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Abstract

This paper utilises Norbert Elias' theory of the civilising process to examine trends in social conduct in the UK and to identify how problematic 'anti-social' behaviour is conceptualised and governed through housing-based mechanisms of intervention. The paper describes how Elias' concepts of the formalisation and informalisation of conduct and the construction of established and outsider groups provide an analytical framework for understanding social relations. It continues by discussing how de-civilising processes are also evident in contemporary society, and are applied to current policy discourse around Respect and anti-social behaviour. The paper utilises the governance of 'anti-social' conduct through housing mechanisms in the UK to critique the work of Elias and concludes by arguing that a revised concept of the civilising process provides a useful analytical framework for future studies.

Introduction

Problems of urban disorder and anti-social behaviour have been the subject of considerable political, governmental and media attention in the UK since the mid-1990s. The New Labour government, and former Prime Minister Tony Blair in particular, have made tackling anti-social behaviour a priority and commentators have argued that the 'politics of behaviour' (linked to the relationship between state and citizen) now represents the key contemporary social issue and political battleground in the UK (Field, 2003). The increasing policy discourse around anti-social behaviour has been accompanied by a raft of legislation and new mechanisms for tackling the problem, including Anti-social Behaviour Orders, Dispersal Orders, curfews, Parenting Orders, Fixed Penalty Notices, Closure Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and increasing numbers of police officers, police support officers, neighbourhood wardens and CCTV cameras.

The government in England and Wales established the Anti-social Behaviour Unit in the Home Office to co-ordinate the national TOGETHER campaign and this Unit has been replaced by the Respect Task Force aimed at delivering the 'Respect Agenda'. This agenda has resulted in a 'broadening, deepening and furthering' of governmental interventions and ambitions (Respect Task Force, 2006: 7) through which the scope of anti-social behaviour policy in the UK has extended to a wider attempt to address general incivility within society and to bring about 'cultural shifts' in targeted sections of the population (Home Office, 2003: 6). The government's conceptualisation of the extent of antisocial behaviour in the UK is somewhat ambiguous, shifting from identifying a general malaise and decline of respect (Blair, 2005) to a belief that: "society has not gone wrong'" but rather that specific groups of

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the population "have gone outside the proper lines of respect and good conduct to others and need to be brought back into the fold" (Blair, 2007). The Respect agenda represents an ambitious project of promoting "shared values, respect for others, a certain discipline and rigour in how [citizens] comport themselves" (Blair, 2007).

Housing has been at the forefront of the delivery of the anti-social behaviour and Respect agendas. A range of techniques for addressing anti-social behaviour are channelled through housing governance mechanisms, including enhanced powers of eviction, probationary and demoted tenancies, Good Neighbour Agreements and Tenant Reward schemes. A new Respect Standard for Housing Management has been included within the regulatory and inspection regime of social housing (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006 a) and social landlords are centrally embedded within local anti-social behaviour strategies and the use of measures including Anti-social Behaviour Orders, Injunctions and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. Social landlords often lead the provision of Intensive Family Support projects aimed at rehabilitating the most 'problematic' households (see Flint, 2006 for a further discussion). In addition, attempts have been made to include private sector landlords within the governance of anti-social behaviour, through Selective Licensing schemes and the extension of Closure Orders linked to anti-social behaviour to private-rented and owner-occupied properties.

Rodger (2006) has suggested that the work of Norbert Elias on the *civilising process* provides a useful theoretical framework for the study of the governance of anti-social behaviour in the UK. In agreeing with and responding to Rodger's idea, this paper describes the key elements of Elias' theories, including the socialisation of behavioural norms, the decline of distinction between classes and the formalisation

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and informalisation of conduct (Elias, 2000). This is followed by an account of the presence of *decivilising processes* which counter a narrative of general long-term progression towards civility The paper explores the concept of *civilising offensives*, through which elites (including state governments) attempt to bring about cultural shifts in the values, dispositions and habits of populations,. The paper then turns to applying Elias' theory to a study of primarily housing-based anti-social behaviour interventions in the UK. We conclude that the work of Elias and scholars influenced by him has much to offer housing studies. We argue that the anti-social behaviour and Respect agendas in the UK represent a civilising offensive which, whilst aimed at addressing perceived decivilising processes with British society, also contain decivilising elements of housing, social and penal policy.

The Civilising Process

It is impossible in this paper to do justice to Elias's detailed account of the long-term development of Western modes of behaviour but what follows is an exposition of his theory and specific elements of his work which are of particular relevance in aiding an understanding of housing-based anti-social behaviour interventions. *The Civilizing Process* (Elias, 2000) is a work of remarkable analytical insight which focuses on changes in human behaviour, power and habitus[i] and links gradual transformations in the standard of conduct with the wider development of society. Elias draws on Western European etiquette books from the medieval period onwards to chart the development of manners towards a more refined standard. This historical documentation is utilised to illustrate how the concept of civilisation is a continual process rather than a permanent, fixed state, and this civilising process represents a change in human conduct and sentiment located with broader processes of social

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development: there is no absolute beginning of civilisation and no society is "uncivilised". For Elias, the long-term trend towards norms of civilised conduct in Western European societies was simultaneous to the development of the nation state, characterised by the monopolisation of violence and taxation and the consequent internal pacification of society (Elias, 2000).

