



## **Crime, order and social control**

*Crime in urban and rural contexts*

### **Interviewer:**

There's been a struggle over rural spaces. And the kinds of order that people wish to secure. And we've also seen the different interests involved. So how pervasive is this idea of a rural idyll?

### **Daniel:**

I think that there is some normative conflict about the character of the rural as I have intimated in what I've said previously. But the rural idyll, remains the dominant culture representation. It has a number of key elements to it. I think overall, it's as simple as representing rural areas as a nice place to be. Because they're perceived to be more friendly. They're perceived to have a slower pace of life. They lack the social problems that you encounter very visibly in urban areas. And they're places of heritage and tradition. In many ways I think that the idyll is an inversion of the urban. Where you have this dominant sense of dangerousness.

### **Interviewer:**

The idea of the city as being a dangerous place has quite a long history. Would you say that the same can be said of the rural?

### **Daniel:**

It's difficult to say with any degree of certainty. Because I think within England, you can find a long tradition of anti urbanism. But the idyll has not always been there. So I think ideas about the rural have changed over time. The rural has been represented in quite different ways. Now the rural idyll presents rural areas, as incredibly orderly. Whereas perhaps in the past, the rural was presented as something that was dangerous. And I think there may be some similarity with the way that urban areas have been portrayed.

### **Interviewer:**

Yes, indeed. As I said earlier on regarding Leith. There are similarities.

### **Daniel:**

One of the ways in which the idyll operates, is to serve as a discourse. That excludes things that don't quite fit in. Lifestyles or particular practices that don't fit the idyll, are somehow pushed to the side. That might be travellers. It might be minority ethnic groups, who feel that they're not part of the cultural heritage of the rural. And perhaps it also strengthens other ideas around domesticity and so forth. But it operates primarily to exclude.

### **Lady:**

Again, here the similarity with the urban, when specific disadvantaged groups are excluded. Not only street prostitutes, but in the area of Leith, elderly people were not affluent to have financial power. Are excluded because they cannot afford to live in the area any longer.

### **Interviewer:**

The idea of urban renaissance itself, of the new urban futures has the effect of including some groups and excluding others. So that the trendier new bars and restaurants and so on would be geared towards a particularly kind of population. And not geared towards others. And you mentioned the shopping centre for example. And people who can't afford to shop there. The ideas that are being created by urban renaissance have a very particular idea about who's part of it, and who isn't.

**Daniel:**

In the same way that the rural idyll does that. I think that the idea of renaissance and the idea of the idyll perhaps could be seen as the same thing. Albeit in urban and rural counterpart. But the renaissance idea of regeneration portrays this sense of the city being a sterile attractive environment that is appropriate for affluent people. People who have money. Trendy people basically. In the same way the rural idyll is a place for people who are part of the heritage. Who wear wax jackets or whatever it may be. But it's the same kind of image. And it's the people who belong, and the counterpoint to that, is the people who don't belong.

**Lady:**

For the two [one word] part of the effect of that, is that our attention is deflected away from some of the underlying social problems. Both in rural areas and indeed in urban areas as well.

**Daniel:**

Absolutely. Not only does it keep certain people out of rural areas. But the people who are in the rural areas, who suffer some fairly significant aspects of social stress. Such as young people, or those on low incomes. They tend to be concealed from view. It's as if they've been wiped clean from the rural slate.

**Lady:**

Yes. Indeed. That is what is happening in urban areas as well. Because young people don't have, for instance going back to Leith. They don't have sports centres anymore. They have very expensive health clubs. Elderly people as I said already they don't have the opportunity to shop in local shops. Because local shops are being replaced by expensive trendy shops, selling other designer furniture. Or delicatessen shops. So it's also the identity of the place has been destroyed. Because fish and chip shops are being replaced by posh restaurants for instance.

**Daniel:**

I think there is a similar process there in rural areas. Where the idyll is serving to obscure the decline in service infrastructure that is there. I think in the rural areas we are seeing a closure of small village stores, as the big town out of town supermarkets have taken over their trade. Shops have closed down. Particularly older people again don't necessarily have access to those facilities. Especially given the problems that you have with rural transport. Similarly Post Office's close down. Where you get towns full of second home owners. You also have a problem with schools closing down. Because of falling school rolls. And those can have very significant cultural influences on a rural area. Much as I presume they do have also in the shape of the urban environment.

