# Making Space for Each Other: Civic Place-Making in a Divided Society

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# Making Space for Each Other:



# Civic Place-Making
# in a
# Divided Society

Produced by the
**Planning for Spatial Reconciliation**
Research Group

# Making Space for Each Other:

## Civic Place-Making in a Divided Society

# Contents

New, good quality affordable housing near the interface on Limestone Road, Belfast.

# 1. Preface

This report is about how to use planning in Northern Ireland as a key instrument for the creation of a more shared and reconciled society. But, it argues the need for a *global* rather than *parochial* perspective on this difficult challenge. Divisions within and between societies, about sovereignty, identity, and borders, abound in the contemporary world. There is much that Northern Ireland can learn from other examples.

Currently, the most obvious manifestation of this kind of conflict is to be found in the tragedy of people forced to seek refuge in Europe, particularly from the turmoil in parts of the Middle East and North Africa. Interestingly, the pace and volume of this people movement is said by some to threaten the Schengen Agreement, which allows for open, passport-free travel across many parts of Europe, a continent beset with myriad contests over the centuries about territory and sovereignty. Showing solidarity with distraught peoples from nearby countries is seen, in these terms, to threaten the hard-won solidarity *within* Europe itself, particularly in an era of austerity economics. Alongside this immediate convulsion, Iraq's accentuating sectarian division between Sunni and Shia and ethnic division between Kurd and Arab, together with Libya's disturbances and dislocations, continue their distressing fallout.

In this context, the principle of 'open borders' within Europe is steadily being eroded. Germany is set to tighten border controls along its frontier with Austria. Hungary is imposing its own closure with razor-wire fencing. Such 'protectionism' is not restricted to southern and central Europe. Contrary to its reputation for liberal political culture, northern Europe is being impacted. Sweden and Denmark are embroiled in a dispute about whether the latter is permitting refugees to move to the former without proper processing of documentation. In the Netherlands, populist Freedom Party Leader, Wilders, is interpreting this migration as an 'Islamic invasion' that endangers culture, identity, and prosperity, echoing xenophobic sentiment from the Northern League in Italy, the Front National in France, and

the neo-fascist Jobbik movement in Hungary. In this way, the spill-over of clashes about sovereignty, fundamentalism, and democracy in areas like the Middle East is re-awakening border quarrels in supposedly stable and territorially integrated Europe.

Apart from its own humanitarian obligation in this crisis, Northern Ireland can find resonance and relevance in this unfolding catastrophe:

**(1)** it shows clearly that when it comes to conflicts complicated by a toxic mix of rival nationalism and religion, Northern Ireland is not 'a place apart';

**(2)** across the planet, migration is literally on the march. Since this pattern is spreading diversity, Babel is likely coming in time to a neighbourhood near you. In many European countries accustomed to homogeneous race and religion, learning to live with difference is going to come high up the curriculum of social life. In the last year alone over 1 million migrants arrived in Europe. So, the 'Northern Ireland problem' is no longer akin to just a few areas like Cyprus, the Balkans, and Israel/Palestine. Aspects of its ethno-nationalist character are set to emerge in Europe itself. So, there is an increasing European dimension to this, beyond the parochial remit of the Peace programmes; and

**(3)** the scale and extent of the disruption and anguish evident in these conflicts put the Northern Ireland problem into a more proportionate perspective. In this society, we are overall very fortunate to inhabit this favoured part of the planet. Yet, our indulgence and self-obsession can make it appear that we expect special attention and donation from the UK Exchequer, Europe, and the United States. In this regard, we have to 'get over ourselves', and desist from the delusion that, as a society 'emerging from conflict', we are due exceptional largesse. For how many more years can this tired tune be credibly played?

This is not to underplay the real hurt and grief experienced by the bereaved and injured in Northern Ireland in the course of over three decades of sustained violence.

All this political turbulence has association with other conflicts that come in and out of view. For instance, separatist pressure in the Ukraine could see Donetsk annexed by Russia, following the experience of Crimea, leading in time to a quasi-autonomous East Ukraine, associated with Russia, and a West Ukraine veering closer to Europe and NATO. As in Egypt and Syria, at least nominally democratic governments seemed to be viewed as expendable by the West when they no longer align with western interests, whereas governments like Saudi Arabia's, with long traditions of autocratic rule, are considered allies. Such geo-political configurations raise questions about the values of democracy itself; about how 'terrorism' is defined; and what moral authority such positioning leaves the West in general, and the US in particular, when berating paramilitarism here.

At the same time, democracy itself is stirring across the world, often expressed in angry resistance to political orthodoxy, and challenge to conventional wisdom, in forms that confound pundits and polls. This is evident in the Occupy Movement in the aftermath of the financial crisis, but also in the student-led mass protest in Hong Kong, dubbed the 'Umbrella Movement'. These shifts can be fickle and fluid, reflecting the very volatility that derives from the social fragmentations underpinning them. In the West itself, this can assume remarkable and maverick display: the prominence of Trump in the current republican contest in the US; the shock of the SNP's insurgence in Scotland; the rapid emergence of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain; together with the growing electoral profile of UKIP in England, Sweden Democrats, and Front National in France. In Britain's Labour Party, the serial rebel, Jeremy Corbyn, achieves landslide victory in the recent leadership election. Of course, all such tumult cannot be explained by any single cause.

But, in the mix, there is some sense that democracy isn't working for many people; that the world of big business, high finance, distant government, 'spinning' media, unregulated markets, trimmed social protection, digital divides, and greater people

migration, is one that leaves sizeable populations voiceless on the margins. In turn, this can produce revolt against conventional politics in a surge for a more authentic and representative form. Equally, it can produce disaffection, apathy, and fatalism. But beyond any such disenchantment, there is a basic political dilemma in Western democracy. In many countries, the long-standing choice between social democracy and conservatism has been replaced by forms of semi-permanent managerialist technocracy, which is not meeting many people's aspirations.

Thus, in reflecting on a new politics of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland that goes beyond 'deal-making', the re-think has to be contextualised within this wider global shake-up in how we do politics. In particular, there is need to accept the complexity, turbulence and rate of change of this globalised world, from which Northern Ireland cannot be insulated. This circumstance includes: an interconnected economy, perhaps as crisis-prone as Marx suggested, though not terminally, but certainly characterised by extreme inequalities, rapid change and major dislocations of the work environment; multi-sided conflicts around race, ethnicity, culture and religion; and, closer to home, the fractionalising of British politics, and even threat to the UK's territorial integrity from other than Northern Ireland Republicans. The project group hold many uncertainties (and disagreements) in addressing such issues, but share a set of key assumptions that form its approach:

- **First**, there is crucial need for proportionality in understanding the problems faced by Northern Ireland. The endless pre-occupation with Troubles legacy issues needs to recognise that the scale, ferocity and wider impact of contemporary conflicts make ours seem relatively modest. This is not to deny the awful hurts inflicted in a conflict whose brutality was only matched by its futility. Rather, it is to suggest a simple recognition that nobody in that convoluted, multi-sided 30 year trauma held monopoly on victimhood, grievance or blame. In addition, how do we address an economy that, on any measure, falls behind major competitors on competitiveness, labour market participation rates, and economic inactivity, or a society characterised by long-standing inequalities and long-term disadvantage of many communities. Either, we will be dragged by the past or pulled by the future. Without vision of a competitive, inclusive and cohesive Northern Ireland, we will remain on the same merry-go-round, while citizens become ever more disillusioned about devolution, and the way that the 'peace process' can be abused to protect dishonest politics;

- **Second**, some of the authors have been around a long time and have seen the same ideas for urban regeneration repackaged in a novel language, almost without any institutional memory of what has gone before. This is not to say that the 'wheel has to be re-invented' on every new policy occasion. Certain key ideas retain force and resonance, even decades after they were launched. Social and political problems are clearly 'multi-dimensional' and require integrated intervention, but posing mantras like 'Joined-Up Government' or 'Partnership', without serious intent to tackle the bureaucratic inertia, even resistance, to change, that prevent their development in practice demonstrates lack of seriousness. It should come as no surprise that multiple evaluations of urban programmes fail to find evidence of significant convergence between the poorest and more affluent areas, or indeed, that such assessments themselves employ facile methods to measure impact on community cohesion;

- **Third**, while there are simple solutions to complex problems, they are invariably wrong. Any new approach has to engage with the complexities, within and without Northern Ireland, while admitting no 'blueprint' solution. The imperative is to be clear about the principles that underpin any intervention and to set out a methodology for a way forward, rather than a list of recommendations. Hopefully, the report content reflects that commitment.

The 'peace-wall' in Alexandra Park, Belfast.

# 2. Introduction

Designed as an action-research initiative to explore improved planning practice in a deeply contested society, the project was funded by the PEACE 3 Programme, and operated in partnership with the Department of the Environment (NI), the government body most responsible for both changing the nature of future planning, and for the transference of many of its statutory duties to local government.

The project has aimed to identify how regeneration and reconciliation can be better twinned than at present, and, in particular, how the new approaches to planning under local Councils can be harnessed to promote good relations and a more shared society in Northern Ireland. In this central objective, the project has been rooted in a transformative rather than managerialist perspective on conflict resolution.

The research captured in this report is based on a range of inputs and sources, not least of which, includes the extensive experience of the authors. Some of the authors have been involved for decades as activists dating back to the late 1960s and 1970s, in campaigns around the housing and transport strategies for Belfast; anti-poverty programmes in Belfast and Craigavon; as an official working on development schemes and the Belfast Action Team initiative; as government advisors about Making Belfast Work; Belfast and Derry/Londonderry Vision Strategy; Regional Strategic Framework; Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan; Crumlin Road Prison Development Strategy; Good Relations Policy; the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership; supporting local communities in Belfast with the development of neighbourhood plans, etc. In other words, they bring to this contemporary research, a substantial background in engaged research related to these planning and policy issues. Such long-term involvement with planning and policy, for over 45 years, has informed their appraisal of these matters in this report. As engaged academics, the authors are interested in understanding the dynamics of change in the city, in exploring potential for innovative transformation, and setting out a feasible framework for policy development.

This involved engaging diverse constituencies around issues of conflict, segregation, and cultural difference based on sectarian and ethnic identity. In turn, such engagement demanded analysis of: lack of shared space and services; divided housing and labour markets that inhibit development; the prevalence of sectarian emblems that mark territory; and the physical demarcations that characterise interfaces and routes of contentious parades. Moreover, it included exploration of how a different approach to planning could contribute to a more integrated, connected, and inclusive place-making. Essential to such progress is the effective participation of those disadvantaged citizens most afflicted by the conflict in terms of: marginalization and isolation linked to segregation; dereliction and under-development associated with the legacy of unrest; and on-going sectarian/ racial tension and harassment.

More specifically, the team has followed an interactive methodological process that was underpinned by desk-based research such as policy document analysis, statistical studies, literature reviews and mapping. Engagement with policy makers, local communities, professionals, voluntary groups, academics and others was undertaken through seminars, workshops, focus groups and interviews. This ongoing interactive approach allowed the team to present empirical evidence to contributors in order to deepen the discussions and draw out potential policy responses.

The project team has examined issues of division and reconciliation relating to the sectarian geographies of a segregated society, while exploring the potential of new approaches such as spatial and

community planning for proactive and civically-inclusive forms of peace-building. Specifically, it has identified the socio-spatial context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, paying regard to such features as changing demography; patterns of segregation and deprivation and their relationship to sectarian tension and violence; typologies of space; and the legacy of previous interventions around planning and policy. Moreover, it has specified the problems and confusions associated with key concepts in this arena, such as *need, rights*, and *equality*, essentially arguing that such important considerations need to be balanced with other factors, such as *assets*, *opportunity*, *responsibility*, and *rule of law*, if prospect of creating a cohesive and pluralist society is to be advanced.

While its analysis has been on both rural and urban, its main focus has been on Belfast, with a complementary report on a case study of North Belfast, an area noted for its intractable divisions. In testing capacity for innovative planning responses to division, it was considered useful to learn from good and bad practice in multi-ethnic and conflict-ridden societies in Britain, the Balkans, Middle East, and the USA, through comparative research in cities such as Chicago, Nicosia, Mostar and Jerusalem.

For the first time in human history, just over half of the earth's people live in cities. While the global is urbanising in this way, the urban is globalising with patterns of migration across the world. Major cities of the world are becoming much more diverse. Thus, the issue of how we live with difference is becoming a major development problem across the world. The island of Ireland has a troubled history of having to cope with this challenge. In the case of Northern Ireland, the region has gone through nearly two decades of a 'peace process', marked most obviously by the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, with many people now assuming that we have progressed to a post-conflict society.

Of course, in recent times, people have been reminded that that optimism is premature. Ireland is not yet a post-conflict society. Rather, its people mostly live in a post-violent conflict society. But discord itself remains deep and ever present - particularly in Northern Ireland and along the border.

Northern Ireland's conflict is centrally about territory, sovereignty, and identity. Planning is about the social shaping of space. Therefore, planning is not only relevant, but crucial, to the resolution of that conflict. Importantly, we are at the dawn of a new planning. Two aspects, in particular, are set to change. First, planning itself is going to be about more than zoning land for different physical uses, such as buildings and infrastructure. Rather, it is going to be about linking the wide-ranging issues of responsible place-making in ways that are visionary, comprehensive, integrated, inclusive, and proactive.

Second, the duty to deliver this new planning is returning to newly re-organised local government in Northern Ireland, alongside some related powers in housing, regeneration, and local economic development. This combination of new planning, new ways of doing planning, and new democratic structures for its delivery and accountability, offers unique opportunity for imaginative approaches to how we make good places, even in bad circumstances.

Alongside the usual data survey employed traditionally by planners -- such as demographic change, and policy scrutiny -- the new planning in Northern Ireland will demand appreciation of the basis and implication of the conflict. But, in such analysis, explanation should not be confused with legitimation. Violent actions of the past four decades may be ingrained in the historical narrative, but, from our perspective, never can be viewed as excusable or beneficial.

Visible legacies of our conflict, such as wall murals glorifying, even sanctifying, paramilitaries, and the 'romance' of the gun; commemoration sites saluting respective 'war' dead as heroes; painted kerb-stones marking tribal turf; confrontational flag-waving; and other symbols of aggressive partisanship, bigotry, and hatred, scar the landscapes of many towns and cities. In effect, demarcating exclusive ethnic terrains that are hostile and 'no go' to all outsiders, they can be intensely intimidating. Highly questionable is the extent to which these depictions are truly the voice and choice of local people as distinct from the stance of militia organisations.

This display of one-sided narrative is incompatible not only with an open democratic city, but also with widely-accepted tenets of good planning, intended to foster: equitable diversity; safe space; mixed use; public accessibility; hospitable place; and connectedness. As such, it invites challenge from civic agencies, including planners, with the support of appropriate legislation that more clearly defines 'hate crime' and sectarian harassment.

In the case of Belfast, the city faces an intriguing and contradictory trajectory: relative to the rest of the region, a vibrant urban centre, experiencing significant investment; gross value added (GVA) per head far exceeding the rest of Northern Ireland; and a re-invigorated night life -- all contrasted with its intense communal territorial disputes; growth of hate crime; and capacity of local conflicts like the 'flags protest' to ignite into pervasive regional impact.

In part, these persistent clashes are related to the flawed architecture of the 'peace process'. But in part, they are due to the propensity of deep-rooted conflicts to readily reproduce themselves, even with the slightest trigger. To explore the fine grain of how this plays out on the ground, the report pays particular attention to North Belfast, a part of the city most characterised by small, contesting sectarian spaces, exemplified by on-going stand-off in Ardoyne/Twadell.

**The project has produced three main reports: (1) the Post-Project Evaluation; (2) this report, as its main study; and (3) a case study of North Belfast. The latter two reports will be publicly available in electronic and hard-copy format. Over the next year, the project team, in continued partnership with DoE (NI), will be engaged in disseminating to, and engaging with, the relevant stakeholders, around the agenda laid out in these two reports, with an emphasis on their practical delivery.**

**Children's play facilities overshadowed by a 'peace-wall' in Whitewell, Belfast.**

# Why is Planning Crucial to a Shared Society?

For the purpose of this report and indeed to reflect the research undertaken, planning is defined in broad terms. Mainstream planning refers to the statutory planning functions such as development planning and development management. However, over the last 40-50 years, we have had a series of government interventions and programmes, which were area-based. These include, for example, initiatives such as 'areas of need' and more recently neighbourhood renewal areas. In addition, there has been a wide range of area-based regeneration initiatives. Most, if not all of these, have not been connected to what we call mainstream planning. And yet, all these represent a form of planning, constituting spatially focused interventions by government to achieve 'specific' ends.

Yet, for too long, planning has kept out of the conflict, as though the issue was too contentious, and beyond its concern and capacity. That detachment is regrettable. Rather, planning -- alongside related strategic instruments, such as urban design, housing, and regeneration -- are fundamental to conflict resolution in Northern Ireland.

At the same time, planning is too important to be left only to planners. Creating living places and mediating contested spaces are complex processes, demanding holistic perspective, involving housing, education, environment, economic development, health, and such like.

As a discipline and practice, planning demands critical thinking about the making of place and mediating of space. At its core, it concerns social uses and ordering of space. Space lies at the heart of 'ethno-nationalist' conflicts, such as that in Northern Ireland, a society fixated on issues of contested territory and sovereignty. Indeed, marking terrain with flags, emblems, and murals is an enduring expression of the conflict at street level. Pervasive and persistent sectarian geographies 'cantonise' large tracts of society in ways that feed further 'single identity' responses to housing, schooling, culture, and such like. Moreover, the close link between areas of greatest deprivation and those that have been beset with the worst of violent disturbance, suggests that plausible processes of reconciliation have to be twinned with strategic programmes of regeneration. Thereby, a more synchronised planning can play a pivotal part in resolving the division. Just as it is no coincidence that planning issues, such as housing allocation, triggered the onset of the 'Troubles' nearly fifty years ago, planning today can become a tool for equitable mutuality.

For this to take effect, planning needs to operate with multidisciplinary teams, also comprising urban designers, architects, educationalists, community and economic developers, and similar expertise. Also, it assumes inclusive engagement with the various publics that make up our diverse citizenry. This means bringing the range of stakeholders into the process of plan-making at a formative stage, rather than consulting them at the latter phases of the development process, when so often so much of the decisions seem already settled.

While the report offers analysis and recommendations relevant for the whole of Northern Ireland, it has chosen to focus extensively on Belfast, given its acute experience of the violent conflict and its high share of spatial deprivation and segregation. Nevertheless, the proposed principles and practice offered have potential application across the region.

New civic space replacing a road connection in central Belfast.

# 3.  Key Arguments

**Planning involves the power to shape the environment.** In that sense, it is essentially political. Politics in this society is essentially sectarian. Thus, there is ever-present danger that development will be influenced by sectarian electoral arithmetic -- how decisions impact on core partisan votes in an ethno-nationally divided society.

**Alternative approaches lie in democratic pluralism.** But, there are limits to pluralism. Resource distribution based on accommodation of myriad vested interests, linked to 'group rights', risks social fragmentation and wasteful duplication. In the case of the former, there is consequent loss of common belonging and social cohesion. In the case of the latter, its extensive presence can be seen in our multiple education systems and segregated schools. Also, it is evident in the other big public spending item -- health. Current debate about proliferation of health amenities at the expense of quality care tends to invite political agreement about urgent necessity for rationalisation -- until it comes to specific hospital or specialist closures, which inevitably marshal protectionist responses, based on narrow constituency interest rather than strategic need.

**Long-standing precepts of good planning and design can play a significant role in embedding reconciliation in the development process.** A necessary, though insufficient, approach to redressing the divisions in a deeply contested society lies in the basic principles of good planning: intentional connectivity; search for synergies; coherent design; public access; balanced development that minimises duplication; and avoidance of physical infrastructures that can dissect a city more markedly than 'peace-walls'.