It should also be noted, however, that Elias was not making normative judgements about the relative degrees of civilisation attained in different historical periods or between different countries and societies. His concern was with the *process* of civilisation and the ways in which the increased social differentiation and interdependencies within society (sociogenesis) relate to the internalisation of expected standards of behaviour within the individual which become 'second nature' (psychogenesis). Thus, the central theme of the civilising process is the interconnection between the individual and society. Elias stresses the tendency of social scientists, when speaking of social structures and society itself, to ascribe to them an objective reality over and above the individuals who make them up (Elias, 1978). This is an obvious intellectual aberration when one considers the fact that society consists of individuals: it cannot be separated from the units which it is made up of. Rather, social forces are in fact forces exerted by people over one another and themselves. For Elias it is inquiry into the interdependence of human beings and the human figurations which they form that is the subject matter of sociology, and these cannot be explained by studying humans in the singular; nor in an ahistorical context.

In *The Civilizing Process* Elias details how competition between different feudal lords led to the monopoly of one controlling power and the resultant formation of the

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absolutist state. The state was then able to exert control over the population through the monopolisation of violence (or the threat of violence), eventually reaching the stage where violence becomes invisible or 'confined to the barracks' (Elias, 2000). The use of violence is therefore more calculable, society less dangerous, and through foresight and reflection the individual can restrain his or her behaviour accordingly, which becomes manifest in the 'pacification' of society. Elias argued that these trends are only observable over the long-term as changes in the psychic and social make-up of individuals are extremely slow, such that a focus on a particular period or epoch renders the observer blind to the overall process and constitutes a problem of involvement (see Elias, 1987).

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the rather limited account within *The Civilising Process* of how general societal trends were enacted in the internalisation of orientations and habits within individuals, or in Elias' terms, the linked dynamics between sociogenesis and psychogenesis, may be usefully complemented by the work of others. For example Bourdieu's (1984) fuller conceptualisation of *habitus* and his use of the field and forms of capital to analyse the dynamics of the construction and maintenance of the social distinction which Elias describes but does not fully theorise. In addition, Weber, most notably in his controversial account of the influence of Puritanism upon individuals' self-discipline and conduct within a Protestant ethic (Weber, 1930) offers a more detailed theory of how particular norms become internalised within individuals (see Kilminster, 2004, on the links and points of departure between Eliasian and Weberian sociology).

Differentiation and interdependence

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Elias argued that the development of the urban mode of life in terms of its increasing complexity contributed towards both the differentiation and integration of society and served to increase the webs of interdependence between individuals, groups and nation-states. Key processes inherent in these changes include: the division of labour; the growth of trade; urbanisation; monetarisation; increasing administration; and an increasing population (Mennell, 1990). As these social processes developed there was a corresponding change in the psychological make-up of individuals: a process of *psychologisation* whereby "more people are forced more often to pay more attention to more other people" (Goudsblom, quoted in Mennell, 1990: 209). This psychologisation process is related to processes of functional democratisation and mutual identification as we think more about the consequences of our actions for others. This process is at once *individual* and *social*:

"*In the course of the growing differentiation and integration of social functions and increasing democratization and equalization, the people involved have forced **themselves and each other** to behave with greater consideration; consideration of the feeling and interests of more people, for more of the time...The level of their mutually expected self-restraint has risen*" (Wouters, 1986:11 - our emphasis).

This process applies equally to governments and individual subjects, and control from the centre consequently becomes more difficult, for a government that does not balance the interests of competing groups within society jeopardizes its position of power (see Elias, 1978 for a discussion of power balances; and Elias, 2000 on the Royal Mechanism).

Contemporary rationales of governance in the UK place this 'consideration of others'

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feelings and interests' as the primary element of 'respect' which is defined as: "Consideration for others...civility and good manners" (Respect Task Force, 2006: 1). The inculcation of 'respect' within individuals is described in the Respect Action Plan in Eliasian terms: "For most people, the values and behaviour that support respect are *automatic* and part of the *habits of everyday life"* (Respect Task Force, 2006: 5- our emphasis).   Thus, the interconnection between the individual and society emphasised by Elias resonates with the current discourse around respect and anti-social behaviour.

The civilising process, according to Elias, has two levels: the individual and the social.   Primary urges and impulses are banished from consciousness by the continuous social pressure for self-control and are gradually built in to the individual psyche, internalised and transformed into automatic self-constraints passed down from generation to generation through the process of socialisation.   "The social origin of this banishing process lies in the fact that giving in to these tempting impulses would provoke social degradation, loss of respect and self-respect" (Wouters, 1986: 2).   As part of this transformation of social constraints into self constraints the threshold of shame and repugnance advances such that (what have become) embarrassing facets of life (e.g. bodily functions) are "removed behind the scenes of social life" (Elias, 2000).