**Interviewer:**

So as much as we can talk about urban renaissance, or renewal or improvement. Quite often what we are seeing then is that as much as there is regeneration and improvement for some. There is also a degeneration, particularly as far as services are concerned, on the other.

**Lady:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

And certainly as well, and it's precisely those populations who are bearing the brunt of these changes. In terms of their economic and social position in the community. Also happen to be those who are the most targeted for policing and criminalised. With all the effects that that has as well. So, comparing the marginalisation that's going on. And often the victimisation of those people becomes even more hid. And because they are the problem, rather than the social conditions, or the facilities that have been removed.

**Daniel:**

Has that happened at all with the way that the zone of toleration has disappeared in Leith. So that now you see that the victimisation of people within that area now passing perhaps will run noticed.

**Lady:**

Yes. Because there is no tolerance zone anymore. So there is not a perceived need for a police patrol in the area. Which means that although the rationale was to get rid of crime. There is a huge increase in crime rate, particularly in the area. Mainly because there is a more affluent population. But also because without advocating for tougher policing in the area. The idea of police as deterrent means that some of the crimes that were not visible for a long time, are now again perceived by the population.

**Interviewer:**

So in as much as there's been an attempt to clean up or cleanse. In effect actually it's not become a safer place.

**Daniel:**

I think there's the possibility of a similar dynamic occurring in rural areas, with the recent shift in tension towards anti social behaviour. Where rural areas can claim to have relatively low levels of conventional or mainstream crimes. They have as many problems with anti social behaviour as many other urban areas. Particularly because as I mentioned earlier, young people there are subject of the same cultural influences as people in the city. But what happens is the problematisation of anti social behaviour draws attention to the issue in rural areas. And in so far as that pulls in an enforcement of machinery of governments. I think that we then risk sort of exposing parts of the rural idyll really. You're exposing the rural idyll for what it is. Which is a relatively thin veil covering a set of problems that have existed there for quite some time. Just as in the urban area perhaps, this sense of regeneration is again often quite literally isn't it, a sort of coat of paint, a gloss over an area.

**Lady:**

As a cosmetic change. But in reality the quality of life has deteriorated dramatically. For some people.

**Daniel:**

Yes. And I think this idea of cosmetic change draws attention to the way that rural idyll and the ideal of urban renaissance are there to commodify. And make cosmetic change in order to commodify an area. To make it attractive to business. To make it attractive to affluent residents. And for visitors too. Yes. Just as I've suggested that rural areas are given an attractive appearance for tourism. So the same thing applies to Leith.

**Lady:**

We in fact it has been advertised as the Gateway to Scotland. There is the Royal Britannia yacht in Leith. So there are busses taking foreign tourists to visit Leith. Which would have been impossible if there was still a tolerance zone. Because obviously prostitutes and drug users and homeless people. And elderly poor people, are not something to be proud of.

**Daniel:**

Your mention of homelessness there, makes me think of rural homelessness. Which has been portrayed as a crime problem. Local Authorities have been quite keen to paint homelessness as an issue of crime and disorder that attracts an enforcement response. And of course the underlying conditions that have contributed to that homelessness remain unaddressed. Perhaps in a parallel with the city. Where re-criminalising the prostitution has taken the focus of many of the original reasons why the zone toleration was set up around the health needs of drug mis-users and so forth.

**Lady:**

Yes. That's true. Because what is now missing from the city, is the care of people are in needs.

**Interviewer:**

What about the experience of the women who work there? How has their condition changed?

**Lady:**

Well. The situation has been deteriorating since the closure of the tolerance zone. During the final year of the designated zone in 2001, there were eleven attacks against women. But a year later, there were already 31 attacks. And in the first six months of 2003, 54 attacks against women had been reported. Although as important to stress, only four were reported to the police. During the period of the tolerance zone, Edinburgh had an unparalleled record for apprehending and gaining convictions against men, who were abusing and assaulting and raping women, working as street prostitutes. And this was achieved because of the trust built between working women, and the local police. There is no trust anymore. And there is no physical presence of the police in the area. So women are feeling threatened by men, looking for sex.

Also there are increasing difficulties for agencies delivering health and support services. Not only to sex workers and their clients. But also to the drug using population.