Mention of the latter term prompts concern about the way **fuzzy language can impede candid democratic debate about development.** The concept of 'peace-walls' is a palatable euphemism for 'segregation walls'. In similar vein, the 'peace process' is a catch-all term that can be manipulated by adversaries to cast legitimate disagreement in terms of their opponents being pro or anti peace, thereby curtailing discussion. So it is with the term 'shared space'. It suggests that plans need to give this explicit spatial expression in places dominated by ethnic space, often sectioned by natural environment, infrastructure, and other features of the built environment that serve as barriers. Using a typology of spaces: ethnic; neutral; dead; shared; and cosmopolitan -- the project's focus is on how to amplify the presence and influence of the latter two types over the other three. The concept of a shared future can be understood in its most obvious meaning - a significant increase in integrated living and collaborative working across the divide, rooted in principles of inclusion, respect for diversity, equity, and inter-dependence.

**Policies of inclusion and cohesion can operate inadvertently at odds with each other.** Programmes for compensatory regeneration that seek redress of under-development and those that address inter-communal reconciliation have to be entwined. Yet, the re-distributive goals of social inclusion can increase inter-communal dispute about the relative share of new resources allocated to each side of a divided society. Thereby, regeneration initiatives can inadvertently accentuate rather than ameliorate conflict, confounding reconciliation initiatives designed to build cohesion. On this basis, the project interrogates frequently-used terms in the conflict: *need*; *equality*; *inclusion*, etc in attempt to liberate them from partisan use. These important considerations need to be balanced with other dimensions, such as *assets*, *opportunity*, *responsibility*, and *rule of law*, if the prospect of creating a cohesive and pluralist society is to be advanced.

**A truly shared city cannot neglect the issue of socio-spatial segregation.** This obligation confronts a perennial problem in regeneration of how spatial concentrations of poverty can give way to more socially mixed communities, while avoiding or minimising negative externalities associated with gentrification. Planning and policy cannot operate in an apolitical way, with no explicit appreciation of the spatial impact of a conflict centred around territory and identity;

**'Local community' is an inappropriate spatial unit of analysis and intervention in the context of sectarian geographies.** A civic rather than ethnic perspective is a prerequisite for moving beyond tribal enclaves. Community development has been typically more proficient at obstructing unwelcome proposals than in achieving transformative alternatives. While the sector can propose, it has been largely up to state and market to dispose, and this skewed socio-economic geometry means that it can be often seen as the poor relation in a partnership, and mostly in reactive than proactive mode. The main study report details the capacities needed by planners and policy-makers for this 'border-crossing' role that can demonstrate 'win-win' rather than zero-sum outcomes. Importantly, this shift implies a re-drawing of administrative units for housing, regeneration, and other local interventions. Designed to ensure an economy of scale and scope, these bigger geographies can embody socially and religiously mixed communities that are encouraged to pay regard to assets and opportunities as well as to need.

**There is tendency to not distinguish between development in a place, and development of a place.** The former tends to focus on physical-led development, while the latter concentrates on people-centred development, enhancing the skills and capacities of the residents. Both are needed. But, the latter is the more difficult and long-term. Anybody can put up a building. But, building community is much tougher. Nurturing neighbourliness, friendships, trust, respect, and resilience -- this is the 'soft infrastructure' that is the indispensible scaffolding of sustainable place. A classic example of this flawed thinking is found in the recently built 'community hub' in the highly contentious space, known as Girdwood, long before there is any prospect of a mixed community.

Quality public space, including streets, plays a pivotal role in congregating diverse publics under a common civic entitlement and responsibility. Scant concern has been paid to quality. Targeting has its virtues. But, one of the problems with the culture of targeting is that it tends to focus on the easily measurable, thereby reducing most appraisals to tick-box audits. Quality can be neglected. There may be quality design invested in the central core, but, whatever quality consideration is so invested, it is not rolled out to city neighbourhoods. A key component of new planning and urban design centres on reconnection. Disconnected neighbourhoods reinforce local insularities and undermine the development of civic space.

**Evidence is an indispensable component of engagement.** The urban prospectus is not underpinned by robust analysis. What is happening to the contemporary city derives from substantial structural and cultural changes over the last half century, including: economic re-structuring; related urban-rural shifts; growing social inequality, also reflected spatially in greater social segregation; the re-configuration of 'community' in the context of changing family formations and household structures, wider social networking, decline of religious observance, immigration, etc. These and other societal processes make for new urban complexities that are not reducible to old-style planning, based on 'predict and provide'. Moreover, policies tend to be based on very flimsy evaluation. They move from one

programme to another, without really testing what worked and what didn't in the previous programme, or indeed programmes from elsewhere. In this circuitous policy route, the underpinning concepts vary over time, giving a delusionary impression of innovation and progress: participation becomes partnership; poverty becomes social exclusion; multiple deprivation becomes multi-dimensionality; linkage becomes connectedness; etc. It is almost as if because we cannot change the problems, we change the names instead. As civil servants come and go, institutional amnesia takes hold, and thereby wheels are inadvertently re-invented, because no basis exists for learning from the past.

## Planning can unintentionally accentuate rather than ameliorate contested space.

All this demands that we define planning differently in a much more interdisciplinary, interdepartmental way; that we re-think the role of analysis and 'evidence', appreciating how evidence can be filtered through particular ideological lenses; that we define 'need' in terms of bigger geographies, such as city-wide frameworks; that we understand how too much focus on 'community' can prompt sectarian competition for resources and unhelpful duplication of services; that citizen responsibility is an important companion to individual or group rights; and that we avoid ambiguity and ambivalence as much as possible, in part by highlighting clear principles for progress in a deeply divided society.

## The orthodox technical and professional competencies of planning are insufficient to redress the delicate issue of contested space.

Some see a shared future implying a shift from managing to transforming the division, a step-change to a deeper pluralism with less insular communities anchored in exclusivist ethno-nationalist affiliation. A structural change in agencies like planning that underpins the fostering of a cultural shift in society toward a more cosmopolitan, open, hybrid, globally-focussed future is needed.

A new planning model that can better address contested space is one that is proactive rather than reactive; has capacity to both make place and mediate space; goes beyond land-use planning and specific site development to a more integrated and comprehensive approach; embeds good relations as a central objective in its practice; operates in a multi-disciplinary way; involves from a formative stage of plan-making a range of agencies across private, public, and voluntary sectors; challenges forthrightly any form of sectarian gate-keeping in the development process; and in linking community and spatial planning, builds in delivery, and impact evaluation from the start.

All too often development is geared to opportunity sites and individual site proposals, with scant consideration of wider impact and connection. Take the current case of expanding student rental accommodation in Belfast. Largely, each new application is assessed on its particular merit, with insufficient concern about what would be the 'tipping point' of such lodging to put it at odds with an over-riding goal of creating mixed residential and mixed tenure housing in the central city. In other words, development is mostly rooted in tactical rather than strategic deliberation. Without a statutory-based development plan that takes a comprehensive and integrated look at city regeneration, this disjointed and piecemeal approach prevails.

## A new more integrated model of community and spatial planning can help to simplify, streamline, and give a new relevance to the planning process.

In acknowledging the prospect of this change, it is evident that there is still great confusion about what 'community planning' involves, and this bewilderment is apparent in both the general public and some policy-makers. Certainly there is need for a more multi-disciplinary approach that crosses sectors and specialisms to lead and co-ordinate the planning processes in a more creative rather than mainly regulatory way. Such new ways of working can cross-

pollinate knowledge-sets and practices. In turn, this new model demands re-think about the very scope and reach of planning and design. Also, it requires a very different approach from other partners, such as the community sector. Evidence from the project shows that planning and related policies are not prioritised always by all parts of the community sector for many reasons. As well as this, leadership is central when it comes to implementing a planning system that transcends sectarian politics. The move towards a 'Planning and Place' task team by Belfast City Council may serve as a significant exemplar of how a new development vision can be developed and delivered in a way that moves beyond division.

Given this perspective, this report is unusual for a planning document in its examination of political context; its application of multi-disciplinary scholarship that embraces urban sociology, political philosophy, conflict resolution, education, economic development, governance, etc; and its attempt to link this integrated analysis to a comprehensive approach to making place and mediating space.

**Ultimately, the vision is for places at ease with multiple identity, variety, and hybridity in a new globalising world,** where assortment is becoming more pervasive, even in towns and cities once comfort-zoned by the similar and familiar. In this regard, four main strategic pathways present themselves to citizens in deeply divided societies:

**a.** retreat into ghettoes stained by sectarian exclusivity and absolutism, thereby bolstering segregated living and rivalry;

**b.** adopt a toleration 'live and let live' approach, involving courteous indifference to difference, managing co-habitation of place by way of people living apart in 'parallel universes', with insubstantial dialogue across traditional divides;

**c.** promote a democratic politics of identity and belonging, whereby ethno-nationalist disputes assume permanent presence, but are mediated through regular arbitration and conciliation, involving dialogue that will be sometimes strident and unsettling; and

**d.** cultivate a more generous appreciation that no one single culture or belief-system has total grip on the intricacies and horizons of humanity, but that inter-cultural engagement among adversaries can add value to each for mutual enrichment.

To move in the direction of the latter two choices, the role of planning is significant. Thus, to underpin the proposed new planning model, the project has identified a set of universal principles of development in a contested society. From these, it has recommended criteria that can be of practical use to planners in assessing whether specific plans and development schemes are in compliance with the central goal of a shared and equitable society (see opposite page).

In terms of its structure, the report proceeds to first examine the nature of the problem facing Northern Ireland, in its politics, violence, inequality, segregations, planning legacies, and such like. Second, it explores the traditional forms of intervention to address these matters, and the limitations and contradictions that have beset them; and, finally, it proposes an alternative way of planning and policy, designed to transform rather than manage the key features of a divided and under-developed society.

## 4. Shared Space Planning Principles

1. No one has a right to claim any territory on behalf of a communal identity. All of the city should be considered as shared space.

2. Since the city as a whole is every resident's neighbourhood, urban policy and planning should be concerned to create a pluralist city for a pluralist people -- open, connected, and inter-dependent.

3. Civic values of equity, diversity, mutuality, and social cohesion should take precedence over those ethnic or community values, rooted in tribal partisanship.

4. Capacity for such interlocking networks and good relations should be cultivated as a central mark of genuine community development.

5. Initiatives concerning peace-lines and contested spaces should be considered within the regeneration of their wider environments.

6. Development of disadvantaged areas requires a collaborative and co-ordinated approach involving cross-community local groups working with multi-agency teams to achieve deliverable outcomes, reviewed by an informed external body.

7. Poor physical connectivity among neighbourhoods, and from those neighbourhoods to sites of employment, services and education, should be addressed as a priority. Road engineers need to acknowledge the role that they should play in helping to stitch the fragmented city back together again.

8. New housing developments need to avoid the replication of single identity social and/or religious communities and should aim to create mixed neighbourhoods, well-linked to wider city opportunities.

9. Such mixed developments, designed to create high-quality diverse communities, should become the model to help break down the social and sectarian divisions of existing city neighbourhoods.

10. Location of key public services is crucial to their accessibility. Public services should be sited in areas that are securely accessible to all communities.

Uneven urban development on different sides of the Cupar Way 'peace-wall' in Belfast.

# 5.   The Problem

## Northern Ireland's Challenging Peace

After three decades of ongoing political violence and political impasse, the foundations for a 'post-violent conflict' society in Northern Ireland were finally laid in the mid-1990s. The ongoing 'peace process' has been complicated with interruptions to the political settlement, ongoing disputes about responsibility and blame and outbreaks of intercommunal or political violence. The continuity of the process has been a testament not only to the stamina of internal actors, but to the substantial commitment (and significant financial investment) of the British and Irish governments, the US and the EU.

The different state of the region is best exemplified by the contrast between the levels of lethal political violence before and after 1998 (Figure 1).

Thus, the annual average of fatalities in the 1970s was roughly twice the total number since 1998, while only those of pension age can really remember that most lethal decade. Even in the decade before 1999, the number of fatalities was more than five times greater than the total since.



Figure 1:  Deaths resulting from Security-Related Violence 1969-2014.
Data Source: www.psni.police.uk

### New Forms of Violence

At the same time, political violence has not been eliminated – between 1999 and 2014, there were over 2,000 shooting incidents and around 1,600 bombing devices used; though still around a tenth of the numbers of the 1970s (PSNI, op. cit.). Elsewhere (Morrissey & Gaffikin, 2006), we argued that the significantly greater decline in fatal incidents compared to political violence generally represented a shift

from 'organised-strategic' to 'disorganised-opportunistic' political violence and were cautiously optimistic that such were the residual effects of the complicated transition to peace.

It would be unrealistic to assume that conflicts a long time in the making would smoothly disappear. Nevertheless,

the persistence of security-related violence and, indeed, the growth of other kinds of community-based violence challenge the notion that problems of this kind will simply disappear over time. For example, while PSNI data on hate crime have only been collected relatively recently, recorded racist incidents multiplied by more than a factor of three between 2002/03 and 2004/05 (not unconnected with the arrival of migrants from new EU member states) and then almost doubled again by 2014/15 to reach 1,356. Similarly, only 35 homophobic incidents were recorded in 2002/03, compared to 335 in 2014/15. Indeed, the clearance rate of racist and homophobic crimes (as opposed to incidents) is less than one in five. At the same time, the number of recorded sectarian incidents grew only marginally – around 12% – though remaining the single largest category (PSNI, op.cit.). The usual cautions should be expressed about different reporting rates (e.g. more victims of such crime are prepared to come forward) and definitional refinement, but such data point to the persistent (and consistent growth) of low-level, diverse forms of communal violence.

## The Peace Process and Community Relations

Northern Irish society has witnessed significant changes in community relations over the 20 year time period since the announcement of the first ceasefire in 1994. The end of major campaigns of violence provided the stability required to support a developing cross community dialogue. During periods of uncertainty these relationships are tested. However, over time, the will and desire for the creation of a shared society have become more apparent.

All political parties claim the goal of a 'shared society'. But, there is evidence that Northern Ireland residents see less progress than implied by the political rhetoric. The Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey (www.ark.ac.uk/NILT) has contained a Community Relations module since 1998, in which the same set of questions has been asked. Figure 2 records answers to a question about progress in community relations.



Figure 2: Response to community relations 1998 - 2013
Data Source: NILT, 1998, 2005 & 2013

More than a third of respondents of each religion saw no change ('about the same') over the period. Those recorded as Catholics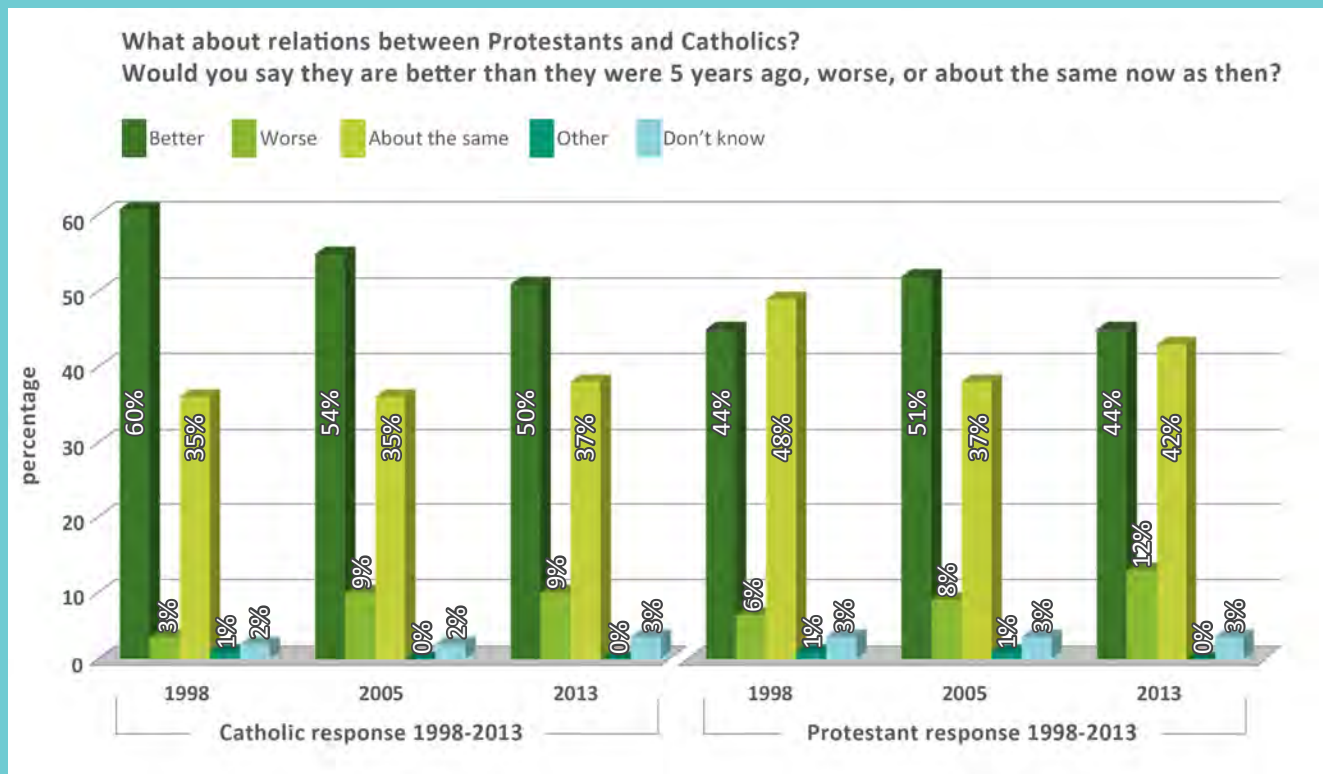 saw a fall of ten percentage points in the percentage claiming better relations between 1998 and 2013, while, for Protestants, the figures rose to a small majority in 2005, only to fall back to the same figure as 1998 in 2013. Again, there are difficulties in obtaining valid and reliable answers even to the same question over such a long period and particular years may be affected by particular events (the Flags Protest, the Ardoyne stand-off). But, NILT utilises a properly randomised sample and the questionnaires are rigorously administered. It would be foolish to ignore the finding that the percentages answering 'worse' (albeit still small) either doubled or tripled over the period.

Yet, the work required to create, maintain and develop these relations is substantial. Multiple community groups in Northern Ireland have fostering cross community relations at their core. 'Together: Building a United Community' published in 2013, sets out to be reflective of government's aim for improved relations and a more 'shared society', outlining its vision as:

> a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance. (ibid., 2013, p3)

Significantly, the report highlights the importance of *space* development to nurture and improve inter-community relations. The central aim to create shared and safe places highlights the move from 'contested space to shared space' (ibid., 2013, p. 27) as an important step in establishing an open and accessible environment, where all individuals feel safe, an ambition echoed in reports previous to this. However, physically translating the goal of open and accessible 'shared space' into the urban environment has proved to be an ongoing challenge. Some of the fundamental concepts are still lacking a robust, clear and (importantly) agreed definition. Clarity on idealistic common phrases such as 'shared society', 'shared living', 'shared space' is essential in order to translate ambition into reality.

Evidence of a 'shared society' is witnessed in the built landscape through projects aimed to deliberately facilitate inter-community interaction. One example of this is reflected in the education sector, as it has seen the expansion of the integrated schools models throughout Northern Ireland, a system which places emphasis on the individuality of the child, and on learning together with all individuals, regardless of religious background, and importantly working side by side in the same space. While demand for integrated education gained momentum over time, the number of 62 integrated schools is relatively low in comparison to single faith schools (NICIE, 2014). While 2014 witnessed the approval to proceed with the building of two new integrated primary schools, namely Drumlins IPS in Ballynahinch and Row Valley IPS in Limavady, this is set against the shared campus model, which appears to have more political backing, as the softer and less contentious route to education's contribution to a shared society. The shared campus model opts for schools remaining separate while sharing facilities and some learning opportunities. This raises a fundamental question: *by building this model, does this legitimise a segregated school system and thereby continue to institutionalise division in children's formative years?*

Thus, while initiatives like A Shared Future (2005) and Cooperation, Sharing and Integration (2013) suggest that community relations have been at the heart of the policy agenda for over a decade, Life & Times data reflect considerable variation in the public's view on community relations progress. Equally, their fragility is starkly revealed by the way in which local incidents can take on regional significance – the Flags protests or 'marching' stand-offs.

**Over the past 20 years, devolution has produced a deal and trade-off arrangement rather than reconciliation, and this 'deal process' rather than 'peace process' is itself reflective of the sectarian power blocs, further empowered by the Good Friday Agreement.**

Marred with stalled 'talks' and inability to achieve real change, ineffective leadership is coupled with lack of governmental 'good relations', which at this high level offers little to encourage the wider population watching in dismay as repeated forms of sectarian stalemate paralyse political progress. While the move from violence to negotiation is important, the move from negotiation to stagnant 'talks' questions how a new 'shared society' can be nurtured.