Dissemination of conduct

A key theme in Elias's work is the notion of *group charisma* and *group disgrace*: the perceived superiority of established groups of humans in relation to other 'outsider' groups and the corresponding feeling of power inferiority experienced as human

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inferiority in the latter (Elias, 1994). In *The Civilizing Process* the desire for social prestige and distinction on the part of the upper classes is central to the dissemination of manners to the wider strata of society. Elias maintains that: "the compulsion that membership of an upper class and the desire to retain it exert on the individual is no less strong and formative than that arising from the simple necessity of economic subsistence" (Elias, 2000: 395). For this reason, the standards of behaviour attained in the court aristocracy of the sixteenth century are a particularly rich area of inquiry in aiding an understanding of the processes by which increasing complexity and interdependencies lead to changes in behaviour across society as a whole, as Mennell (1990: 207) describes:

"*As the structure of societies becomes more complex, manners, culture and personality also change in a particular and discernible direction, firstly among elite groups then gradually more widely.*"

Changes in manners were brought about through competition and the quest for distinction and prestige: Western European courtly circles of the sixteenth century were keen to distance themselves from the vulgarity of the lower classes and particularly from the bourgeoisie which gradually gained a foothold within the court and represented a 'threat from below'. As the wealth and power of the bourgeoisie (whom the majority of etiquette books were aimed at) grew so too did its interdependence with the King. As a result members of the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie were more likely to be found at court and were thus expected to adhere to the social standard of manners therein, which meant the imitation of the upper classes and a resultant alteration of behaviour and fashions in accordance with the different social situation as the 'bourgeoisification' of the court was set in train (Elias,

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2000: 86).   This, in turn, compelled the upper classes to modify behaviour as they strove again for distinction.   As interdependencies advanced further and prosperity grew the court society continued to expand and became a setting in which the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie would intermingle which, in turn, increased the compulsion to penetrate or at least imitate it (Elias, 2000).

At the same time as the dissemination of upper class conduct to the bourgeoisie there was a counter trend in the spread of the behaviour of the lower classes to the upper classes.   The result is what Elias (2000) termed *decreasing contrasts, increasing varieties*: the decline of sharp distinctions in standards of behaviour between different classes and a corresponding variation in the subtleties and forms that this standard takes. One feature of contemporary UK policy discourses and conceptualisations of anti-social behaviour, in contrast, is the attempt to clearly differentiate the anti-social 'minority' from the rest of society (Respect Task Force, 2006: 5).

Functional democratisation: informalisation and the convergence of behaviour between the classes

The decreasing of contrasts and increasing of varieties in behaviour is an aspect of *functional democratisation* which, as Kilminster (1998: 149) describes "is the process of relative social levelling that has taken place at a deep level in modern societies over several centuries." Kilminster continues by describing a "long-term, unplanned process of the lessening of the power gradients and social distance between interdependent groups in societies that have become increasingly differentiated" (Kilminster, 1998:151). Also observable within this overall process is what Elias

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(2000) termed the 'controlled decontrolling of emotional controls', social processes whereby the standard of conduct appears to be relaxed and 'less civilised' behaviour becomes admissible. Wouters (1986) refers to this process as *informalisation*. As 'outsider' groups rise and the power balance between them and the 'established' is lessened there is a greater leniency in the sense of the range of behaviour deemed admissible in particular social settings. Consequently the conduct of behaviour between different social groups converges but the nuances within this standard are greater. Elias (2000) gives the example of changes in bathing manners in the inter-war years to illustrate this point and Wouters (1986) makes an equally convincing argument in relation to the 'permissive' western European societies of the 1960s. Both are apt examples of a perceived relaxation in codes of behaviour that in previous phases of development would have brought shame on the 'perpetrator' and triggered feelings of repugnance in the observer. The fact that this is no longer the case owes to the different standard of conduct of these particular phases of development. However, in relation to the first example Elias is quite clear that the fact that more of the skin is revealed yet social ostracism is not apparent is directly related to the greater and stricter control over affects than was previously the case: "It is a relaxation which remains within the framework of a particular 'civilized' standard of behaviour involving a very high degree of automatic constraint and affect transformation, conditioned to become a habit" (Elias, 2000: 157). Wouters (1986) explains the process of informalisation with respect to the permissive society with recourse to the emancipation movements of the 1960s and the decrease in power differentials in the relations between a range of groups including men and women, parents and children, and teachers and pupils. The result was a relaxation of the rigid taboos- sexual, behavioural- of previous generations as the thoughts previously suppressed from consciousness, those that were transformed from social to

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self-restraints through the fear of others, were able to gain the upper hand. It follows, then, that from a psychological perspective more primal impulses (e.g. libidinal etc.) are brought to the surface during waves of informalisation (Kilminster, 1998:152).

In the UK, contemporary rationales of governance argue that this informalisation of 'contemporary lifestyles' has 'brought great freedoms' and that it is 'neither desirable nor possible to turn back the clock' to previous periods of 'deference and hierarchy' (Respect Task Force, 2006: 5).   However government discourse does problematise a perceived link between 'a loss of deference' and 'a loss of respect' (Respect Task Force, 2006: 5), within a portrayal of what in Eliasian terms would be defined as *decivilising processes* in contemporary UK society.

Decivilising Processes

Elias has been criticised for the inherent sense of progress and optimism that some readers interpret within *The Civilising Process* (Burkitt, 1996; van Krieken, 1999). However, like Mennell (1990), we dispute the reading of *The Civilizing Process* as 'a kind of Victorian progress theory'.   Elias' focus was indeed on civilising trends and rightly so, one could argue, as this is the dominant course that European society has taken over the long term, but as such his development of a theoretical understanding of decivilising processes was neglected.   Certainly there is no well developed synthesis applying to the decivilising trends in society to be found in the extensive writings of Elias. However, in an interview in 1988 he did say that the civilising process: "Has two directions. Forwards and backwards. Civilising processes go along with decivilising processes. The question is to what extent one of the two

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directions is dominant" (Elias, quoted in Fletcher, 1997:83).

