising alternative representations of space centred on the idea of the ‘respectful city’. Crucial to this vision is the ‘taking the needs of others seriously’ and of a notion of urbanity based on tolerance, not zero tolerance, of difference (Sennett, 2003). To engage with ‘otherness’

and strangers in the respectful city requires innovative strategies for dealing with questions of deviance and diversity. Hirst (2000), for example, has called for an approach to addressing disorder which is informed by associationism, of a society split into self-governing communities with different values and with publicly funded services devoted to self-governing voluntary associations. Elements of such approaches already exist in some cities. In Denmark, for example, there is the anarchist enclave in Christiania in Copenhagen and in the Netherlands there are zones where prostitution and soft-drug use are tolerated (Fyfe, 2004). Such areas should not, of course, be romanticised, but they exemplify an approach to diversity and difference within the city that is more decentralised and self-regulatory than strategies associated with the ‘respectable city’. As Hirst explains outside a thin core of morality—almost everyone will agree that murder, theft and fraud are crimes—groups will be better off setting and policing their own standards. Citizens would have to accept that different rules applied to different communities with informal self-regulation and arbitration (Hirst, 2000, p. 279).

In the respectful city, then, civility is not something enforced from above or imposed by the threat of coercion. Rather it emerges from below and is based on a tolerance of difference. As Sennett explains treating people with respect cannot occur simply by commanding it should happen. Mutual recognition has to be negotiated (Sennett, 2003, p. 260).

Notes

1. Tony Blair made this pledge in 1993 when Shadow Home Secretary.
2. Other local authorities have been more resistant. There is also some evidence of local authorities adopting a more balanced approach (especially in residential areas), drawing upon both prevention and enforcement strategies (see Millie et al., 2005).
3. It can also be argued, of course, that the long-standing emphasis upon crime and anti-social
behaviour in housing policy, most notably with respect to the management of social housing areas, is now being applied to city centres. To an extent, it is a two-way process.

References


The Guardian (2005) Respect is the theme, a more law-abiding nation the target. But in Whitehall it has sparked a turf war, 18 May, p. 13.