Reflective of outside support to foster Northern Ireland's peace process and promote a new 'shared society' are the significant external funding schemes aimed to nurture reconciliation. The EU acts as a primary investing body delivering key programmes such as:

- **PEACE Programme**:  This programme "aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society... promoting cross-community relations and understanding in order to create a more cohesive society." (SEUPB, 2014, p.1);

- **INTERREG Programmes**:  Divided into three strands: 1. INTERREG VA (Crossborder) aims to "bring adjacent cross-border regions closer together through the development of joint projects."

2. INTERREG VB (Transnational) aims to "aim to promote a higher degree of territorial integration, with a view to achieving sustainable, harmonious and balanced development across the EU and better territorial integration across the EU and non-EU Member States."

3. INTERREG VC (Interregional Co-operation): aims to "to improve the implementation of regional development policies and Programmes, in particular the Programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and other ETC Programmes." (SEUPB, 2016b, p.1);

- **European Social Fund Programme:** The European Social Fund (ESF) Programme strategic aim "is to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity and to increase the skills base." (DEL, 2015, p.1);

- **ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme:** This programme's strategic objective, "is to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and high levels of employment and productivity." (DETI, 2015, p.7).
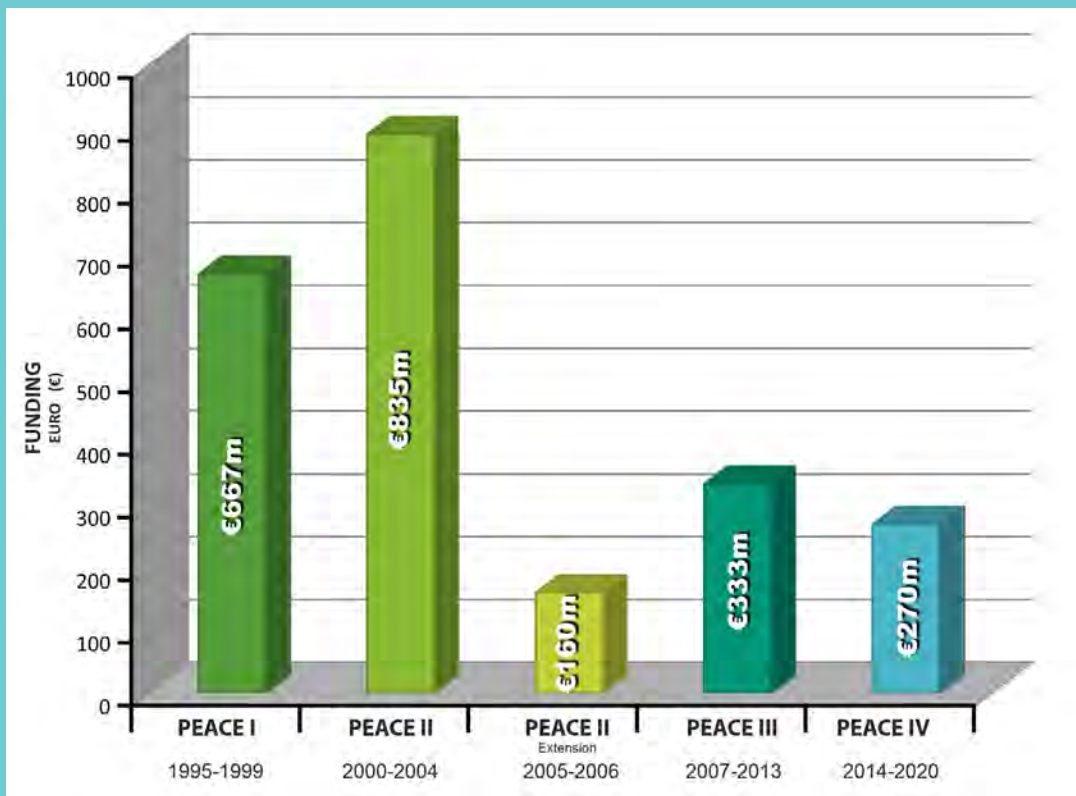


Figure 3:  PEACE Funding, Total programme value 2015-2020
Data Source:  SEUPB 2016a

The 'PEACE programme' alone has invested a total of £1.995 billion from 1995 to 2013, with a further future investment of £270 million planned for 2014 to 2020 (SEUPB, 2014a). However, despite the substantial revenue received to support peace, development and reconciliation from these primary financial streams, the deep signatures of division persist, and these chasms continue to block policy progress.

In part, the problem reflects the complicated debate about victimhood, grievance and blame. More, the expression of what is regarded as 'legitimate' culture and history by one side is seen as triumphalist assault by the other – Orange marches or IRA commemorations. Given that identity politics and culture wars have been the norm since the state's foundation, Northern Ireland might be said to have prefigured some of the complexities of contemporary UK politics.

Yet, at the same time, it's hard to ignore the extent to which the architecture of the Good Friday settlement has, itself, helped perpetuate division. The logic of the agreement has been straightforward:

- **First**, since the fundamental dispute has been about sovereignty, embed a principle of consent regarding the future constitutional status of the area. While tactically necessary, this may have been strategically dubious, since it established a permanent contest over the future of the state, albeit via votes rather than guns. At one point, we saw this as positive, arguing that, since neither side could command a permanent majority, it made sense to engage in 'smart pluralism' in pursuit of one's own political goals, i.e. persuade Catholics that a better future lies in the UK (for which there is some support in Life & Times) or Protestants that they have nothing to fear from a United Ireland. Moreover, this would enable Unionists (being serious about their declared principle of 'civil and religious liberty') and Nationalists (to embrace their declared tradition of uniting Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter) to each reach for a more inclusive form of politics beyond their sectarian comfort-zone. Such optimism has proved unfounded, partly to do with calculations about how demographic change could ultimately deliver a majority anyway, or fears that reaching out to the 'other' could create internal bloc divisions. Thus, the contest has not 'gone away'. Instead, it is being conducted in different forms, which privilege intra-community coherence and discipline over open and honest inter-community engagement;

- **Second**, there has been an objective to ensure that minorities cannot be overwhelmed by majorities, by installing a set of protective procedures within the Assembly's operation. Again, while necessary, this obviates the need to build coalitions or to persuade others outside your traditional fold. In effect, it freezes political debate, sustaining rather than undermining bloc politics;

- **Finally**, there has been an imperative to obtain maximum participation in politics (rather than the alternative). Hence, the very large number of assembly members for a very small population, the creation of ten (ultimately 11) departments of state, and the absence of an effective parliamentary opposition. In the midst of this complexity, political debate tends to be factional and partisan.

**In short, policies to build a shared society are overseen by institutions, whose own architecture fundamentally sustains division. Evolution of a different set of political procedures and processes may thus be a pre-condition for tackling community division.**

# Continuing Equality Disputes

## The Labour Market

Meanwhile, debate about whether inter-communal inequalities have been resolved or, indeed reversed, lingers. Historically, the debate centred on labour market inequalities, an arena where change is evident. When the project began, evidence on labour market differentials pointed to converging trends, though still important differences in unemployment and economic activity rates. For example, the Labour Market Survey 2011 revealed that:

- Over the period 1992 to 2011, the numbers of those in employment from both communities has increased. The rate of this increase has been more marked among Roman Catholics (an increase of 123,000 or 63%) than Protestants (an increase of 7,000 or 2%) (p.27);

- Approximately one in five Protestant males of working age (19%) were economically inactive in 2011, compared to 24% of Roman Catholic males. Thirty-five percent of Roman Catholic females of working age were economically inactive, compared to 32% of Protestant females (p.16);

- The proportion of economically active Protestants in employment increased by 2 percentage points, compared to an increase of 10 percentage points for Roman Catholics (1992-2011). Similarly, the proportion of economically active Protestants unemployed decreased by 2 percentage points, compared to a decrease of 10 percentage points for Roman Catholics (p.14);

- In terms of absolute numbers, the period 1990 to 2011 saw an increase of 32,000 Protestants of working age (6%), an increase of 120,000 Roman Catholics (32%), and an increase of 80,000 other / non determined religion 150% (p.6). In 2011 the composition of the unemployed was 48% Protestant and 52% Roman Catholic. Comparable figures for 1992 were 45% and 55% (p.22);

- Over the period 1993 to 2011, the percentage of Roman Catholics with no qualifications has decreased from 32% to 14%, and the percentage of Protestants with no qualifications has decreased from 30% to 16% (p.34); and

- In 2011, the Protestant median hourly wage rate was £8.74, compared with £9.38 for Roman Catholics. In 1995, the wage rate differential was 0.96. In other words, the Roman Catholic median wage rate was 96% that of Protestants. In 2011, the wage differential was 1.07 (p.31).

Yet, by 2014, the picture had further evolved as follows:

- Between 1990 and 2014, the number of Protestants aged 16 and over rose by 35,000, or 5%, to 678,000, while for Catholics this number increased by 150,000, or 34%, to 590,000, while those categorised as 'other/non-determined' nearly trebled from 63,000 to 170,000. Taking the 2011 Census data, there were 618,000 Protestants aged 16 and over in Northern Ireland, compared to 567,000 Catholics, and 247,000 assessed as 'other/non-determined', making for 43% of those aged 16 and over as Protestant, 40% as Catholic, and 17% denoted as 'other/non-determined';

- Consistently over the period 1992 and 2014, Catholics have held higher rates of working age economic inactivity than Protestants. However, these rates have converged significantly: in 1992, 24% of working age Protestants were economically inactive compared to 34% of working age Catholics, while in 2014 the corresponding figures were 28% and 29% respectively;

- With respect to employment over this period, a higher share of working age Protestants has been in work relative to their Catholic counterparts, a gap that has reduced to a great degree: in 1992, 70% of working age Protestants and 54% of working age Catholics were in employment, whereas by 2014, these rates became 67% and 66% respectively, almost the same;

- Again, while over this period, Catholics have held higher rates of unemployment than Protestants, there has been a closing gap in the absolute disparity between unemployment rates for both communities -- from nine percentage points in 1992 to two percentage points in 2014. In 1992, the unemployment rate was 9% for Protestants and double that for Catholics (18%). By 2014, these rates had fallen to 6% and 8%, respectively, a notable change; and

- Taking a similar period (1993 to 2014), the percentage of working age economically active Protestants with no qualifications has fallen from 30% to 12%, while the percentage of working age economically active Catholics with no qualifications has decreased from 32% to 12%, bringing both communities to the same level.

This transformation has been the result of both structural change and a comprehensive legal framework for fair employment. Claims of reverse discrimination are not supported by the most recent labour market data. Voices from the Protestant community complaining about the changes have to recognise that they only redress historic long term disadvantage suffered by Catholics. By the same token, those on the Catholic side who continue to complain that nothing significant has changed - have to recognise that they have substantially gained from labour market reforms over the last decade.

Simultaneously, the evidence allows one community to perceive it is on the wrong side of history, and that things have gone too far, while the other claims that equality has not yet been fully realised. The latter is reinforced by the data on spatial deprivation (www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk) where the Relative Poverty 2003/05 and Multiple Deprivation Measures 2001, 2005, 2010 suggest that the most deprived areas are more likely to have populations predominantly of Catholic, rather than Protestant, Community Background. The Family Resources Survey (www.dsdni.gov.uk) is used to generate Households Below Average Income reports that also provide evidence of income poverty. The 2002-03 Report found that 22% of households with a Catholic head had incomes of 60% or less than the median (after housing costs), compared to 20% for Protestants. In the 2012 report, the respective figures were 23% and 15%, implying a relative deterioration for households with a Catholic head. Even if the reports are not consistent (though both used OECD equivalence scales), the latter continues to provide evidence of persistent relative income disadvantage for Catholics, although much of this may be related to household structure rather than substantial income differentials.

## Educational Performance

An issue of considerable concern of late has been educational under-performance of sections of the Protestant community, particularly young urban Protestant males from disadvantaged backgrounds (eligible for free school meals), and this has important implications for the equality debate. In part, this is a reflection of more

general trends that are not exclusive to Northern Ireland – gender differentials in educational performance, the 'hollowing out' of labour markets that eradicate certain traditional occupational trajectories once suited for male apprenticeships. However, in Northern Ireland, evidence points to under-achievement of this group compared even to their Catholic counterparts. If such differences are sustained and translated into systematic labour market disadvantage, then the perception that the equality 'pendulum has swung too far' will be dramatically reinforced.

Catholic pupils are generally more successful in obtaining a place in a Grammar school than their Protestant counterparts (42.8% of Catholic pupils vs 30.8% of Protestant, 2012/2013) which may be the decisive factor in accounting for differences by religion. The CRC Peace Monitoring Report (Nolan, CRC, 2014, p.97) breaks down the performance data by gender, religion, and free school meals entitlement outlined in Figure 4.

The implications of such differences, in a labour market that is increasingly divided between those with high level and those with no qualifications, are substantial. However, figures from the Department of Education on achievement of 5 GCSEs A-C, 2011-12 suggest a more complicated picture, although the comparison is not exact, since they cover attainment for any GCSEs A-C. Even so, when the data are standardised not just by gender and free school meals eligibility, but also by grammar/non-grammar category, the differences appear less stark. For example, Protestant boys in non-grammar schools, eligible for free school meals, had a 30.7% achievement rate, compared to 43.3% for their Catholic counterparts – a smaller difference, but one that still needs to be explained. The inclusion of English and Maths in the GCSE set seems to reveal a performance difference in itself. Differential distributions between grammar and secondary schools – Catholic boys eligible for free school meals seem more likely than similarly entitled Protestant boys to attend grammar schools – is a complicating factor.

Second, percentages can conceal significant differences in the actual numbers. Thus, the number of Protestant boys eligible for free school meals was considerably smaller than Catholic boys – 590 compared to 1251 in 2011-12
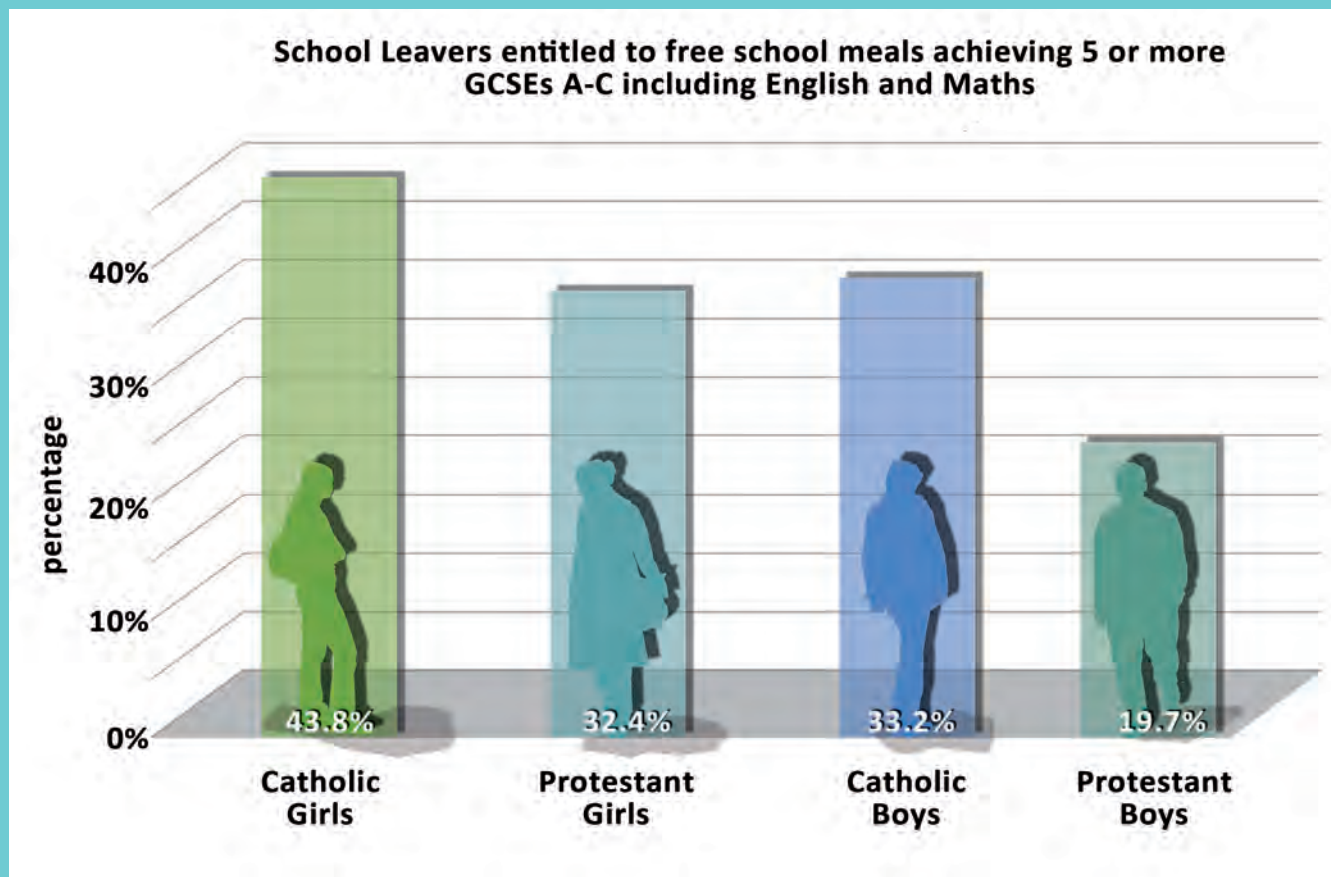
Figure 4: Chart showing gender and religious breakdown for school leavers entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs A-C including English and Maths (Grammar schools tend to have GCSE English Language and Maths as compulsory subjects). Source: Peace Monitoring Report 2014

(13% and 22% of their respective cohorts). Moreover, just 62 Protestant boys eligible for free school meals were in grammar schools compared to 212 Catholic boys. The achievement rate in GCSEs for Catholic boys is thus influenced by their larger sample size, and the greater number in grammar rather than non-grammar schools. If one takes two samples of different sizes from two similar ranked distributions, the mean of the larger sample will be closer to the population mean. When these samples are differently distributed between grammar and non-grammar schools (the real divide within the Northern Ireland education system), differences in achievement are further exacerbated.

The relative importance of a socially, as compared to religiously, divided education system is emphasised by data released recently by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation,  showing that around 60% of boys eligible for free school meals (FSM) do not achieve five good GCSEs, in stark contrast with 30% of those ineligible -- double the level. While for girls, the corresponding figure for non-achievement is lower at 51%, the gap between their

performance and that of girls not FSM- eligible (22% non-achievement) is greater than that of the difference among boys (New Policy Institute, 2016).

Though in general, grammar school attainment levels on this core criterion are significantly better than those of the non-grammar schools, in each type, FSM-eligible pupils perform poorer than their 'non-eligible' counterparts. This disparity is more evident in the non-grammar sector, in which nearly two thirds (65%) of FSM-eligible pupils do not get five good GCSEs, compared with under half (47%) for non-eligible pupils. Yet, a deprived background still makes a difference even among grammar school pupils, with those entitled to free school meals more than twice as likely to lack five good GCSEs as other pupils – 10% compared with 4%. Poverty matters in educational attainment.

Indeed, this marked distinction between grammar and non-grammar carries on in the pattern of post-school education. Close to 90% of boys and girls leaving grammar schools proceed to further or higher education, as against 61 % of boys and 74% of girls from other schools. In turn,

this different trajectory plays out further in labour market destination, with non-grammar school leavers being around twice as likely to be unemployed or in an unknown category – around 7% of boys and girls compared with 3% of corresponding grammar school pupils.

None of this suggests the absence of a problem, but one that is more complicated than at first sight. Quite simply, Catholic boys are more likely to be eligible for free school meals than Protestant boys – the higher benefits dependency of the (non-pensioner) Catholic population ensures that. Equally, 3.7% of Catholic boys in the free school meals group are in Grammar schools compared to 1.3% of their Protestant counterparts, and this has implication for the relative success rates of both.