The theory of decivilising processes has received more attention from scholars influenced by Elias who have sought to develop the neglected counter to the civilising process (Burkitt, 1996; Fletcher, 1997; Garland, 1991; Mennell, 1990; Pratt, 1998; Wacquant, 2004).   Given that decivilising processes presuppose civilising processes (Mennell, 1990) it is perhaps unsurprising that most efforts towards extending an understanding of decivilising trends have looked to the framework of the civilising process to garner insights into the factors and characteristics that may trigger a reversal in the dominant trend, and the results of this for the course of the development of individuals and societies.   Elias does explore 'decivilising spurts' and this would suggest a more short-term phenomenon with regards to decivilising processes.   Indeed, he states that while processes tending towards the integration of society are extremely slow and take place over many generations, a disintegration can take place in a far shorter timeframe.   Fletcher (1997: 82) defines the three 'most important' interrelated criteria cited by Elias as the determinants of the direction of civilising processes as being:

- a shift in the balance between social constraints and self-restraint in favour of the latter;
- the development of a social standard of behaviour and feeling which generates the emergence of a more even, all-round, stable and differentiated self-restraint;
- an increase in the scope for mutual identification

In decivilising processes social constraints gain the upper hand over self-restraint; the standard of behaviour developed generates a less even, all round, stable and

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differentiated pattern of self-restraint; and the scope for mutual identification *decreases* (Fletcher, 1997: 83). Fletcher also posits that these reversals would be likely where: the state control of the monopoly of violence decreases; there is a fragmentation of social ties; and a shortening of chains of commercial, emotional and cognitive interdependence (1997: 83). A range of other characteristics are suggested by Mennell (1990: 206) as possible symptoms of decivilising processes and he groups these into four inter-related categories. Firstly, in relation to structural processes Mennell cites shortening chains of interdependence, an increase in the homogeneity of society through a decrease in the division of social functions and a heightened danger level and corresponding incalculability with regards to violence. Secondly, he suggests that changes in manners might facilitate the re-emergence of violence into the public realm whereas over the course of the Western European civilising process the trend has been to remove it 'behind the scenes'. Thirdly, changes in social habitus may include a decrease in the pressures of restraint and a corresponding dominance of external constraints over self-restraint, a decrease in the gap between childhood and adulthood, and a freer expression of aggressiveness. Finally changes in modes of knowledge centre on a move towards more involved thinking, a resultant increase in the fantasy-laden content of knowledge and a decline in 'reality congruence', related to the increase in danger and its incalculability (see Elias, 1956; 1987).

The respect agenda in the UK is constructed upon a perceived decivilsing process within particular sections of the British population. One of the challenges in applying the work of Elias to contemporary society is that, although he describes particular social contexts and groupings (including the courts of absolute monarchies and the emergent bourgeoisie societies) his theories are applied at a society-wide level and

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he is explicit in stating that shifts in social norms and behaviour only become evident over a long historical period. For scholars and governments alike, there exists a considerable ambiguity about the extent to which decivilising processes are currently evident and whether these decivilising processes apply to society in general or to particular populations (e.g. young people) or locations (e.g. deprived social housing estates). Establishing the extent to which the manifestations of decivilising processes identified by Fletcher (1997) and Mennel (1990), including a fragmentation of social ties, increased violence in the public realm and a heightened sense of danger amongst the populace, are present in our own historical period is very difficult.

Although the influential work of Putnam (2000) and Murray (1990) suggested a decline in social ties and consideration for others in contemporary western societies the research evidence on recent short term trends is ambiguous (see Stolle and Hooghe, 2004). Indeed research in the UK suggests that levels of neighbourliness and civic participation are stable or increasing in the first decade of the 21st century (Home Office, 2004). Similarly, perceptions of the levels of anti-social behaviour in UK society have stabilised (Upson, 2006) and officially recorded crime rates have fallen. However, a heightened sense of danger does appear to be more consistently found in the levels of fears of crime and perceived threats to personal safety (Upson, 2006).

UK government discourse is similarly ambiguous. The Respect Action Plan states that "values necessary to support respect are becoming less widely held- and that this change has led to an increase in disrespectful behaviour" (Respect Task Force, 2006: 5; see also Field, 2003) and Tony Blair argued that "in our country there is a

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disrepect that people don't like" (Blair, 2005). However Blair (2007) also argued that "society has not gone wrong" and the Respect Action Plan (2006: 5) refers to the 'selfish behaviour of a minority' which is manifested primarily in 'deprived communities'.