At the same time, there seems to be little appreciation among Unionist leaders that the educational performance of Protestant pupils, a pre-requisite for their future effective participation in the economic system, is increasingly falling behind the Northern Irish average. In fact, the insistence of mainstream Unionism on the maintenance of the existing division between grammar and secondary school only seems to add to the relative disadvantageous socio-economic position of their working class electorate.

In linking data on educational outcome with that on deprivation, circumspection regarding the complexity is necessary. For instance, reservation about methodology that uses MDM scores to select 'deprived' wards for study is warranted. MDM is heavily weighted towards working age benefits dependency (50%), thereby tending to 'favour' populations that are reliant on such benefits. Moreover, in the case of assessing impact of deprivation within each of the two main communities, there is a problem in applying this 'one-size-fits-all' measure to two populations with different demographic characteristics. If a simpler income measure of poverty is used, there is no relationship with religion for 'non-equivalised' households, but a systematic relationship for 'equivalised' households. In short, being in poverty is more dependent on household structure that comparative income. Arguably, Catholic and Protestant areas that have similar deprivation scores can be actually quite different.

Another well-versed argument is that Protestant disadvantage is a consequence of the operation of Loyalist paramilitaries – inferring a particularly significant role

for the black economy in Protestant working class areas. This supposes that there are much less paramilitary and drug dealing operations in counterpart Catholic areas -- a proposition for which convincing evidence remains deficient. Yet another explanation offered is that academic education has never been an ambition for the Protestant working class, since another route was available through apprenticeships for engineering and shipbuilding employment, a pathway now blocked due to deindustrialisation in such manufacturing sectors. By contrast, it has been suggested that Catholic educational motivation has been kindled by their keenness to circumvent job discrimination through scholarly achievement. One sceptical note in this discourse stems from counter-narratives that people who lost such jobs didn't actually become long-term unemployed, but rather became reabsorbed in the labour market quite quickly. Indeed, were it not for the extraordinary growth of the Northern Ireland public sector, Catholic participation in employment would still fall short of Protestant. It's hard to surmise that these enterprising, redundant Protestant workers have not passed on some of that resourcefulness to their children.

What seems obvious, however, is the need to advance educational opportunity for all those communities suffering from high levels of deprivation. A number of interventions, such as the 'sure start' programme, have brought significant successes in this context. However, research from elsewhere, suggests that early gains need to be developed and sustained throughout the overall educational experience.

While there may be grains of truth in these familiar commentaries, that could benefit from deeper investigation, such discussion, if left at a very generalised level, risks a simplistic binary tale taking hold: relative Protestant working class educational under-performance attributable to 'smart' Catholic and 'dumb' Protestant culture, paralleling the caricature of smart republicanism and stupid Unionism. Thus, since the politics of the 'irreformable' Northern Ireland state has had to be abated, since nationalists are now embedded in it, the idea may be insinuated of an irreformable, though sizeable, chunk of the Protestant working class population. Irreformability, in these terms, can come to mean that a section of the population is beyond rational redemption, a proposition that would be very problematic for an inclusive society.

In summary, our data analysis in relation to educational attainment reveals three interesting things:

- Even when disaggregated by school type, there are differences in performance, but less so than often suggested. But, the difference remains and needs to be explained;

- A higher proportion of Catholic boys on free school meals are actually in Grammar schools – thus, a comparison that does not differentiate by school type favours Catholic boys;

- The size of the Catholic boys sample was much bigger than that of Protestant boys. If two samples are taken from the bottom of two ranked distribution, it is simply a matter of arithmetic that the mean of the larger sample will be closer to its population mean, thus exaggerating the degree of difference.

## Sharing Poverty and Deprivation?

In the UK, the usual measure of low income is a threshold set at 60% of the median household income, calculated after deduction of housing costs (AHC) or before (BHC). For policy purpose, the most widely used deprivation indicator has been the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) (www.nisra.gov.uk), particularly in allocating resources across space for the Peace and Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes. It has been produced on a consistent basis since 2001, reproduced in 2005 and 2010. Since it offers an MDM score for small geographies like Super Output Areas (SOAs), it is possible to explore the association between MDM and the religious background of the same areas. With the 2005 version, the correlation coefficient between MDM scores and the percentage of the population of Religion or Religion Brought Up In: Catholic (2001 Census) was 0.4. For Religion or Religion Brought Up In: Protestant the correlation coefficient was -0.4.

In short, the higher percentage of a population of Catholic Community Background, the higher the MDM score. A similar association was found between MDM 2010 and 2011 Census data (0.38 and -0.38) on religious background. Thus, the statistical association between religious background and MDM was consistent over this period, and suggested a likelihood of higher deprivation scores in areas with greater concentrations of Catholics.

Simultaneously, the 20% of SOAs with highest deprivation scores had disproportionately populations of Catholic background – a result that hasn't changed much over time.

However, these findings are less straightforward than they appear:

- A correlation coefficient of 0.4 means that one variable (religion) predicts about 16% of the variance of the other (MDM). Thus, religion explains a very small share of the total variance of MDM;

- Second, the two domains within MDM that have the most weight are the Income and Employment domains, accounting for 50% of the total. If one section of a population is more benefit dependent than another, it will automatically appear more deprived on this measure. Unless benefit dependency is automatically associated with less command over resources, there may thus be a bias towards one section of the population. It's difficult to have a rational discussion about this issue, because of the moral panic and stigma stirred up by sections of the popular press about claimants in general, aided and abetted by significant members of the UK government. However, a further piece of evidence throws some light on this issue. There is another measure (the Relative Poverty Measure 2003-05) which has scores for the same geographies as MDM. This provides an estimate of the percentage of households with incomes less than 60% of the median (the most widely used EU poverty measure). Interestingly, it provides scores for both equivalised and non-equivalised households. The correlation coefficients for religious background for equivalised households mirror those of 2005 and 2010 MDM, but there is no similar association for non-equivalised households.

Figure 5 depicts SOAs (Until April 2015 Belfast was made up of 150 SOAs) with populations 75% or more of a particular community background in three datasets: Relative Poverty 2003-05, MDM 2005 and MDM 2010. For each, community background percentages have been calculated from both 2001 and 2011 Censuses. The table refers to the 30 most deprived/poor and the 30 least deprived/poor SOAs in the city – the top and bottom quintiles.

It can be seen that SOAs with populations 75% or more of Catholic Community Background figure prominently in the most deprived/poorest quintile – being between two and three times more likely to be included than those with populations with 75% or more of Protestant Community Background. This is in contrast to the least deprived/poor quintiles, where SOAs of 75% plus of Catholic Community Background are fewer than those of Protestant majority background. In short, inter-community inequalities do remain a concerning feature of the deprivation landscape. It should be noted that the relative poverty data show a greater imbalance between the two communities than the deprivation data.

One qualification to the above: when the highest quintile of the Relative Poverty (unequivalised) dataset for Belfast is identified, the inter-community ratios shift. For example, the poorest quintile had 10 SOAs of 75% or more Catholic Community Background and 18 of 75% or more of Protestant Community Background. The difference reflects the use of equivalence scales. Differences between those of Catholic and Protestant Community Background may be more to do with household characteristics rather than income. However, household characteristics remain important since larger households with similar incomes to smaller still have greater poverty risk.



Figure 5: SOAs with 75% or More of a Single Community Background in Three Deprivation Studies.
Source: Relative Poverty Measure, 2003-05, MDM 2005, MDM 2010, Northern Ireland Census 2001 and Northern Ireland Census 2011.

This suggests that the differences between households of different religious background are not simply of income, but are also to do with composition – more dependents make for higher levels of need and therefore greater poverty levels.

Indeed, as the 2012 Labour Force Religion Report notes (p.14): 'In 2012, 18% of Catholic households had one dependent child, compared to 12% of Protestant households. Twelve percent of Catholic households had two dependent children compared to 11% of Protestant households. In addition, Catholic households were twice as likely to have three dependent children as Protestant households (6% v 3%)'. It is impossible to ignore the higher levels of need generated by more dependents in the calculation of poverty measures. But again, this may be unconvincing to those simply comparing their own incomes to others.

At Northern Ireland level, the Family Resources Survey (www.dsdni.gov.uk) is used to generate Households Below Average Income reports that provide the most comprehensive evidence of income poverty. The 2002-03 Report found that 22% of households with a Catholic head had incomes of 60% or less than the median (after housing costs) compared to 20% for Protestants. In the 2012 report, the respective figures were 23% and 15%, implying a relative deterioration for households with a Catholic head. Even if the reports are not consistent (though both used OECD equivalence scales), the latter continues to provide evidence of persistent relative disadvantage for Catholics. However, since the data also refer to equivalised households, the cautions expressed above continue to apply.

In short, the equality debate remains complicated. In a question asked in the Life & Times Survey in 2003, 56% of Catholics felt that Protestants were 'better treated', while 41% of Protestants felt that Catholics were 'better treated'. While policy makers and academics may ponder on the meaning of change, it is experienced by people living in communities and both influences, and is influenced by, the narratives by which they give meaning to their lives.

The complicated interplay of political, economic and social forces are frequently bewildering in themselves. For those most affected, the result is rarely a positive embrace of openness, sharing or collaboration. In 1998, 75% of Catholics and 53% of Protestants felt that relations between the two communities would improve in the next five years - in 2013, the respective figures were 46 and 35 % (NILT, 1998, 2013).

It should also be recognised that the decade following 1998 was one in which Northern Ireland enjoyed considerable economic growth and substantial increases in public spending, accompanied by external investment in peace. In short, the economic environment was favourable to the region. However, since 2008, that environment has radically changed. In 2014, GDP in England was about 10% higher than in 2010, in Scotland the increase was 7% – yet Northern Ireland experienced a three% fall in its Composite Economic Index (a surrogate for GDP) (www.detini.gov.uk). A study by the Resolution Foundation (2015) found that Northern Ireland suffered the biggest decline in real-terms median net household income between 2007 and 2014 of all UK regions. The full implementation of austerity during the current UK parliament has yet to be felt in the region, though the impact of the impasse over welfare reform has had a negative impact on other services.

A lower spending, income-declining region is likely to see more competition for available resources and more strident claims and counter claims about equality. Despite these persistent disputes, Northern Ireland has undergone significant transformation in the past two decades – much of it positive. However, the problems that create political volatility (the Flags Protests) or indeed, intractability (Twaddell/Ardoyne) are more than just residual – remnants of a past that needs to be put behind us. They are the consequence of an evolving situation that creates new fissures and new points of contest. Some are about the ways in which general social change appears in particular forms in the region and are interpreted according to local peculiarities. Some are the consequences of a reformed political system in which, inevitably, there will be winners and losers. One of the factors behind continuation of communal strife is the perceived imbalanced distribution of the peace dividend among the two main communities:

it is especially the lower income Protestant communities that feel left out, when it comes to job allocation and socio-economic mobility. While the sources of populist Protestant discontent are discernible, a more equitable labour market is a pre-requisite of a fairer Northern Ireland. Yet, although change over the past two decades has led to very similar Catholic and Protestant unemployment and economic inactivity rates, Catholics have benefited from the majority of job opportunities – circumstances capable of sustaining contradictory grievances. It is in such a contested environment that peace-building struggles to prevail.

## Paradoxes of Peace Building

Einstein's famed definition of insanity involves doing the same thing repeatedly, while irrationally expecting that the next time will somehow produce different results. When it comes to tackling deprivation and the linked issue of good relations between the contending tribes in Northern Ireland, that's exactly what has been happening for 40 years. Evidence of limited impact suggests that we need to stop, reassess, and try something very different. The intractable persistence of urban poverty, social and religious residential segregation, and related territorial contests confirm this imperative.

Peace-building confronts a set of central paradoxes in divided societies. On the one hand, there is need to do something practical and immediate. Yet, intervention is addressing a protracted problem that invites the hesitancies and uncertainties that attend complex analysis. Such conflicts call for *risk*. Indeed, how do you provoke real change without being really provocative? It is essential to 'disturb the peace' of conventional thinking and comfort zones to create a sustainable and genuine peace. Yet, blunt words and deeds, in a highly partisan society, risk being cast



Visual displays of 'community': Loyalist mural on the lower Newtownards Road, Belfast...



...Republican mural off the Oldpark Road, Belfast...



...and Gay Pride Festival in Belfast city centre.

as biased. To survive such accusation, advocates of change and *renewal* need to build relationships of trust across the borders of division. Yet, such *relationships* cannot be purchased at the price of surrendering pluralist values in the face of narrow ethnic interest. So, these 3Rs of **risk**, **renewal** and **relationship** form the inescapable landscape of peace-building. In negotiating this tricky terrain, appealing to people's needs may be more productive than appealing to their good nature.

Moreover, the basic supposition of traditional anti-prejudice programmes is that the *consonance* generated through contact and communication across the divide can over time dilute the *dissonance* of bigotry and 'tribal' hostility. But, this faith in the power of 'mutual understanding' runs counter to evidence suggesting that the more common interests are proclaimed in these circumstances, the more significant becomes the *marginal* differences (Ignatieff, 1999). It is a version of Freud's *'narcissism of minor difference'*, whereby people who can share a lot in common by way of language, physical appearance, broadly similar religious narratives such as Christianity, residence of the same city, and similar socio-political culture can accentuate the relatively minor divergences between them as the rationale for internecine hostility. The association involved in extravagant group attachment becomes countered with dissociation from the 'outsider' group, who need to be kept

at arm's length, as the threat of the strange is juxtaposed with the comfort of the similar and familiar.

> **In other words, paradoxically, efforts to emphasise close resemblance may inadvertently accentuate rather than ameliorate the defining division between protagonists, who feel more compelled to amplify those aspects which most place them apart and justify their warring tribalism. Thus, the plausible idea of replacing cultural distance and ethnic enmity with the relational empathy of a 'shared humanity' underestimates this tendency to 'marginal difference'.**

Another approach is to supplant the 'ethnic' nationalism that emphasises blood and kin, linguistic and cultural roots, and the mythical history that binds the collective tribe, with a 'civic' nationalism that recognises a multi-ethnic society built on citizenship, responsibilities, and the protection of individual rights and liberties. Three main arguments can be advanced to illustrate the difficulties of this shift:

First, while a 'civic' society infers institutions and governance constructed around shared meaning and memory among citizenry, from a *post-modernist* perspective, unitary and universalist concepts such as 'common rights' do not exist independent of diverse cultural interpretation and social contingency. From this relativist position, the



Hate crime targeting a racial minority community.

very assumption that divisions can be even commonly understood, never mind resolved, ignores the lack of an agreed moral compass to guide not only mediation and reconciliation, but also basic standards of 'civilised' behaviour. Moreover, while it is often advocated that contesting parties in the conflict should learn to behave 'reasonably', this appeal to *reason* again underestimates a post-modernist loss of faith in rationality, alongside a greater respect for 'multiple realities' and the emotive impulses of the human condition.

Second, when unitary concepts like citizenship confront splintered realities like contested identity and territory, it highlights the importance of *power inequalities* in determining the outcomes of disputed definitions. Thus, the notion that a civic society can be built through collaborative discourse between rival ethno-nationalist interests underestimates the paradox that such peace-building actually invites each side to demonstrate their power, since 'flexing their muscle' can lever negotiations in their favour. In short, peace processes are at once energising and dangerous because they can elevate levels of both hope and harm. In addition, while progress out of violent conflict demands creation of safe spaces for democratic dialogue, that engagement itself has to contend with contradictions within the liberal democratic framework offered for such conversation:

- On the one hand, it extols respect for cultural diversity and related special treatment of different groups, while on the other, it upholds universal principles about similar rights and equalities across the whole of society;
- Its practice of equal opportunity is compromised by market and other inequities that structurally disadvantage groups around factors such as gender, class, race and ethnic identity;
- Behind the banner of universal franchise lies the reality of differential power, based on these socio-economic disparities; and
- Its response to ethnic violence even when based on a cross-community consensus can risk a self-fulfilling cycle, whereby insurgent violence provokes state repression, itself prompting violent reaction that induces more repression, which in turn can be exploited to justify ever more aggressive resistance. Yet, if the state fails to offer appropriate security, it

invites formation of vigilante militias in the noble name of 'community defence', and this bind between being both delicate and decisive in dealing with armed urban conflict can be manipulated by those intent on accentuating it.

Third, appeals to respect diversity assume some core binding common identity that permits appreciation that those who are different from us are also in some important sense like us, and the concept of *citizenship* is often employed for this unifying purpose. Yet, as indicated earlier, it is problematic to use the idea of shared 'citizenship' in an environment (like Northern Ireland) lacking *shared sovereignty*, where the fundamental contest is not over the nature of the state, but rather over its very existence. In such a situation, reformist agendas to improve equity and diversity can become confused with revolutionary agendas to fundamentally re-arrange constitutional authority.

Some of the above tensions can be seen in the way that peace-building processes, designed to address the contest become bound up in that very contest. Controversy over the differential funding and resources allocated to each side of the divided community provides one stark reflection of this. In a situation where there are socio-economic inequalities, *parity* of treatment is not the same thing as *uniformity* of treatment. The side in more social need needs more compensatory resources. Yet, non-uniformity of resource allocation will invite claims of partisanship by the side receiving less.

Such considerations demonstrate the complexity of peace-building in deeply divided societies. Within such a vexatious context, a distinctive contribution that can be made by a proactive form of planning is the privileging of shared and safe places for inter-communal dialogue and intra-communal choices and dissent. Division involves not only political and cultural options *beyond* the traditional divide, but also the extension of scope for peaceful democratic difference and dispute *within* each main tradition. One model of this can be a form of planning that deliberately facilitates a multiplicity, hybridity and fluidity of identity, within a framework of common civic belonging, however fragile the latter may be in a contested society. Many of these dilemmas can be seen in the planning and development of Belfast, which captures a clear spatial imprint of the layers of contested history.

**The new Titanic building sitting within the old shipyard landscape.**

# Belfast: The Changing City

A century ago, Belfast was in many respects a *global* city, but one debilitated internally by a *parochial* contest around ethno-national identity between its two main communities: Protestant (Unionist with Britain) and Catholic (Nationalist with the rest of Ireland). Demographically, it peaked in the mid-twentieth century, only to shrink dramatically in the subsequent fifty years, and to 'flatline' in the last ten. Accompanying this decline has been a significant re-composition of the religious make-up of its residents, and the combined impact of this population loss and change poses a formidable challenge for a sustainable urbanism in Northern Ireland's capital.

In the 1960s, government reports implicitly acknowledged the inadequacy of existing forms of state intervention, based around subsidy of old industry, to achieve essential economic modernisation (Hall, 1962; Wilson, 1965).

The Matthew report (1963) specifically recommended industrial dispersal from the Belfast Urban Area to a Greater Belfast and beyond to new 'key' and 'growth' centres that could be attractive to the investment of multinational capital. To encourage this demagnetisation of investment and population in Belfast itself, and requisite labour mobility, a stop line on Belfast's further expansion was proposed, together with new town developments that would 'satellite' *around* the city, and the comprehensive physical redevelopment of housing and road networks *within* the city. These studies culminated in the 1969 Belfast Urban Plan, which set the framework for this strategy. Apart from lower density new build housing, land in the inner city was to be designated for major elevated motorways and new commercial development, as it was anticipated that a sizeable share of the more skilled inner city population would 'decant' to suburbs and New Towns.

At one level, the plan met with success. Multinational companies did arrive, and helped diversify an economic base that had become too narrow in terms of regional specialisation. But, they were not interested in occupying the old industrial spaces in the core city. For instance, firms producing the new artificial fibres were not locating in the old urban mills that once weaved the linen. Rather, they sought the single-storey factories that accommodated new

mass assembly intensive production, and these were more economically built in the Greenfield sites beyond the urban centre. Through the seventies and eighties, the economic impact of this strategy in a new globalising context was marked. In the Belfast Urban Area, manufacturing still accounted for one third of jobs in 1971, but a decade later, it was just below a quarter, and the role of the multinational companies in that production declined as they contracted and retreated as part of their global corporate restructuring in that period. The first wave of Belfast's industrialisation lasted 150 years. But, the second wave, largely centred on a strategy of attracting inward investment, lasted more like fifteen.

This process of economic restructuring directly affected Belfast's traditional role as major economic power base of Northern Ireland, a process that was reflected in major changes in the socio-spatial structure of the Belfast region. Major 'pull' and 'push' factors led to a significant urban-rural migration, especially in the seventies and eighties. New investment, employment, and housing were locating beyond the wider suburbs and into New Towns, such as Antrim and Craigavon, in the wider city-region.