While contemporary discourse appears to be characterised by ambiguity some scholars have tried to shed light on the less well developed concept of decivilising processes by arguing that *ambivalence* is central to the development of civilisation and thus to an understanding of civilising processes. van Krieken (1999: 300) provides a critique of Elias's neglect of the barbaric elements of civilising processes, including their associated violence and its centrality to the 'spread' of Western civilization, and also criticises Elias' omission of the use by Western states of the monopolization of violence. The concept of ambivalence is key to van Krieken's critique and he argues that the civilising process is at once civilising *and* barbaric. van Krieken makes reference to Fletcher's criteria for decivilising processes, the reversal of the three processes outlined above: a shift from self to social constraint; a shift in standards of behaviour generating more uneven, unstable patterns of self-restraint; and a decline in the scope for mutual identification. He takes issue with the assertion that a reversal in one triggers a reversal in all three, forming a dominant overall process which is decivilising (Fletcher, 1997). van Krieken argues that the first two may develop independently of the third, citing Burkitt (1996: 302) who argues that: "long networks of interdependence in society can lead to a loss of mutual identification" and that "sections of the population can then be persecuted, discriminated against, or even killed while the central features of "civilization" remain intact." For van Krieken (1999: 302):

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"*Mutual identification has only started to become central to processes of civilization in the second half of the twentieth century. Before then, they were characterized precisely by a very narrow range of identification within the field of European culture itself*."

While discussion of decivilising processes may be absent from the two volumes of *The Civilizing Process*, Elias did stress the *latent ambivalence* of human relations, which he is criticised for neglecting (Burkitt, 1996; van Krieken, 1999; Vaughan, 2000), arguing that it is a special quality which manifests itself more strongly the broader and denser the network of social interdependence becomes (Elias, 2000). Where such interdependencies are present he writes: "All people, all groups, estates or classes, are in some way dependent on one another; they are potential friends, allies or partners; and they are at the same time potential opponents, competitors or enemies" (Elias, 2000: 317). For Elias this 'latent ambivalence' is: "one of the most important structural characteristics of more highly developed societies, and a chief factor moulding civilized conduct" (Elias, 2000: 318).

Of particular interest for an understanding of 'anti-social' behaviour are the increasingly ambivalent relations between different groups and social classes; as group interdependencies inevitably result in competition for the same opportunities in one situation and common goals and partnership in another. Where there are tensions arising from the organisation of society and its functions, and where these tensions continue to grow to the point where a large portion of people 'no longer care' they can result in the negative side (the opposition of interests) of the ambivalent relationship gaining the upper hand over the positive (the community of interests) (see Elias, 2000: 319).

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Civilising Offensives

van Krieken (1999) argues for a modification of Elias's description of state formation and social differentiation that takes account of the diverse and often barbaric effects of state formation with regards to colonialism in particular, but also *within* the nation states of Western Europe.   The concept of the *civilising offensive* is invoked here and we argue below that the UK governments' anti-social behaviour and Respect agendas represent an important example of such a civilising offensive.

Elias points out that the very concept of *civilisation*, which emerged in the eighteenth century and was developed from the previous concepts of *courtoisie* and *civilite*, served to indicate that the process of civilisation had been completed and forgotten:

"*People only wanted to accomplish this process for other nations, and also, for a period, for the lower classes of their own society.   To the middle classes of their own society, civilization appeared as a firm possession.   They wished above all to disseminate it and at most to develop it within the framework of the standard already reached*" (Elias, 2000: 88-89).

The concept of a civilising offensive has been developed further by other scholars (van Krieken, 1999; Vaughan, 2000) who emphasise the ambivalence inherent in the civilising process and argue that this can be illustrated clearly with regards to civilising offensives:

"*It is important to supplement, systematically, the concept of civilizing **processes***

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*with that of civilizing **offensives**, to take account of the active, conscious and deliberate civilizing projects of both various powerful groups within societies and whole societies in relation to other regions of the world*" (van Krieken, 1999: 303- our emphasis).

van Krieken (1999) argues that it is through identifying the projects of government and other elites aimed at reframing human conduct that contextualises the direction that 'civilisation' has been steered in and enables a complement to the alleged automatism of Elias' formulations and the apparent account of the blind, unplanned direction of social development within Elias's sociology. The Respect agenda in the UK shares these characteristics of a civilising offensive as a project of government representing an active and deliberate attempt to reframe the values, habits and conduct of particular individuals.

The theoretical concepts derived by, and from, Elias would appear to offer fruitful analytical tools with which to further our understanding of the perceived trend towards a less refined, less 'respectful', and more impulsive standard of conduct among certain sections of British society: a mode of behaviour in which mutual identification appears to be weaker, where processes of informalisation and decivilising tendencies can be observed, and where processes tending towards social interdependence and integration appear absent.   Elias' theoretical framework informs our following analysis of the UK government's conceptualisation of the anti-social behaviour 'problem' and the civilising offensive it is undertaking in order to resurrect 'respect' in the UK; a governmental project within which housing is centrally implicated.

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Housing, Anti-social Behaviour and the (De)Civilising Process in the UK

Rodger (2006) suggests that Elias' work on the civilising process may illuminate the contemporary problem of anti-social behaviour, deteriorating inter-group relations and concerns about incivility. In this section of the paper, we firstly suggest that the UK government's focus on anti-social behaviour and the 'Respect' agenda represents an example of a civilising offensive in which housing mechanisms are used to inculcate values and modes of required conduct in response to perceived decivilising processes occurring within sections of British society. Secondly, we illustrate how mechanisms of housing governance are utilised to attempt a reformalisation of conduct. Thirdly, we use the example of naming and shaming linked to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) in the UK to argue that decivilising processes are evident in contemporary housing, social and penal policy in the UK.