'Push' factors included: deindustrialisation and massive housing redevelopment that was spatially concentrated in the most deprived communities of the urban core. The social impact of this haemorrhaging of the city's economic and social base was felt especially in the inner city areas of Belfast, where deindustrialisation meant that the traditional employment bases were eroded and unemployment and poverty became more prevalent. The exodus of people with continued employment to the new satellite towns left behind impoverished communities unable to escape their social position. It were these deprived inner city areas where a combination of social insecurity and traditional inter community rivalries provided the circumstances for the deterioration of relations into the full scale violence associated with the Troubles, which in turn provided further stimulus for people to migrate from the city.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the core city's population was reduced by a third, with its inner city population declining by over half (55%), while the population of the wider
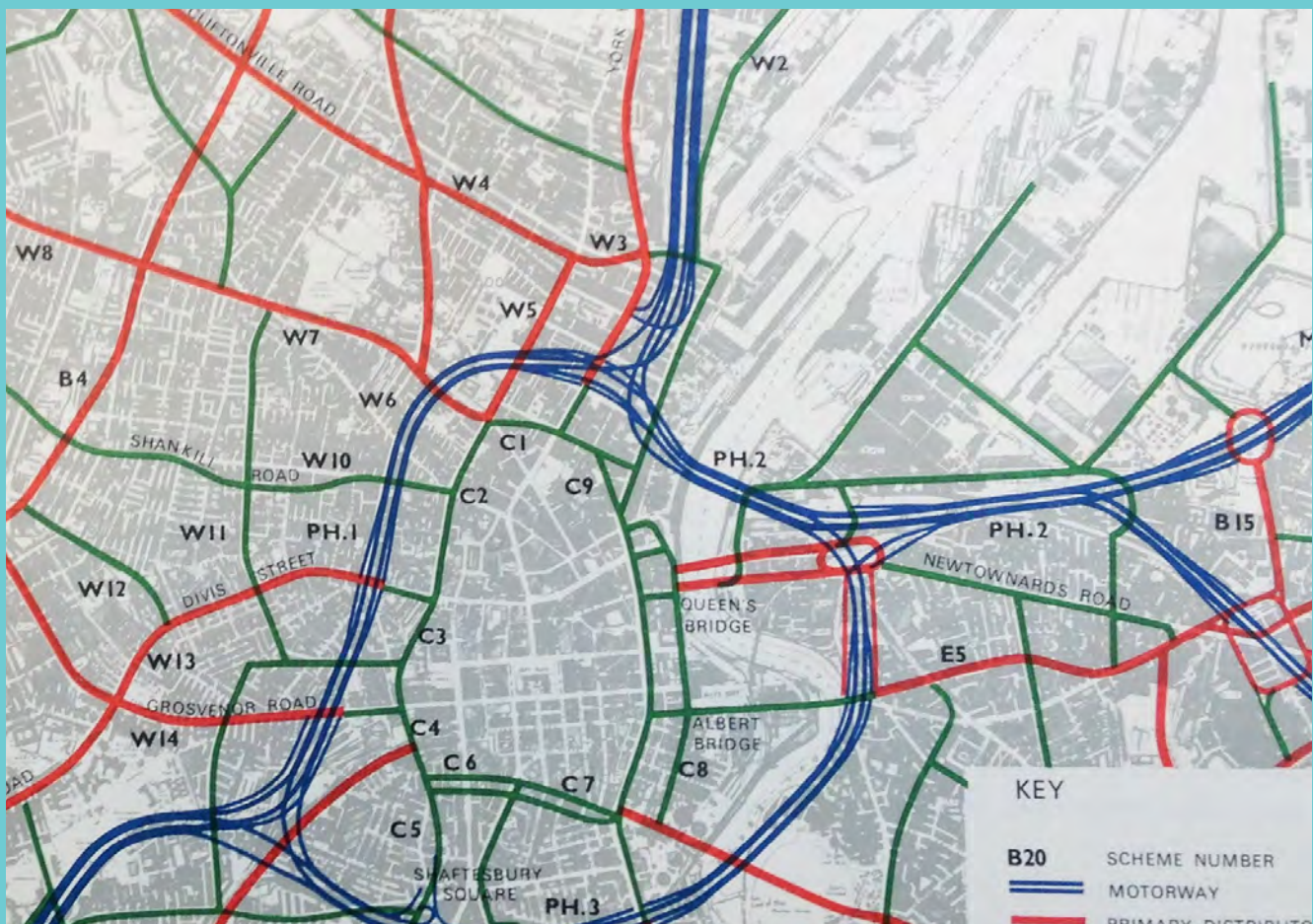
Figure 6: Image of Belfast city centre proposed by 1969 Belfast Transportation Plan.
Source: 1969 Belfast Transportation Plan.  R. Travers Morgan & Partners (1969)

city-region increased by 39%. The population share of the core city of Belfast, relative to its wider urban area, has continuously reduced from 90.2% in 1926 to 55.9% in 2011. Furthermore, in 1951, Belfast had 32% share of the regional population. However, by 2011, this had dropped to half that at 15.5%. The city itself has seen a significant population decline from its peak in 1951 (444,000) to 2011 (280,962), representing a 37% decline. This pattern of shrinking core city, being followed since the 1970s by a shrinking urban area, persists to the present.

## Belfast's Urban Revival

The manufacturing collapse in the 1970s, and an emerging new international division of labour, led some observers to proclaim the inevitability of post-industrialism for much of the global north. Growth in services seemed to offer a life-line to vulnerable urban centres, since many were more labour-intensive than modern manufacturing, and still relied on logistical convenience to main settlement centres. Moreover, a strategy that concentrated on Downtown and Waterfront could help to spatially concentrate the physical transformation and visibly support a re-branding of the city, and provide a counter-attraction to the appeal of out-of-town shopping.

Implementation of major reshaping of social space coincided with the onset of the political violence, thereby complicating the renewal process, by contributing to population shifts into segregated territory for greater security, and related urban blight. By the late seventies,

community protest at the comprehensive redevelopment, the enduring violent conflict, and starker economic times and fiscal retrenchment following the oil crisis and world recession, all combined to induce a re-scaling of some of the proposals. Nevertheless, the broad strategy persisted, but in a region where the tradition of proactive planning was weak. The main legislation supporting the transformation --- the 1944 Planning (Interim Development) Act -- had not delivered an expertise in strategic planning, and proliferation of local government in a small region had not helped to co-ordinate Belfast's development in its regional context (Birrell and Murie, 1980).

In a divided city like Belfast, there were particular putative benefits. Its city centre had suffered the ravages of an intensive bombing campaign by the Provisional IRA during the seventies and into the eighties. Its proposed rehabilitation seemed to offer proper recompense. Since 75% of the region's population was within a 30 mile radius of Belfast's city centre, concentrated effort in its renaissance seemed to be economically sensible. In addition, these new Downtown developments could generate new employment opportunities in a neutral and safe environment for those unemployed who were deterred by a 'chill factor' from seeking work in more partisan city geographies.

The 1989 Belfast Urban Plan marked a significant departure. It was intended to identify and satisfy land development needs of the then most active sectors of a fragile local economy. In particular, this included retailing, leisure, and tourism. A city economy, once based on industrial production, was formally acknowledged as one that would be largely based on services. Essentially, the 1989 Plan was concerned to reclaim the city as a central location for the region's investment in a post-industrial economy:

> *The City Centre plays a major role in the economy of the Urban Area and of the region beyond and the image it presents can reflect upon that much wider area....Current economic trends suggest that the best development opportunities are in shops, offices, and leisure facilities. The City Centre is well placed, due to its size and its scope for expansion, to take advantage of this trend.... (DoE (NI) 1990, 13)*

Accordingly, the main focus was on resuscitating the Central Business District with retail and office expansion, and extending its commercial catchment by opening the city to

its river by the prestigious waterfront Laganside scheme, on the basis that 'improvements to the central area and the Lagan will play a major role in the regeneration and attraction of investment to the urban area as a whole' (Ibid., p.17). As in other cities facing the ravages of industrial and population decline, this strategy seemed to make sense to many key urban stakeholders.

> **So, whereas the 1969 Belfast Urban Plan deliberately tried to de-populate Belfast, its successor two decades later felt compelled to emphasise a 'strategy of developing a strong City Centre and a revitalised Inner City coupled with the retention of population within the urban area....' (Ibid., p. 16).**

At one level, this strategy has been remarkably successful. The transportation/communication infrastructure has seen substantial investment; the city core and riverside have enjoyed major redevelopment, including landmarks like the Victoria Centre, the MAC, and the Titanic building; and a vibrant nightlife and tourist culture have been successfully promoted. For the first time in decades, population of the City Council area increased between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, even if migration was a significant factor.

This was reflected in the headline measure of economic growth (Gross Value Added per Head GVA), in which Belfast steadily out-performed the rest of Northern Ireland. Between 1997 and 2011, the GVA for the Belfast NUTS 111 area (equivalent to the City Council area) almost doubled, compared to just over 60% for the UK as a whole, and was substantially greater than any other Northern Ireland NUTS111 area. Indeed, by 2011, the Belfast GVA in money terms was more than twice as high as any other Northern Ireland area (ONS, 2013).

It is questionable, however, whether the benefits of the city's productivity are appropriately shared with its population, since Gross Disposable Household Income per head remained consistently below that of Outer Belfast and the East of Northern Ireland NUTS 111 areas (ONS 2013). In short, the benefits of its economic growth were disproportionately shared with those living outside the city – understandable given that the number regularly travelling to work in Belfast from outside is almost equal to its working age population (Belfast City Council, 2015).

Moreover, there is evidence that the driver of growth in Belfast has been mainly public spending. In the latest Cities Outlook (Centre for Cities 2015), Belfast was compared with 63 other UK cities. It performed badly (in the worst 10) on indicators like business start ups, patent registration, private/public job ratios and the percentage of the working age population without formal qualifications – hardly evidence of a thriving private sector. Moreover, on the Inequality Indicator (the difference between highest and lowest Job Seeker Allowance rates), it exhibited the highest level of all 64 cities.

The relative generosity of public spending in Northern Ireland has been well documented, though headline differences in spending per head amongst the UK nations don't take account of the region's greater rurality, its higher morbidity rates, greater levels of social housing, and the fact that some of its brightest students go on to work elsewhere, thus contributing to other regional economies. The point here is not to debate fairness, but to emphasise the fragility of a public spending-dependent city in an era in which austerity has become the norm. If the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Green Budget, 2015) is correct in predicting that the plans announced in the 2015 Budget would reduce the public sector to around 35% of National Income, the impact on Northern Ireland as a whole, and Belfast in particular, could be severe, since spending increases in the region are benchmarked to those in England and Wales.

In reports commissioned by OFMDFM, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (2013) had already predicted that in Northern Ireland, relative poverty for children would increase to 29.7% and for working age adults to 25.3% by 2020. Work commissioned by NICVA (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013) suggested that amongst the then 26 district councils, Belfast would have the third highest income loss per head, resulting from Welfare Reform. These changes would have disproportionate impact on particular groups living in particular parts of the city. The implications for anti-poverty measures (a requirement in the new local authority Community Plans) and, indeed, for community relations, most likely will not be positive.

## Changing the Balance

Alongside the rapid changes in the appearance of Belfast's urban environment in the decades since the 1960s, the social composition of its populace has altered significantly. The most notable of these demographic changes is the gradual increase in the proportion of the city's Catholic community, a process that can be traced back through history as far back the late 18th century, when rural-urban migration of Irish peasants appeased Belfast's growing demand for cheap labour for the expanding linen industry. Although the Protestant population has traditionally constituted a majority in the city, a number of factors has contributed to the rise to greater prominence of the Catholic community since the 1970s. These include: a higher birth rate among the Catholic population; the ageing of the Protestant population; and a disproportionate emigration of the Protestant population to surrounding suburban and satellite towns around Belfast and further afield, to Great Britain.

In the early 1990s, the number of Catholics had surpassed the number of people adhering to the three traditional Protestant denominations in the core city of Belfast, a milestone that is partly a result of increasing levels of secularism and the formation of an array of alternative Christian denominations. However, when taking community background as indicator (a Census variable since 2001), which is often considered to be a more realistic measure of the extent of the two communities because it includes people that don't consider themselves to be religious but still part of a community, it becomes clear that:

the city of Belfast - which once had a make-up of two thirds Protestant, one third Catholic - is now seeing a move to a 50/50 balance of the two traditional communities. The same census also shows that the Catholic community dominates the younger age groups, thereby indicating that the Catholic community is likely to constitute a majority in the city of Belfast in the future. At the same time, however, most suburban towns around Belfast are predominantly Protestant, giving rise to a growing urban/suburban dichotomy in terms of community dominance.

Figure 7: Breakdown of Northern Irish population by religion.
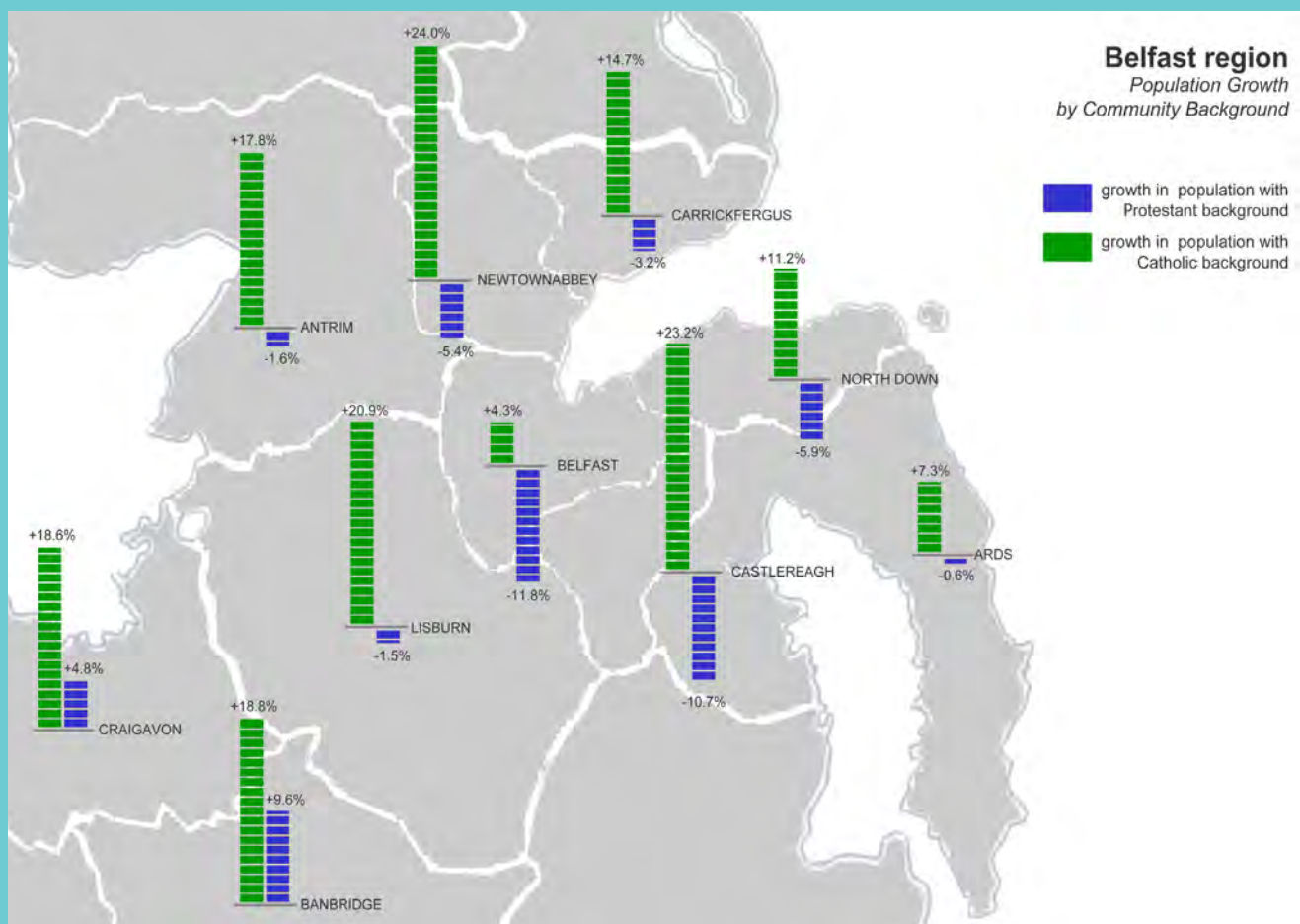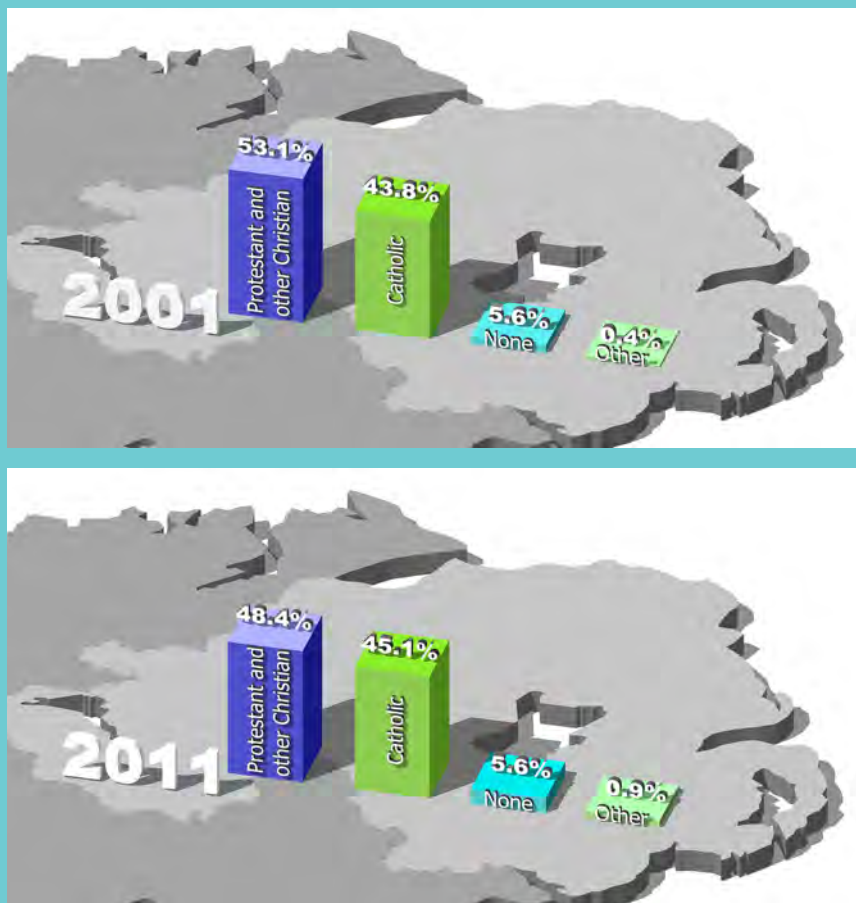Source: 2001 and 2011 censuses.







Figure 8: Population growth between 2001 and 2011 by community background in the Greater Belfast area.
Source: 2001 and 2011 censuses.

The changes in demographic balance of the city are clearly reflected in the political make-up of the city's local government. The traditional dominance of Unionist parties over the city's affairs has been eroded over the last number of elections by the gradual growth of a nationalist bloc, alongside an increase in more neutral parties, such as the Alliance Party, now able to influence the balance of power. Although political differences are not uncommon within both the Unionist and Nationalist blocs, perceived stalemate in political power means that governance of the city has become more complicated, and that both blocs are tempted to tap in and exaggerate differences between the two communities in order to garnish maximum political support. This capacity for *mutually assured impasse* has brought further challenge for processes of reconciliation.

At the same time, however, the traditional political orientation of the two main communities seems to be less prevalent, and opinions about major political issues more diverse, making it more difficult to base politics on the traditional divides. For example, when asked about the issue of national identity, the general public seems to choose from a much wider range of options than the 'Irish' and 'British' options, with both these options attracting a relatively modest reply. Similarly, the numerical support for Irish unification seems to be much less than the size of the Catholic community, which makes up its traditional support base. Both examples indicate that it has become much more difficult to correlate public opinion on major issues to the traditional sectarian divide.
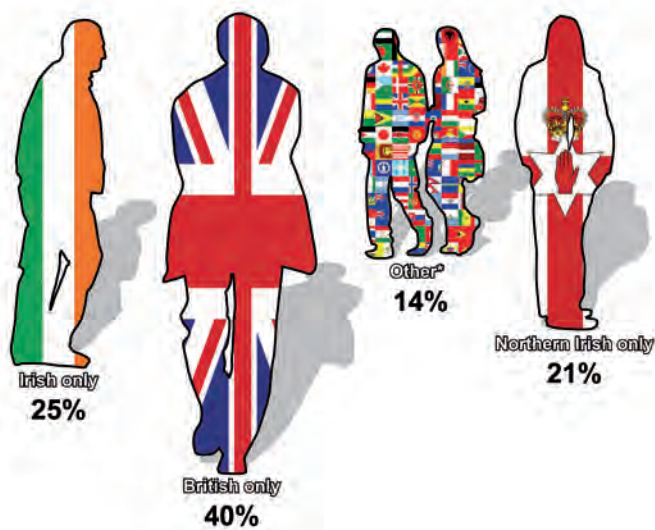


**Figure 9: Individual perception on National Identity.**
**Source: 2011 Census**

Alongside these *internal* changes to the two main communities, there have also been *external* processes prevalent since the signing of the peace deal in 1998 that have impacted significantly on the demographic structure of the city. One such process is the influx of a large number of immigrants that don't belong to either one of the main communities (approximately 10,000 immigrants between 2001 and 2011). Analysis of the 2011 census data reveals that in Belfast (at Super Output Area level) the correlation coefficient between the percentage reporting religion or religion brought up in as none, and the percentage with a country of birth outside the UK or RoI is 0.79 out of 1 (1 indicating a causal relation). Although these immigrants are far from 'empty shells' in terms of cultural backgrounds, their unfamiliarity with the conflict and their relative neutral stance towards sectarian division means they often contribute to a 'softening' of sectarian geographies. In addition, the census data also seem to indicate that most of these immigrants are relatively well educated and between the ages of 20 and 40, an indication that suggests that immigrants contribute to a more vibrant and economically healthy population base. Significantly, without the influx of immigrants, the city would have experienced a fall in its population.

Although it is difficult to extract the implications of these immigrants for the fragile political landscape of the city, especially since there is no separate political representation of the migrant communities, the addition of a new set of social networks and political allegiances adds to the complexity of the current social and political groups within the city – if only because longer-term migrants are able to vote.

> As a result, the likely continuation of these demographic tendencies in the future bolsters the notion that the city is increasingly made up of minorities that are less and less bound to the traditional social and political divides and adds weight to the cry for political engagement across these self-inflicted differences.

## Geographical Units for Spatial Analysis

The units most suitable for the purpose of analysis of Belfast are Super Output Areas (SOAs) with populations between 1,500 and 2,500 - roughly one third the size of a typical Belfast ward, large enough to contain a reasonably sized population, but small enough to reflect separation. There were 150 SOAs in Belfast in 2001 and 2011. However, it is very difficult to capture separation adequately, as the two enlarged areas illustrate. When mapping Community Background data on Small Area level, neighbourhoods that appear 'mixed' on SOA level can be shown to be highly segregated on a street-by-street basis.



□ < 60% Protestant or other related Christian Religious Background
    and < 60% Catholic Religious Background
■ > 60% Protestant or other related Christian Religious Background
■ > 80% Protestant or other related Christian Religious Background
■ > 60% Catholic Religious Background
■ > 80% Catholic Religious Background

250m 500m    1000m        2000m

When analysing Census data on Small Area level, fine grain spatial separation between Catholic and Protestant communities is revealed.
The Catholic Short Strand area (above) is separated from the Protestant Lower Newtownards Road by a Peaceline (shown in red).
Inner South Belfast (left) seems to be a mixed area when looking at Super Output Area level, but in reality consists of the Catholic Markets area and the Protestant Donegall Pass area.
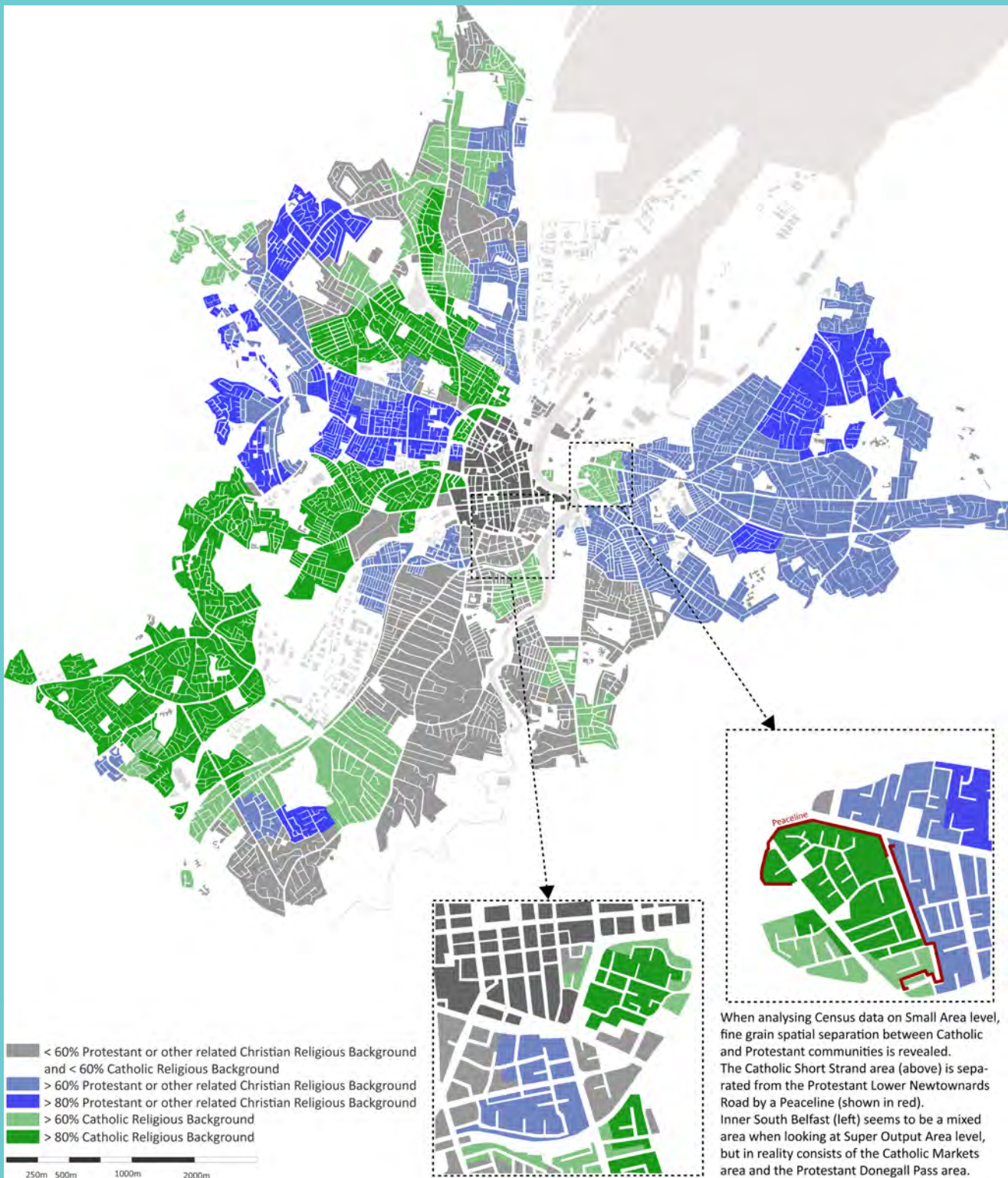
Figure 10: Map of Belfast showing community background by Super Output Area and Small Area (frames). Source: Census 2011.

**New housing beside old divisions: the Alexandra Park 'peace-wall', Belfast.**

# Belfast: A Shared City?

Over the past 45 years, tension and inter-community conflict in Belfast created enclaves dominated by one or other ethno-nationalist identity, where people felt a greater sense of security, thus fortifying and entrenching patterns of residential segregation. Over the longer period, in Belfast's more peaceful times, such patterns tended to soften, though retaining large areas predominantly of one community or the other (East or West Belfast) and at least one patchwork quilt of micro, segregated communities (North Belfast). However, Ian et al. (2013) argue that over the period 1971 – 2001 the city of Belfast undoubtedly became more Catholic, but it also lost considerable population, particularly from the Protestant community. Suggestions, however, that segregation continued relentlessly are, in their view, an exaggeration.

For those interested in urban contest, a key issue is whether the first decade of the 21st Century saw a reduction in the city's overall pattern of segregation as a result of the 'Peace Process' or whether the embedding of segregation, accompanied by ongoing low-level community violence, became a 'fixed' characteristic of the urban landscape. The frequently commented growth in the number of 'peace lines' hints at little change. Yet, for Northern Ireland as a whole, Shuttleworth & Lloyd (2013) conclude from their analysis of Census data that residential segregation actually decreased in the period between 2001 and 2011.

**But, has this 'moving together' been a discernible feature of Belfast in the last decade, particularly in those sectors of the city where political violence was concentrated? If such areas remain unaffected by change, the question is really whether two cities are emerging: one more diverse, more affluent and more peaceful; the other still locked in traditional enclaves, prone to violence and whose deprivation has been relatively untouched by four decades of urban programmes, designed to alleviate poverty.**

One indication of changes in residential segregation in Belfast during the Peace Process can be found by examining some basic demographic figures. Analysis of the 2001 and

2011 censuses reveals that within the Belfast Urban Area, in 2011 there are still almost 280,000 persons living in a ward (approximately 6000 persons) that is either predominantly Catholic or predominantly Protestant (over 70% of the population of a single community background). This amounts to 56% of its total population. In 2001, these numbers were almost 330,000 (67% of total). Despite an overall population increase, the number of persons living in a ward dominated by one or another community has decreased. In 11 out of the 20 wards experiencing the largest increase in population in the period 2001-2011, neither community background constituted a majority in 2001.

While in 2001, there were around 18,000 persons (3.7% of the BUA population) living in a ward where neither community background constituted a majority, the number of persons living in such wards was more than 60,000 in 2011 (11.9% of BUA population). In total, more than 1/5th of the increase in the number of persons from a Catholic background within the BUA has occurred in 12 wards, where neither community background constituted a majority in 2011 (out of 119 wards). The same 12 wards have seen a relatively modest decline in persons from a Protestant background.

Eight out of 20 BUA wards with the largest population increase, over the decade between 2001 and 2011, were predominantly Protestant in 2001. All of these wards have seen the proportion of the Protestant community fall, with four of these wards experiencing quite dramatic falls in Protestant population that have resulted in the proportion of the Protestant community below 70%.

These are also the same wards where large increases in immigrant population have been recorded. As Shuttleworth and Lloyd indicate, if migrants from EU accession countries record their religion (Poles being predominantly Catholic), this might affect measures of segregation without any greater sharing between the two indigeneous communities. The fall recorded above in the Protestant community and the rise in Catholic Community Background may well be partly attributable to the impact of migrants moving into Protestant areas.

## The Dissimilarity Index

The formula for the Dissimilarity Index is:

(1/2) SUM |ai /A – bi / B |

Where 'a' is the number of the first group in the small area, 'A' the total number of that group in the larger unit, 'b' the number of the second group in the small area and 'B' the number of the second group in the larger unit. It can be seen that if each small area is inhabited exclusively by one group or the other, the total would be two (or 200 in the notation used) – hence the need to half the sum, but if each area contained exactly the same share of each group, the total would be zero. Since negative and positive values would cancel each other out when aggregated, absolute values are employed. In short, the closer the index is to 100, the more residentially segregated are the two populations.



Figure 11: Dissimilarity Indices for Belfast 2001 & 2011.
Source: Census 2001 & 2011.

But it's not clear that such ambiguities can be resolved exclusively via the analysis of Census results. There are, however, some pointers: first, Census data reveal that most wards with the largest rise in immigrant population between 2001 and 2011 were predominantly Protestant in 2001. Second, more thorough quantitative analysis shows that those reporting *'None'* as *'religion or religion brought up in'* are more likely to share space with those of Protestant Community Background.

All of the above is predicated on the assumption that the Census variable *Religion or Religion Brought Up In* accurately captures Belfast's two main communities. If sufficient members of one or both were classified differently, the results would be compromised. This is important because the number recorded as having no religion nor religion brought up in, more than doubled between 2001 and 2011 to 20,784 (about 7.4% of Belfast's population).

A first look at the changes presented above seems to support the hypothesis that areas that are perceived to be 'mixed' are the most desirable areas to live in for all communities, and that a fair degree of 'mixing' is occuring in some areas of Belfast. This is consistent with the conclusion posed by Shuttleworth & Lloyd that, for Northern Ireland as a whole, while accepting that the pattern has been affected by immigration and the different ways in which people report religion:

> *…there does appear to have been a decrease in segregation as measured by D* (Dissimilarity index)*. This is the first time that segregation has fallen since 1971 but with a longer-term historical perspective the results should not be surprising* (Shuttleworth & Lloyd, 2013, p.62).

**However, the evidence may also support the interpretation that 'mixed' wards are merely a transition from previously Protestant areas slowly transforming into Catholic areas, without too much prospect of remaining mixed in the years to come. In addition, due to the sometimes fine grained scale of sectarian geography, the data risk generating a positive picture, while the essence of geographically compact enclaves of single persuasion remains untouched.**

The most commonly used measure of the degree to which two groups share space is the Dissimilarity Index. This measures the evenness with which two mutually exclusive groups are distributed across the geographic units that make up a larger geographic entity. Figure 11 shows the Dissimilarity indices for Belfast calculated on the basis of different geographical units of analysis. The degree of residential segregation in Belfast declined between 2001 and 2011 for the city as a whole and for each of its sectors – moving together rather than moving apart. It can be seen, however, that the North and West sectors have higher values than the overall city and markedly higher than for East or South. Residential segregation is still remarkably high in the North & West of the city and these areas had also the most intense exposure to political violence.

At the same time, populations are not distributed across space as individuals, but rather as households. It is thus possible that changing household sizes may have an effect on the value of the dissimilarity index. For that reason, indices were calculated for households (using the community background of the household reference person in 2011, thus assuming that this is common across household members). Other than South Belfast, the 2011 indices for individuals and households are remarkably similar. While it is not clear why this should be the exception, in general, this similarity suggests that the moving together hypothesis is also supported by the household analysis.

There is, however, one rider to that conclusion – households of different sizes appear to have different dissimilarity indices. The 2011 Census contains a table giving religion or religion brought up in for one person and multi-person households respectively. The Index for Catholic/Protestant Community Background one person households was 58.3, whereas for multi-person households it was 69.9. One possible explanation for this divergence assumes that one person households are more likely to be in younger or older age groups. It's possible that the extensive apartment accommodation (with high occupation rates of younger age groups), particularly in inner-city Belfast, is a more mixed environment, thus contributing to the lower index for one person households. Whereas in the past, 'sharing' has often been associated with socio-economic characteristics, it may be that age is an equally important variable. More analysis is required.

# Case Study:
# Oldpark/Cliftonville/Cavehill/Antrim Roads

In acknowledging the sometimes very narrow spatial definition of communities in the Belfast context, and the incompatibility of communities with administrative units, it becomes important to supplement census data analysis with other, more qualitative forms of analysis.



Just over half a century ago, these areas were very different from now. Lower Oldpark and the 'river' streets that adjoined it, were overwhelmingly Protestant; the 'middle' Oldpark was made up of the Catholic 'Bone' area on the left hand side going up from the Crumlin Road, centred around the Sacred Heart church, while on the opposite side of the road was the predominantly Protestant 'Ballybone', comprising streets such as: Ballynure, Ballycastle, Ballymena etc. All these neighbourhoods were working class, with mainly terraced housing in narrow streets. Just up from them was Oldpark Avenue, a lower middle class area, leading from the Oldpark to Cliftonville Roads, and religiously mixed in residence. Further up the Oldpark was the mainly Protestant Heathfield and contiguous Torrens area, leading further upwards to the more middle class Deerpark, Alliance, and Cliftondene areas, stretching up to Ballysillan Road. Though mainly Protestant, these localities were becoming more religiously mixed by the 1960s.

When violence erupted in summer 1969, this landscape started to change significantly. Over the next few years into the first half of the 1970s, Protestants moved out of the Ballybone, while those Catholics that had begun to occupy part of the 'river streets' adjoining Lower Oldpark similarly left. Increasing Catholic presence in the wider Bone area came, in part, from an influx of people living in areas like Benview and Silverstream, which up to this had been developing as 'mixed areas', and which then changed into Protestant districts in the Ballysillan. As violence and tension were worse in the working class areas, these saw the major conversions in this period. How far these population shifts were the deliberate result of 'ethnic cleansing' led by intimidation, or the incremental impact of rumour, uncertainty, and unease, leading people to move to what they considered as more secure terrain among their 'own kind', is debateable.

As comprehensive redevelopment of the Bone/Ballybone/Lower Oldpark arrived in the mid-1970s, alongside continued intensive violence, this 'ethnic churning' increased in pace and scale. Many people started to vacate the Protestant Lower Oldpark, so much so that by the early 1980s, whole tracts such as Hillview and Louisa Streets, and adjoining areas, were demolished to make way for an Enterprise Zone, stretching from Oldpark to Crumlin Roads, providing a 'buffer' wedge between the dwindling Protestant Lower Oldpark, and the burgeoning Catholic 'Greater Bone', as it was then becoming. Around the same time, the Protestant presence first in Heathfield and later in Torrens started to haemorrhage, a process that over the next decade of the 1990s, started to take hold in the lower Deerpark/Alliance/Cliftondene areas (Darby and Morris, 1974; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006).

Alongside this pattern, spatial mobility, linked to the social mobility of Catholics who had benefitted from improved educational opportunity since the 1940s, saw an increasing Catholic presence in the middle class areas such as Cliftonville, Cardigan, Deerpark and part of Upper Oldpark. Indeed, what had become 'mixed' areas from the 1950s in Upper Oldpark, including streets such as Deanby, Dunowen and Dunkeld, all became increasingly Catholic since the mid-1970s. Similar patterns were evident in the Cavehill Road, and adjoining areas, such as Salisbury, Chichester, Sunningdale, North Circular, and Castle; and on the Antrim Road, leading from the Catholic inner city areas of New Lodge and Newington to the now overwhelmingly Catholic middle class areas of Fortwilliam, Somerton, Landsdowne and Downview.

For a period of 15-20 years up to the late 1980s, this trend manifested itself as improving 'integration' in the middle class areas of Cliftonville, Cavehill, and Antrim Roads. But, this 'mixing' was transitional. By 2000, the general flow was towards a predominantly Catholic presence in much of this area, stretching also to the north west to mainly Catholic Ardoyne and Ligoneil, in contrast to what remains the mainly Protestant vicinity around the Shore Road. This broad demarcation can disguise the more complicated patterns of 'cheek by jowl' segregations, such as: Protestant enclave of Glenbryn amidst the mainly Catholic Ardoyne; Catholic New Lodge/Newington and Protestant Duncairn/Tiger's Bay; Protestant lower and Catholic upper Limestone; Protestant lower Westland and Catholic upper Westland; mainly Protestant Skegoneill and mainly Catholic Glandore. Physical evidence of this divide can be seen in the graffiti, memorials, murals, flags, window metal grilles, and painted kerb stones, alongside the many peace walls, including the barrier that splits Alexandra Park since the mid-1990s, opened in 2011 by a 'peace gate' during the day. Proliferation of surveillance cameras also testifies to the many flashpoint 'interface' areas between the tribally defined territories. But, there are also less perceptible 'understandings' of turf, for example between the lower 'more Catholic' and upper 'more Protestant' tiers of the split-level Waterworks.