A civilising offensive

The Respect agenda in England and Wales and related attempts to tackle anti-social behaviour in Scotland and Northern Ireland represent a contemporary example of a civilising offensive that is grounded in government rationales of a decline in civility within society. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair identified that a priority for his third government was "to bring back a proper sense of respect in our schools, in our communities, in our towns, in our villages" (Blair, 2005). As noted above, the Respect Task Force defines respect as values and behaviour that are "automatic and the habits of everyday life" (Respect Task Force, 2006: 5), and government policy documents have therefore identified the need to bring about 'cultural shifts' in sections of the population (Home Office, 2003: 6).   Social housing is expected to

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play a central role in delivering the Respect agenda. Many of the mechanisms deployed to tackle anti-social behaviour are housing-based and a new Respect Standard has been introduced within the social housing regulation and inspection regime (Respect Task Force, 2006) whilst the large Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme is now subject to a Respect Protocol (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006). In a pilot scheme in North Tyneside, both social and private landlords will be potentially subject to Anti-social Behaviour Orders if they fail to control the behaviour of their tenants as they will be deemed to be 'aiding and abetting' criminal behaviour (Hilditch, 2007).

Elias points us towards locating these developments within a long history of civilising offensives, not least during the 16th and 17th Century in the 'reformation of manners' across several European states when governments began to regulate public morality and attempted to organise individual subjects in an unprecedented fashion (MacCulloch, 2003). A key feature of these projects of government was that the reformation of political institutions or policy formed elements of a far more ambitious project to realign human behaviour. As Tocqueville (1998: 100) wrote of the French Revolution: "It seemed to be striving for the regeneration of the human race even more than for the reform of France". Therefore the contemporary Respect agenda in the UK, which aims to bring about 'cultural shifts' in the 'habits' of the population (Home Office, 2003: 6; Respect Task Force, 2006: 5) may be located in a tradition of such behavioural projects aimed at reframing the 'grammars of living' (Rose, 1999) within society. For example, Weber (1930: 168) describes the social, moral and spiritual regulation of Puritanism "descending like a frost on the life of 17th Century Merrie Old England", whilst the Young Italy movement of the 1830s aimed to convert the degenerate *gente* (mob) into a *popolo* (people) by reforming criminals,

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drunks and womanisers (Burleigh, 2005: 256). There were also very strong links between the emergence of urban policy and social housing in Britain in the 19th Century and the temperance movement (Burleigh, 2005).

Interestingly, tackling urban disorder and ensuring public safety have often been the motifs through which attempts to reform behaviour and the deployment of more intrusive governmental interventions have been framed. For example, the symbol of the Committees of Public Safety in the French Revolution was the all-seeing eye of continual surveillance which provided a visual accompaniment to the Committee's declaration that it "would never leave the citizen alone by himself" and would "change his [sic] values and behaviour through continual coercion" (Burleigh, 2005: 81). Similarly the Respect Action Plan boldly states that "If people who need help [to change their behaviour] will not take it, we will make them." (Respect Task Force, 2006: 1). Such explicit declarations of state power and intent further highlight, as Elias explained, how conflicts over the reformation of conduct are a manifestation of wider power struggles between classes and groups of the population. The Respect agenda in the UK has an important symbolic function in attempting to reassert state efficacy and primacy in addressing social problems within a context of contested sovereignty over social regulation (Stenson, 2005; Garland, 1991).

Intensive Family Support Projects

The intense surveillance and regulation of targeted populations and individuals is epitomised by the growing numbers of Intensive Family Support Projects in the UK. These projects, which are often led by local authority housing departments, engage with households who have been, or are at risk of being, evicted from social rented

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housing on the grounds of anti-social behaviour (see Respect Task Force, undated; and for evaluations of Intensive Family Support Projects see Scott, 2006; Jones et al.,2006 and Nixon et al., 2006). The Projects are based on three main models of provision: outreach work with families in their existing homes, outreach work with families in specialist dispersed accommodation and, in some cases, work with families in specially provided accommodation blocks. In the latter model, families are subject to intensive regulation, supervision and surveillance, with workers from a range of agencies providing a spectrum of support to families, including conflict resolution skills, parenting skills, counselling, drug and alcohol support, benefits advice and tenancy sustainment support. A critique of these projects is provided by Garrett (2007) who argues that they represent a 're-excavation' of the 'problem family' by New Labour and that they have a precedent in the Zuilplien Project in Rotterdam in the 1950s which aimed to re-educate 'socially weak' families with a view to re-housing them in mainstream accommodation (see also Gillies, 2005). However, the evaluations of the Projects have mostly been positive, and in many senses they represent a progressive 'civilising' trend within the Respect Agenda, away from punitive enforcement actions such as evictions and Anti-social Behaviour Orders towards the rehabilitation of offenders and the commitment of the state to this rehabilitation. But these projects also represent a microcosm of a civilising offensive, whereby individual subjects are to have their value orientations and daily habits realigned through intensive training and re-socialisation (Roger, 2006).

The reformalisation of conduct

The governance of anti-social behaviour, including through housing mechanisms in the UK represents a reformalisation of the conceptualisation, surveillance and

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management of conduct. Two key dimensions of this reformalisation are evident. Firstly, there are attempts to expand the types and arenas of conduct that are to be subject to surveillance and secondly, a range of techniques are being deployed to contractualise behaviour.