It should be noted that this Catholicisation was accompanied by intensive violence and reprisal attacks in this fought-over terrain by Republican and Loyalist militia throughout the 'Troubles', with IRA shootings and bombings, including part of its 'Bloody Friday', and Loyalist incidents such as the McGurk's Bar killings and assassinations in the infamous 'murder mile' that straddled Cliftonville, Newington, and New Lodge. While sectarian violence has abated, outbreaks of factional tension have persisted, in, for example, the gauntlet of harassment faced by girl pupils of Holy Cross primary school in 2001; and enduring contentions around marching at Twaddell Avenue.

The imprint of these tumultuous events, particularly of Protestant contraction, can be seen in closure of state schools,

Figure 12: Aerial view of Oldpark/Cliftonville/Cavehill/Antrim Roads Case study area.

such as Finiston, Skegoneill, Castle High, and Mount Gilbert, and transformation of other once Protestant schools, such as Cave Hill, Cliftonville, and Belfast Royal Academy into formal or 'de facto' integrated schools. Even more dramatic makeover can be witnessed in the closure of Protestant churches in Carlisle Circus, Antrim and Cliftonville Roads, and Duncairn/Mountcollyer, so that the Moravian church at 424 Oldpark Road, looks now like a lonely outpost of Protestant worship in the wider Oldpark/Cliftonville area.

It might be said that these patterns are part of the continual 'layering' of cities over time. For instance, Annesley Street, in the lower Antrim Road, housed Greenville Hall Synagogue, the once centre of the Belfast Jewish community, now closed. Over more recent decades, concentration of Jewish presence in the Somerton Road, and nearby streets such as Lismoyne Park, has also experienced retrenchment and retreat. Meanwhile modest levels of immigration are evident in places like Thorndale in the lower Antrim Road. While such shifts are endemic to contemporary global urbanism, the acute re-drawing of religious geographies in North Belfast, with all the attendant disturbance of ancestral roots, makes a particular impression on the divided city, and its prospects for 'shared' living.

The review of Census data suggests that residential s egregation in Belfast decreased in the recent period, while leaving high concentrations in at least two areas of the city. Such changes might be characterised as Catholic advance and Protestant retreat, though changes in reporting of religion, the spatial impact of new migrant arrival, and potentially the emergence of a new 'apartment stratum' make the picture even more complicated. Moreover, the North Belfast case study suggests that another interpretation of changing area composition may be a process of area transformation from one majority background to another.

Although census data usually take the individual or household as the basic unit of analysis, we have to recognise that all people adhere to networks of social relations that extend beyond the familiarity of the household and the extended family ties. Often, such networks are established incorporating people that use or have previously used the same educational institution, workplace or residential area and are informed by shared cultural values. Since accessibility of services often dictates patterns of human gathering, the built environment plays a crucial role in the shaping of communities. However, an increase of mobility provided by car transport and the more recent emergence of different types of 'virtual communities' through social media have meant that, depending on resources, the traditional link between residential neighbourhood and 'community' has eroded over time.

In the case of Belfast, the sense of community seems to be highly related with shared cultural background. Residential segregation based on cultural background means that local neighbourhoods, or even separate streets, can thereby act as important spatial platforms for supporting community senses. In this respect, the geographical unit chosen for analysis of census data is important – the bigger the sub-area, the more it is likely to contain elements of different communities – even where they actually live separate lives. For example in 2011, 59% of wards were populated by those who were 70% or more of a single community background. At Super Output Area the percentage rises to 61% and at Small Area level to 69%. It should be noted that self-identified communities still cut across administrative spatial units.

## Belfast: An Inclusive City?

The complications (discussed earlier) in the equality debate apply with equal force to Belfast, while also recognising that reference to 'objective evidence' rarely shifts deeply held conviction – 'facts' tend to be constructed rather than observed and the process is heavily influenced by experiences (partial at best) and attitudes (what used to be called ideology). Equally, evidence only makes sense within a given context – for example, long standing claims about unmet Catholic housing need in North Belfast have been evidenced within a specific geography; change the geography and the claims become less compelling.

Underlying the data on the links between deprivation and community background presented in figure 13, is a further characteristic - SOAs of 75% or more of a single community background (i.e. residentially segregated) make up almost all of the most deprived/poorest quintile. But, the total number of residentially segregated SOAs is less than half the total in each case. Without wishing to diminish the equality issue, the most prominent feature of the table is that residentially segregated SOAs are more likely to appear in the most, rather than the least, deprived/poor quintile.

Close association between segregation and deprivation can be illustrated by examining a group of Belfast wards that have consistently appeared in the most deprived 10 per cent of Northern Ireland's wards in two decades of deprivation research.

Eighteen wards were among the region's most deprived 10% in every study and two appeared in three studies. A further ward, St Annes, would have been in the most deprived group had it not disappeared in boundary changes and its population redistributed mainly to Shankill and New Lodge. Three quarters of this group of wards had populations that were 70% or more of a single Community Background. Although this represented a decline from nine tenths in 2001, this change was mainly the result of increases in the numbers described as 'Religion or Religion Brought Up In, None'. Belfast has thus a group of wards (with around 35% of the city population) whose deprivation ranking has remained relatively constant across two decades and which are highly segregated.

| Key | | | 1991 | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | Majority Community Background 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ▮ (blue) | Ward with majority of residents with Protestant Community Background. | | | | | |
| | ▮ (green) | Ward with majority of residents with Catholic Community Background. | | | | | |

| | 1991 | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | Majority Community Background 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ardoyne** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 93% CCB |
| **Ballymacarett** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 52% CCB |
| **Beechmount** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 91% CCB |
| **Blackstaff** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 72% PCB |
| **Clonard** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 91% CCB |
| **Crumlin** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 82% PCB |
| **Duncairn** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 64% PCB |
| **Falls** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 88% CCB |
| **Glencairn** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 76% PCB |
| **Glencolin** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 93% CCB |
| **Island** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | — | 70% PCB |
| **New Lodge** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 89% CCB |
| **Shaftesbury** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 47% PCB |
| **Shankill** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 85% PCB |
| **The Mount** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 68% PCB |
| **Upper Springfield** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 94% CCB |
| **Waterworks** | — | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 88% CCB |
| **Whiterock** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 93% CCB |
| **Woodstock** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 63% PCB |
| **Woodvale** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 87% PCB |

Figure 13: Belfast Wards appearing consistently in Regional Deprivation Studies
Source: Northern Ireland Multi Deprivation Measures 1994-2010, NISRA

| Rank | School | A-Level | FSM |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | **Dominican College** | **86.4%** | **10.5%** |
| 45 | St Malachy's College | 74.6% | 9.9% |
| 47 | Belfast Royal Academy | 73.9% | 7.0% |
| 100 | Little Flower Girls' School | 50.9% | 31.9% |
| 107 | Hazelwood College | 46.2% | 39.1% |
| 109 | Belfast Model School for Girls | 46.0% | 40.8% |
| 114 | Our Lady of Mercy Girls' School | 43.5% | 47.9% |
| 119 | Belfast Boys' Model School | 40.0% | 42.1% |
| 119 | St Patrick's College | 40.0% | 40.6% |
| 161 | St Gemma's High School | * | 69.4% |

| Key | |
|---|---|
| ▮ (light blue) | Grammar (Voluntary) |
| ▮ (beige) | Secondary (Integrated) |
| ▮ (green) | Secondary (RC maintained) |
| ▮ (blue) | Secondary (Controlled) |

| Rank | School | GCSE | FSM |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | **Dominican College** | **98.6%** | **10.5%** |
| 41 | Belfast Royal Academy | 94.0% | 7.0% |
| 43 | St Malachy's College | 93.9% | 9.9% |
| 170 | Little Flower Girls' School | 25.0% | 31.9% |
| 174 | Our Lady of Mercy Girls' School | 24.6% | 47.9% |
| 178 | Hazelwood College | 23.4% | 39.1% |
| 181 | Belfast Boys' Model School | 22.1% | 42.1% |
| 185 | St Patrick's College | 19.2% | 40.6% |
| 192 | Belfast Model School for Girls | 15.7% | 40.8% |
| 206 | St Gemma's High School | * | 69.4% |

Figure 14: Tables showing 2012 pupil achievement in North Belfast schools based on A-Level Results (above) and GCSE Results (below).
Source: Belfast Telegraph 2012 annual examination results for GCSEs and A-Levels for Northern Ireland

Belfast Royal Academy

Our Lady of Mercy Girls' School
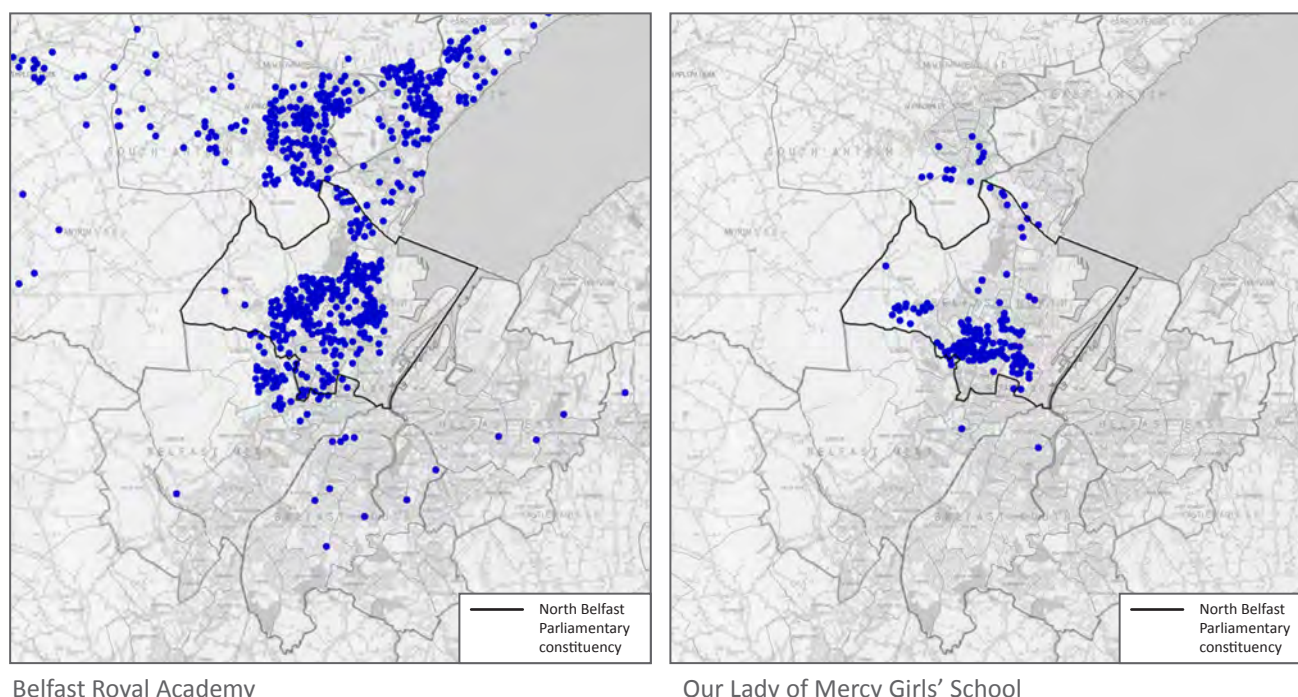
Figure 15: School catchment areas for Grammar and Secondary schools in North Belfast.
Source: Belfast Education and Library Board

Differential performance of Belfast's segregated school system is also important here, particularly well captured by recent analysis of pupil achievement in North Belfast schools (see figure 14). Belfast's Grammar schools, whether controlled or maintained, perform significantly better than secondary schools at GCSEs (sustained through to A' levels) while containing substantially smaller percentages of children eligible for free school meals.

The segregated education produced by the Grammar/Secondary school system also translates into varying opportunities for social mixing for pupils attending the two types of post-primary education. Since Grammar schools are the preferred option for parents to send their children to, and this choice is mostly inspired by the level of education rather than the cultural orientation of the school, Grammar schools tend to attract a much more spatially dispersed pupil population compared to Secondary schools (see figure 15).

**To summarise, Belfast does have a disproportionate share of small areas judged to be either highly deprived or to have high rates of income poverty. Undoubtedly, wards or SOAs with high population percentages of Catholic Community Background appear prominently in the data. Simultaneously, however, residentially segregated areas (measured as having their populations above a threshold figure of a single community background) appear even more prominently and, indeed, may be a better predictor of deprivation than community background.**

**The intractable persistence of urban poverty, social and religious residential segregation, and related territorial contests in places like Twaddell Avenue, confirm the necessity for a different approach.**

**Belfast city centre regeneration facilitated by the Department of Social Development: the Victoria Square Centre.**

# 6.   Traditional Forms of Intervention

To appreciate how much policy has been going round in circles on this issue, it is useful to trace some of the recent history. Following Boal's study of socio-spatial patterns of deprivation in Belfast in 1976, a new urban compensatory programme was launched by the name of **Belfast Areas of Need** (DOENI, 1976). In essence, it offered modest extra public funding for the 22 worst-off wards in the city, and its remaining relics include a few of our current leisure centres. Inherent in some of these early investments seemed to be the simplistic notion that if you built leisure and community facilities in some of the most disadvantaged and troubled areas that this would induce at least some of the riotous youth off the streets into more productive activity. This faint-hearted initiative was followed by the more substantial **Belfast Action Team** programme (BAT) in the early 1980s. At least this time, the 'geographies' of intervention were drawn wider to include both Protestant and Catholic areas into each BAT team locality -- for instance, Lower Shankill and Falls; New Lodge and Tiger's Bay, etc. Nevertheless, the scale and type of intervention were not proportionate to the problem addressed, and the role of community conflict in partly generating and sustaining the disadvantage was not competently analysed and incorporated into the intervention.

Meanwhile, the real action in terms of urban regeneration was starting to take shape, in terms of rehabilitating a rundown city centre that had become victim to the Provisional IRA bombing campaign. Reflected in the signature building of Castle Court, this emphasis on Downtown was then extended to Laganside, an ambitious waterfront development, designed to turn the city to the river and to optimise the re-valorisation of mature industrial spaces and brownfield sites, as dockland had moved upstream under new technologies of containerisation. The logic of this strategy of facilitating the development priorities of the most active sectors of an increasingly service-based economy was endorsed in the **1989 Belfast Urban Plan**, with its emphasis on office and retail expansion, and its notable failure to identify the dynamics of economic and political change driving the de-population, de-industrialisation, deepening segregation, and durable poverty be-setting the sustainability of many communities.

This concentration on the commercial urban core to the relative neglect of the city's neighbourhoods provoked persistent community critique, and prompted a modest up-scaling of intervention, under the first **Making Belfast Work** programme in the late 1980s, progressing to its second more substantial stage by the mid-1990s. By then, it was operating, across the city, five area partnerships -- inter-sectoral bodies that were encouraged to engage in long-term strategic thinking about the multi-dimensional aspects of their areas' decline and prospective resuscitation. As the name of the programme suggested, it was the first serious attempt to connect the problems of poverty and under-development to the changing urban economy. In turn, this was followed by **Neighbourhood Renewal** in the 2000s, and most recently complemented by the **Social Investment** initiative. Alongside these mainstream government programmes, there have been myriad other schemes such as URBAN, Integrated Operations, and POVERTY 1 and 2, funded under the EU; a host of community projects funded by IFI, Atlantic Philanthropy, Co-operation Ireland, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, and most recently by the Big Lottery. Added together, this spending has been considerable. And yet, what have been the results?

In terms of measuring multiple deprivation, we have had a range of indices: Boal in the 1970s; Townsend in the 1980s; Robson in the 1990s; and over recent decades, the Noble Index. They all come out much the same. Even taking it over the last 20 odd years, the same wards, in almost the same ranking, remain stubbornly the most deprived. It could be taken all the way back to the 1970s, and the picture would be similar. Even though the *populations* have changed to some extent in these wards over that period, the same *places* show up persistently as the most disadvantaged, as if poverty was imprinted into their very DNA.  So, this calls either for resignation to 'the poor being always with us', or for concession that urban regeneration has not been working for all.

# The Legacy of Planning in Belfast: Urban Structure and Form

The so-called 'peacewalls' across Belfast are probably the most visible manifestations of division in the city. Indeed many have become the iconic images of sustained separation between the 'two' communities. Arguably too, it is the visibility of these structures that has prompted the focused ambition in TBUC (Together Building a United Community) – for them to be removed by 2022. And yet, when we look at how the spatial environment of Belfast has been purposively or unintentionally manipulated, we can see barriers of various shapes and forms. Roads, car parks, blighted land, gates, fences, buffer buildings and other bulwarks all contribute to sustaining an ethnically and socially divided city.

The physical configuration of Belfast is, in many respects, similar to other cities. It nestles in a valley between hills to the west and east; it has a starfish arrangement of radial roads stretching out from the city centre; and it has a commercial core that has expanded along the 'reclaimed' river (Laganside) and into the former shipyard/docks area (Titanic Quarter). However, this urban structure needs further analysis and understanding. The layout of the city has been planned and designed, at different times during its relatively recent history, to meet what we might call 'social' objectives. Again, many of these social objectives were common in other cities. Examples here, include: the redesign of the city to accommodate the car and the redevelopment of nineteenth century inner city housing.

However, in Belfast many of these planning initiatives were undertaken during the period of the conflict, and have, in many respects, contributed to a problematic city layout and urban structure. In addition, it is now becoming evident that many developments in the city were purposively employed to create barriers between communities in conflict or to manipulate the spatial environment to exclude problematic community areas. In North Belfast, for example, two areas were deliberately planned as 'buffer zones' between communities in conflict. The business park on the north side of Duncairn Gardens was planned and designed as an 'environmental' response to a very violent interface between the 'Catholic' New Lodge area and 'Protestant' Tiger's Bay. A decline in the demand for housing in Tiger's Bay helped 'facilitate' the process. Around 200 houses, a church and other commercial premises were demolished to create a site for 'neutral' businesses. Similarly, the Hillview 'Enterprise Zone' was planned as another buffer between Protestant Oldpark and Catholic Oldpark / Ardoyne.

While these, and indeed other, initiatives were designed with deliberative 'political' intent, others, such as the many road infrastructure projects continued to pursue the modernist vision of a city designed for the car. Of course a number of these also brought 'benefical' 'political' spin offs in the form of barriers or buffer zones (see figures 16 & 17). However, a core issue that permeated a range of spatial reconfigurations was the protection, enhancement and



Figure 16: St Barnabas's Church, Duncairn Gardens demolished to make way for a Business Park buffer zone.

fortification of the central commercial city. This started in the late 1960s /early 1970s with the urban motorway, 'downgraded' to the Westlink and then purposively developed in the 1980s as a strategy to demonstrate a vibrant commercial core. The decanting of civil servants to offices in the centre together with massive subsidies to new commercial development (Castle Court) was designed to create a retail recovery as well as the symbolism of defiance against the IRA bombing campaign.

This deliberate strategy of creating a protected node of commercial activity was further supported by a range of developments that reinforced the insularity of the centre. These include buildings such as Castle Court that turn their back to north and west Belfast; the Gasworks that is sealed off from, and disconnected from, the Markets and Lower Ormeau and, of course, Laganside and Titanic Quarter, which are socially and physically 'detached'. As important though, the commercial viability of the centre depended on car commuters; and this, in turn, needed cheap car parking and a supportive road network. Interestingly, in the original documentations, even the aesthetics of the proposed motorway experience were considered: '*In the twilight areas 'facial cosmetics' of buildings beside the motorway which are left may be necessary so that a good front is presented to the motorway*' (Building Design Partnership et al, 1968, p18). And of course, to complement

this, car parking was to become a major feature for the new modern city - '*There will need to be large car parks associated with the road to receive the increasing number of cars which will visit the city*' (ibid., 1968, p19).

Of course, the contemporary spatial consequences of all of this, is a core city effectively disconnected from the surrounding inner city neighbourhoods but highly connected for the 100,000+ car commuters who use the city every day (Belfast City Council, 2015).

The devastation of the inner city through the remodelling of urban space for the car had a major impact on inner north Belfast (see figure 19). The historical grid layout which connected streets to the main arterial thoroughfares and to the centre was largely replaced by the 'Westlink' and 'inner box' roads, surrounded by a sea of fractured developments and spaces. All of this affected the general mobility of communities and, as importantly, it reinforced their isolation, both physically and psychologically, from the rest of the city. This breakdown in the structure and layout of the inner city and the spatial privilege given to the car has had widespread consequence.