The Respect agenda in England and Wales is based on an explicit and ambitious government attempt to 'broaden, deepen and further' the regulation of conduct (Respect Task Force, 2006: 7). Through this civilising offensive, the gaze of government shifts from a focus on criminal activity to general incivility and facilitating 'politeness, considerateness and thoughtfulness' (Field, 2003). The Respect Action Plan and Ministerial speeches make reference to the inconsiderate use of mobile phones, queue jumping and spitting, and suggest that the scope of state intervention will extend to tackling these incivilities. This focus on uncivil, but not criminal, behaviour is enacted through new mechanisms of social regulation. For example, some Anti-social Behaviour Orders have included prohibitions on singing, playing rap music, swearing, appearing in public wearing only undergarments, 'referring to the Taliban', and wearing certain types of clothing (see Collins and Cattermole, 2007). Similarly, a recent evaluation of a pilot programme of Fixed Penalty Notices for anti-social behaviour in Tayside in Scotland found that fixed penalty notices were being given for offences such as public drunkenness and urinating when previously the police would only have issued a caution (Eberst and Staines, 2007). This micro-regulation of social habits and conduct also extends into private housing governance, for example the Hollingdean estate in Brighton which has a (voluntary) code prohibiting swearing and spitting (a direct echo of the etiquette books Elias built his study upon) and requiring pavements to be kept clean (Blandy, 2006). The Respect agenda has also resulted in increasing governance intervention into the

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realm of family life and family relations, through Parenting Orders which attempt to regulate parental supervision of children, and which new proposals provide for housing officers to have a role in monitoring.

Again, it is important to note that whilst these more expansive and intrusive techniques of governance may have been recently established within contemporary governance mechanisms, they have a longer historical precedent (indeed it has recently been argued that it was constant surveillance of, and intrusive knowledge about, citizens that provided the 'surest foundations' of the Roman Republic in the classical period, Holland, 2003: 96). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the inspection of tenants' domestic premises and judgments about their cleanliness and standards of domesticity were common features of housing management in Britain (Damer, 2000). This micro-regulation was also evident in the philanthropic housing and labour movements such as New Lanark in Clydeside in Scotland in the 19th Century where a silent monitor, consisting of a wooden block, was placed next to each employee's work station and whose black, blue, yellow or white surfaces were rotated to show the conduct of the worker on the previous day. Each week a superintendent entered the tally of positive or negative colours in a 'book of character' (Burleigh, 2005: 256). In the modern era, the nationalisation of public houses in Carlisle during and subsequent to the First World War included attempts at the micro-management of cultural practices, prohibiting the buying of rounds of drinks, with signs stating 'no treating' in order to reduce drunkenness.

The second element of reformalisation is the increasing contractualisation of social relations and conduct within housing governance. Obviously, rented housing has always been subject to tenancy agreements which represent "the oldest and most

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common of contractual agreements" (Englander, 1983: 4). Tenancy agreements regulate and formalise the required behaviour of tenants and landlords. However, there is evidence in the UK that tenancy agreements are becoming lengthier, increasing the range of required or prohibited behaviour and have expanded both their geographical coverage (to include conduct in the vicinity of properties) and the range of individuals whose behaviour they regulate (including children and visitors to the premises (Carr and Cowan, 2006). The introduction of probationary and demoted tenancies in the UK also represents a formalised regulation of conduct whereby tenancy status becomes increasingly dependent upon meeting the required standards of behaviour.

In addition to tenancy agreements, social landlords are increasingly introducing good neighbour agreements which articulate and formalise the behaviour expected of tenants and involve a signing ceremony which underpins the formal contractualisation of conduct and social relations between neighbours. Importantly, good neighbour agreements do not simply proscribe forbidden behaviour, but prescribe desirable positive behaviour, such as volunteering, engaging in tenant participation structures, taking part in 'community' activities or looking after elderly neighbours (see Flint and Nixon, 2006; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006 c). This formalisation of both required behaviour and the surveillance and regulation of such behaviour is illustrated in the growing propensity of social landlords in the UK to introduce tenant reward schemes comprising financial and other incentives for tenants who pay rent on time and do not engage in anti-social behaviour. Social landlords and other agencies such as the police are increasingly using Acceptable Behaviour Contracts for individuals involved in anti-social behaviour which requires these individuals (and in the case of children

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their parents) to regulate their conduct to required standards and also place obligations on social landlords and others to provide support to individuals in order to do so (see Bullock and Jones, 2004). The scope of this formalisation of conduct and the expansion of government regulation is also evident in recent attempts to increase the responsibilities upon private sector landlords for the anti-social behaviour of their tenants (see Flint, 2006).

Decivilising governance? The case of naming and shaming

Critiques of contemporary crime and anti-social behaviour policy in the UK suggest that we are witnessing the growing criminalisation of social policy characterised by a punitive focus upon individual moral and behavioural inadequacy that undermines welfarist justice principles (Hughes, 2007; Gillies, 2005; Garrett, 2007). These debates and the contested interpretation of Intensive Family Support Projects illustrate that, just as societies may be subject to civilising and decivilising processes, governmental civilising offensives themselves may also contain regressive elements that symbolise a decivilising of previous standards of social regulation.

One example of such decivilising trends in governance responses to anti-social behaviour is the increasing use of *naming and shaming* techniques. These involve local authorities, the police, social landlords or private sector organisations publicising the details of an offender and their offence through a range of mechanisms including media and website articles or posters and leaflets. Sometimes this is used as an explicit shaming technique, for example the lists of individuals who have been apprehended without a valid train ticker which are becoming common in

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train and metro stations in the UK. In the case of Anti-social Behaviour Orders then publicity mechanisms also have a more functional management role in providing information to local residents about an offender, the types of conduct proscribed by the Order and contact information for reporting breaches of the order to the authorities. In some cases, this publicity includes a photograph of the offender.

Once more, an Eliasian perspective,would emphasise that these naming and shaming techniques have a strong historical precedent, including the displaying of the costumes (*Sambenitos*) of offenders in the Spanish Inquisition in their home parish church to symbolise their disgrace (MacCulloch, 2003); the stool of repentance used by the Church of Scotland to shame offenders (MacCulloch, 2003) and the English 18th Century custom of 'Riding the Stang' whereby an effigy of targeted or accused individuals (male and female) were carried through the streets by a crowd and burnt at the offender's door (Thompson, 1963). More extreme examples of naming and shaming are emerging in some States in the US, including requiring sex offenders to have a different colour of number plate on their vehicle and a recent sentencing of a woman in Alabama to stand outside a shopping plaza wearing a sandwich board reading 'I am a thief. I stole from Walmart' (Dowling, 2007, see figure 1). These naming and shaming practices have been subject to sustained criticism (Scraton, 2005) but are becoming more frequently deployed and are strongly supported by central government (Home Office, 2005).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

In the UK, increasing utilisation is also being made of Community Rehabilitation Orders whereby offenders are required to undertake varying types of (unpaid) work

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within local communities, often whilst wearing distinctive clothing making it clear they are involved in a community reparation project. The Department of Work and Pensions is beginning a pilot programme in November 2007 that will potentially lead to a sequential reduction in, and potentially complete secessation of, Housing Benefit payments to families evicted from housing tenancies on the grounds of anti-social behaviour who subsequently refuse to engage in rehabilitation and support programmes.

These measures appear primarily about shaming, social stigmatisation and societal revenge rather than rehabilitation. In this sense it may be argued that they represent a decivilising of justice mechanisms. Naming and shaming strategies represent the reversal of the occlusion of punishment from public space. Elias (2000) did not suggest that the civilising process resulted in the extinction of violence from public space, rather that they increasingly occurred behind closed doors and this move away from the spectacle of torture and execution towards a diminution of the public nature of sanctions is described most famously in Foucault's account of the birth of the prison (Foucault, 1977; Vaughan, 2000). The contemporary reversal of penal practice and the use of shaming and degradation in the UK as a crude form of social control is a clear manifestation of the ironic phenomena whereby attempts to increase civility and 'respect' in society result in government mechanisms that are in themselves decivilising.

Conclusions

The contemporary governance of anti-social behaviour in the UK challenges a narrative of progress and civilising processes in state regulation. Rather, a historical

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investigation reveals tides and counter-currents characterised by decivilising processes in governmental and societal responses to crime and anti-social behaviour and waves of the (in)formalisation of conduct (Elias, 2000; Wouters, 1996). For example, Europeans believed in witches long before the Reformation and went on believing in them for several centuries afterwards, and yet only in a limited period from 1500 did they turn this cultural assumption into major episodes of assault on fellow human beings (MacCulloch, 2003). Although obviously not of the same magnitude, some elements of the contemporary Respect agenda in England and Wales, including mechanisms deployed through techniques of housing governance, do represent decivilising processes of government at the very time that they are aimed at countering a perceived decline in civility amongst certain populations within UK society. Elias was right to identify that the promotion of civility often serves as an instrument of social control by constructing differences between elites and 'targeted' populations and may therefore serve as a device of hierarchy and exclusion (Boyd, 2006; Garrett, 2007).

Housing mechanisms are also illustrative of *civilising offensives* that may influence the more general and longer-term processes of cultural socialisation described in the work of Elias. They also provide examples of the reformalisation of conduct which Eliasian scholars have identified. The purpose of this paper has been to sketch the key theoretical concepts underpinning Elias' theories of the civilising process. We have attempted, through a case study of housing-based governmental mechanisms within the Respect and anti-social behaviour agenda in the UK, to show that the work of Elias and scholars influenced by him has much to offer housing studies. We would argue, along with Rodger (2006) that housing scholars should attempt to further explore the theoretical tools his work provides and to apply them to other forms of

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housing, social and urban policy. Elias illustrates the need for contemporary housing studies to be located within a much longer historical framework. For example current debates about rises in levels of anti-social behaviour would be enlightened by a consideration of levels of crime, violence and drunkeness in Victorian Britain (O'Neill, 2006). Elias' linked concepts of sociogenesis and pyschogenesis are very useful in understanding the social and cultural dynamics of housing, for example the relationship between the individual, the home and the neighbourhood. The concepts of civilising and decivilising processes, formalisation and informalisation and civilising offensives also provide clarity in analysing the impacts of governmental discourse and intervention on social phenomena. Finally, Elias' work illustrates both the value of international comparative study and the specificity of national contexts. We hope that this paper has been a limited and exploratory beginning to this process.

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Acknowledgements

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[i] The term habitus is perhaps more readily associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, though the Eliasian usage pre-dates the Bourdieuian. When using the term habitus 'Elias said he meant almost exactly what is captured by the everyday expression "second nature"' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 15).