Indeed, it is possible to suggest that there are two distinctive patterns of movement within the city. One, referred to as 'urban bubbling' by Atkinson and Flint (2004) captures the



Figure 17: Location of former St Barnabas's Church today.

Figure 18: Map of inner Belfast. The dark tones indicate blighted areas of new motorways, Westlink, M2, M3, and inner ring road widening with associated major car parks. In yellow the largely intact city core and in brown the inner city neighbourhoods.
Source: Mark Hackett, Forum for Alternative Belfast.

way in which the middle classes use the entire city and its environment as their neighbourhood. Of course, the key to this level of access is the car or 'the bubble'. Working, shopping, pursuing leisure and so on around the city is very much the middle class lifestyle. And, as noted above, the city has been largely designed, developed and managed to facilitate this.

For working class neighbourhoods, on the other hand, movement is largely limited to walking and public transport. Local facilities are therefore more important, as are safe walking environments that allow access to other parts of the city. However, in inner city Belfast there is a 'double bind'.

First, these single identity communities are largely territorialised. During 'the conflict', these communities tended to become very insular and self-reliant. While this offered a degree of safety and protection, it also reduced contact with the rest of the city and between communities. Moreover, new facilities were often located in the heart of a community area, and, of course, this inevitably excluded their use by 'others'. Arguably too, the remodelled layout of the physical environment during redevelopment in the 1970s and 1980s helped to reinforce this insularity. The traditional grid street pattern that characterised Belfast's inner city since the nineteenth century offered a permeability, which facilitated wider social interactions and connections to services and employment. In contrast, much inner city redevelopment employed cul-de-sac layouts that lowered densities and reduced connectivity (figure 19). And in addition, of course, the overall process saw the loss of over 55% of the inner city's population.
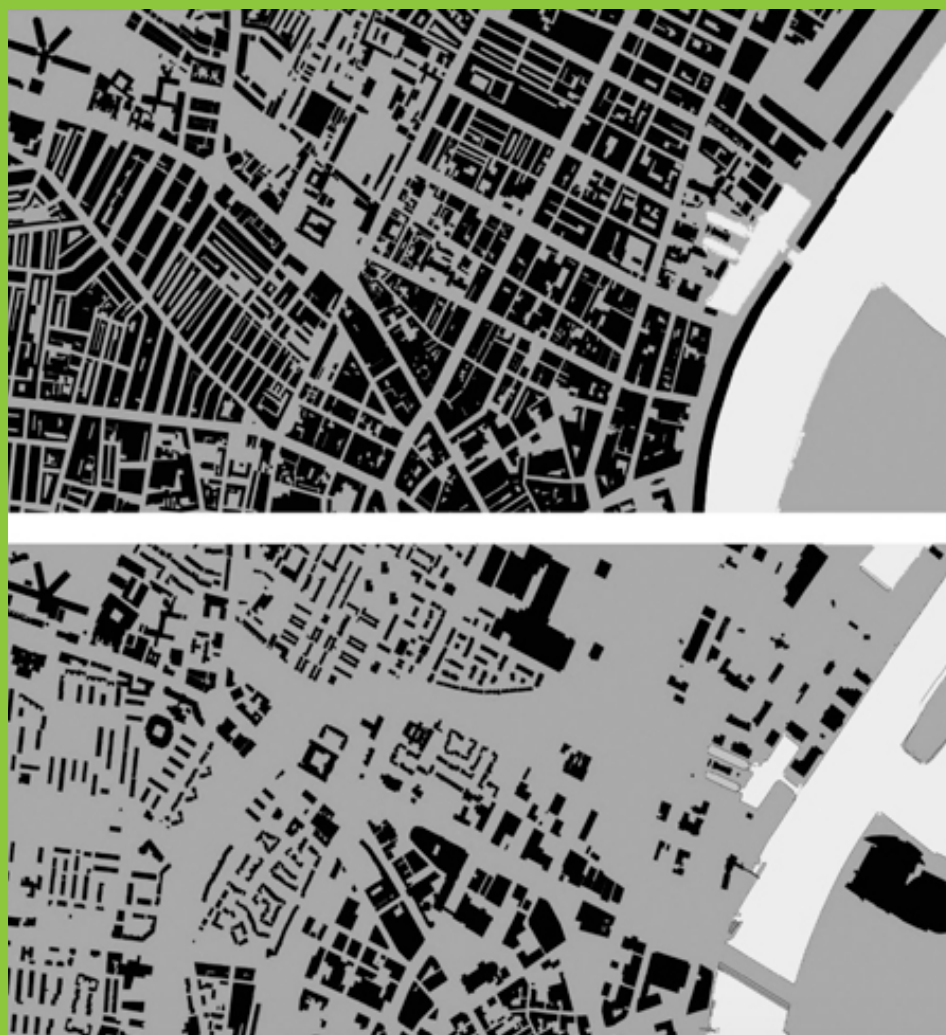
Figure 19: Restructuring urban form in Belfast – figure-ground maps of inner north 1960 and 2011. Source: Chris Duffy QUB.

Second, it is also important to note that patterns of movement in Belfast, particularly in and around the segregated residential areas, have a certain peculiarity. An ongoing legacy of 'the Troubles' is what might be termed an 'inbuilt psyche' of knowing how to traverse the city (Brand, 2009). The arterial routes, for example, are carefully navigated by inner city residents to avoid passing through, or by, 'the other's' community territory. In the north and west of the city, the pedestrian spaces along the arterial routes are almost exclusively used by one community or the other. While this sensitivity to community geography is also evident in how communities use public transport, it does not overly affect the behaviour of commuting car traffic. Of course, the real and psychological constraints of territory, and how this plays out in terms of movement and access, is made worse by a car dominated environment.

While the comfort of territory has been important for communities, particularly during 'the conflict', it should not distract from the need to open up the city to local neighbourhoods and to encourage the development of a shared urban environment.

In the early 1960s, Jane Jacobs was making the same point about American cities. She argued that the notion of 'neighbourhood' was a somewhat sentimental concept which was ultimately 'harmful to city planning'. For her, the city is the neighbourhood, offering its citizens 'wide choice and rich opportunities ….. whatever city neighborhoods may be, or may not be, and whatever usefulness they may have, or may be coaxed into having, their qualities cannot work at cross-purposes to thoroughgoing city mobility and fluidity of use, without economically weakening the city of which they are part' (Jacobs, 1993, p.152).

The Westlink motorway effectively cuts off north and west Belfast from the commercial city centre.

# Connectivity and Exclusion

Belfast city centre together with its extension into inner south, Laganside and Titanic Quarter provide a range of services and facilities that are at the heart of the city's economy. Indeed, this is recognised in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, which states that 'the promotion of Belfast City Centre and the development opportunities within Belfast Harbour will support the provision of new job opportunities in central locations accessible to all sections of the community' (Department of the Environment, 2004, p.20) Moreover, much of the planning and regeneration emphasis over the last thirty years has been on these areas because they function as neutral, if not shared, spaces. However, many of these areas are not socially inclusive and are often seen by traditional communities as inaccessible and unwelcoming. There is no doubt, that at least in part, this is because these 'neutral' spaces and events are consumption-oriented. Genuine civic spaces that offer public amenity are very limited in number and in scope.

All of this suggests, that, at the very least, facilitating good quality and direct access to key areas of the city should be a planning and regeneration priority. A North Belfast study by Queen's University students (Queen's University MSc North Belfast Report, 2014) showed that the city centre and Titanic Quarter were, potentially, within 5-10 minutes walking distance of Duncairn Gardens in the heart of inner north Belfast. However, the route to the city centre is frustrated by road barriers and poor quality frontage environments, while the route to Titanic Quarter is circuitous by both bus and walking. Titanic Quarter is, of course, similarly cut off from the adjacent East Belfast neighbourhoods.

Good urban design practice which seeks to promote connectivity and therefore accessibility has not been a feature of planning and regeneration in Belfast. Rather, single function planning such as roads development together with site focused investment has largely ignored the broader spatial needs of the city. The underpinning assumption is that the private market will generate activity and, in turn, that activity will bring economic benefit to the city. Indeed this appears to be the underlying rationale in the current Belfast draft City Centre Regeneration.

The problem here for planning is the exclusion this brings. Celebrating the value of individual, site particular projects sidesteps the civic and collective needs of the city. Such needs are so important in a context where exclusive ethnic and social space often triumphs over the civic. Good city form and structure are not just about aesthetics. Rather, they are about creating a place that everyone can share and access. Good design, in this regard, is also about creating spaces that have civic value rather than ethnic or commercial value. Every major development decision contributes to this. A key question for city planners, therefore, is *how all major development proposals can respond to and address the fractured and divided city.* More than this, prioritising a re-stitching agenda would allow the development of a vision for the city that recognises that spatial fracture and disconnection help sustain social and ethno-religious fracture and disconnection.

Major regeneration projects such as City Centre, Laganside and Titanic Quarter have largely ignored these broader civic needs. Rather, they have relied on the neo-liberal theory that the market will solve the problems of a divided city through the generation of economic benefits that trickle down to all communities. However, this scenario implies that if new training facilities exist in Titanic Quarter or if job opportunities are available in Laganside, then it is up to individuals to overcome any access difficulties. In other words, the focus is on the individual rather than on any collective concerns.

As noted earlier, issues of division take various spatial forms. The spatial legacy of the conflict together with over forty years of planning and regeneration has delivered a city that is fractured, disjointed and poorly managed. Importantly too, single identity ethno-religious neighbourhoods are being joined increasingly by mixed identity social neighbourhoods. While the former are often characterised by peace-walls, the latter are often bounded by gates and fencing. As noted elsewhere in this report, areas with high levels of deprivation often correspond with single identity neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the new gated communities correspond with an ethnic mix and high levels of educational attainment. A survey of city centre apartments conducted by Queen's University as part of a study for the Northern Ireland Community  Relations

Pre 1965 streets



Post 1995 streets

Figure 20: Reconfigured inner West Belfast – 1960 & 2011, showing how the street grid has been fractured and disrupted.
Source: Mark Hackett, Forum for Alternative Belfast.

Council found that the majority of residents of the new apartments were not born in Northern Ireland. Moreover, they were relatively young, highly educated and transitory; and very interestingly, the majority of them didn't know their neighbours or knew only a few (Gaffikin, et al, 2008).

All this confirms the emergence of new, non-placed based communities, but it also suggests that the issue about creating and developing shared space and shared services is not limited to the traditional divisions. A number of the new gated communities sit adjacent to longstanding, single identity, working class communities, which are recorded as having the highest level of educational under-achievement in Northern Ireland. In this context, the issue of division is not about 'peace-walls' but about the sort of environment that the city wants to create. The regulatory planning system that has prevailed over the last 40 years, largely ignored the 'traditional' geography of division and the evidence would suggest that it is also side-stepping these emerging new divisions.

While acknowledging that dysfunctional city form and structure is only one dimension of a deeper set of problems, it is, nevertheless, a significant issue. Creating the potential for shared space and services requires thoughtful street design and layout; it requires good walkable, safe and interesting connections. New or revitalised streets offer opportunities to locate services that can be accessed by both sides of the community and all classes. The so-called neutrality of the city centre has the potential to be expanded along arterial routes and 'new' connecting streets. The work of the Forum for Alternative Belfast largely focuses on this. The Six Links project in inner North Belfast together with proposals that emerged from the 2011 Summer School for inner south Belfast, offer opportunities to both strengthen connections as well as expanding shared streets and services (Sterrett et al, 2012).

This sort of analysis and agenda setting is not peculiar to Belfast. At an international level, there is growing recognition of the role that 'infrastructure' of various sorts can play in cementing division.  In the United States, for example, Detroit (also known as Motor City) is beginning to acknowledge the impact that an extensive network of freeways has had on the city. Recent comments by the city's mayor, Mike Duggan, acknowledged that the freeways that encircle Metro Detroit have had a negative impact on the city and have contributed significantly to Detroit's steep economic decline. In his view, 'Freeways cut off and isolate neighborhoods (and) … we are still trying to recover from that.' (www.grist.org).

Similarly, a major ESRC research project 'Conflict in Cities and the Contested State' (CinC, 2012), concluded that social and political divisions can be 'exacerbated' by a range of long term physical barriers:

> *'walls, buffer zones, checkpoints, urban enclaves, and even large roads, tramways and motorways – continue to play a major role in dividing cities… Mobility, or lack of it, is often used as a tool of conflict. Interventions in the physical environment can overtly further the interests of certain groups, whilst seemingly well-intentioned and apparently benign encroachments on the landscape can create or sustain inequalities in ways that are hard to reverse'.*
> (Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, 2012, p.1)

A fresh way of looking at planning and regeneration in the city is to acknowledge that all planning, regeneration and design has social purpose. However, for the most part, this is not made explicit or, at least, it is not openly discussed. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge firstly, the now widely held view that cities are shaped and re-shaped by social forces. Any understanding of socio-economic change and of the needs of social groups has to be factored into the analysis. This includes not only the power of capital, in all its forms, but also distinctive political and administrative forces that mediate this in places like Belfast.

Second, some of these distinctive political forces are in contest with each other, but also interestingly, are together, in conflict with the state. In relation to the former, the issue of housing land and territory remains a 'wicked issue'. In relation to the latter, the two communities have been co-operating with the Forum for Alternative Belfast on common built environment and connectivity issues through the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (see: http://www.charterni.com/projects/belfast-conflict-resolution-consortium).

Figure 21: Design drawings (above) and implementation of Old Market Square in Nottingham. Pedestrianisation of the square and a new tramway were part of the extensive transformation of the public realm.
Source: www.architonic.com (above) and Ken Sterrett (below).

Third, there is the ongoing issue of fragmented governance. Although the Northern Ireland Assembly is now relatively stable, its responsibilities for the built environment are spread across at least three government departments, each of which is headed-up by opposing political parties. Some hope lies in the shift of planning and regeneration responsibilities to the new 11 local authorities. Although there are no immediate plans to devolve transport or housing powers from central government, good spatial planning practice together with the new 'community planning', can allow many challenges raised above to be addressed.

These challenges are, of course, interwoven, and they permeate almost all major built environment issues facing the city. Moreover, the damage already done to Belfast's central area and the inner city by roads infrastructure and market led planning is substantial and not easily repaired. However, this, together with the other infrastructure barriers that have effectively cemented divisions, need to be given as much political priority as the so-called 'peacewalls'. Indeed, there now seems to be clear evidence that planning, particularly in Belfast during the 70s and 80s, was 'steered in the direction of defensive planning by the security forces in order to contain and control political violence.' (Cunningham, 2016, p.6) All this requires a degree of small 'p' political pragmatism. Uniting conflicting communities around common interests such as disconnection from the city centre allows trust to build that may in time foster a more productive dialogue about the 'wicked issues'. Similarly, working with Ministers, councillors and officials in central and local government on individual schemes, such as the York Street Interchange and the 'Six Links' proposal, demonstrates the value of taking a

more holistic and integrated approach to the development of the city. Jan Gehl makes the significant point that it took forty years, using what he calls a 'gradual approach', to get Copenhagen from a car-dominated to a people-oriented city (Gehl, 2008).

It is important to acknowledge that the market has been the dominant instrument for change in Belfast in the recent past. Indeed, some commentators have even complimented its nonpartisan capacity to shape a more cosmopolitan outlook for the city. However, the new apartment building around the city, seen by some as creating shared spaces in terms of the sectarian geography, is at the same time creating a new social geography. Yet, would the city trade off more social segregation for less sectarian segregation? Would it avoid social housing in its new non-sectarian spaces and city centre regeneration, since such housing is deemed by some to have an association with high levels of segregation? How would such an agenda square with declared planning values about creating balanced, socially mixed, sustainable communities?

As noted earlier, the concept of 'shared space' is bandied about in both political and academic circles and yet definitions seem to vary significantly. Some of the current debate about multiculturalism and assimilation in the context of changing government policies in Europe may be useful in this regard. While such debates highlight the problems with both approaches, they may also point towards the need for greater emphasis on civil society and a 'progressive sense of universal values' (Malik, 2015). This, in turn, suggests that city design should be about the facilitation of the 'civic' and the 'interactive' in space and should not be about institutionalising ethnicity in space.

In other words, the planning, design and layout of the city should purposefully aim to create streets and spaces that promote and facilitate interactions that cross social and ethnic boundaries. In terms of urban structure, therefore, there is urgent need to recognise, and then deal with, the fragmented and disconnected city. Re-stitching the city is not just about creating a more coherent urban form, but rather it is about putting in place an urban layout that facilitates equal access to all parts of the city for all citizens, irrespective of their social or ethno-religious standing. It is also about creating a city that values its civic spaces over its ethnic spaces and that this celebrates the vision of a new Belfast that is a city of equals.

# Case study: Nicosia, Cyprus

In Cyprus, particularly in Nicosia, but also in Famagusta, good spatial planning is largely absent. In other words, there is little evidence of a planned environment that signals a willingness to intervene to ensure functional and aesthetic coherence. Rather, market driven development seems to have a priority over planned development. This, in turn, seems to be reinforced by laws relating to land and property ownership that prevent the sort of interventions that might celebrate and deliver the 'public' and the 'civic'. A significant consequence of all of this is the poor quality public realm. In Nicosia this is evident in both sides of the city. On the Greek side there is a distinct lack of well-designed public spaces and very poor pedestrian infrastructure. Movement around the city is very dependent on the private car and public transport is nearly non-existent. Similarly, on the Turkish side poor public spaces and almost abandoned parts of the inner city signal a laissez-faire approach to planning and development. Moreover, the most degraded parts of the city on both sides are the areas around the buffer zone. In turn, this blight has helped encourage a sprawl pattern in the 'outer' city, again a familiar pattern in cities like Belfast. Poor public realm around the buffer zone, together with the relatively modest residential presence in the Old City, suggests, at least for 'meanwhile' use, the opportunity of a more ambitious project --- such as a large quality public park that is accessible by all Nicosians.



Figure 22: Poor public realm in Turkish-Cypriot (left) and Greek-Cypriot (right) sides of the city.

Urbanism is about plurality, spontaneity, and connectivity. Amputated cities like Nicosia are, in these terms, fundamentally anti-urban. At present, the bisection of the city – which may allow for a 'purification of space' (Sibley, 1988) that extols the integrity of each side's quarrel – operates in an exclusionist form. As noted by Pullan (2013), since these barriers were installed in 1974, violence has almost totally vanished. Yet, the cost has been the production of 'two rump cities' in a form that stunts the development of both.

All of this highlights the need to understand the relationship between buffer zones, peace-walls or barriers and the wider urban environment. Most significantly perhaps, these barriers exist within an urban frame that in itself has become dysfunctional ---possibly the former causing the latter, or certainly contributing to the latter. Two key points emerge from this. First, any spatial analysis of the barrier zones needs to be part of a wider urban analysis. The work on urban structure analysis and transformation by Forum for Alternative Belfast and by Socrates Stratis (see acknowledgements) in Famagusta is instructive here. Both examine street and pathway networks and the barriers to good permeability. The second point relates more to the planning system, to its culture and operation. In both parts of Cyprus, the planning systems appear to be regulatory at best, minimalist at worst. Spatial planning that aims to be visionary and transformative is evidently not part of the governance culture. While the Nicosia Masterplan represented an unofficial attempt to map a future for the overall city, little progress has been made over many years. This impasse echoes the way great plans can be produced in these divisive circumstances, yet remain undelivered. If they are bereft of statutory authority and requisite resource, they end up as largely rhetoric that serves to further disillusion and demoralise.

Interestingly, the Nicosia Master Plan (2004) speaks of the buffer zone in the city becoming a 'glue' in re-integration, and restoration of the vitality, of the Walled City and the Core area -- places of symbolic heritage value, shared by both communities. As an example of a modest basis for inter-community engagement within the buffer zone, the H4C (Home for Cooperation) building, opposite the signature Ledra Palace Hotel, was opened in 2011 as an educational centre. Transforming signifiers of the conflict into signifiers of its potential solution finds echo in places like the renovated Crumlin Road prison. As in Nicosia, choice of such buildings as 'bridges' between the two main rival sides needs to take account of: prominent location; accessibility; transparency; security; flexibility of use; and quality design.

As in Jerusalem's ethno-nationalist segregation, the two parts of Nicosia can be read as referencing two distinct development cultures. On the Greek side, neo-liberal consumption spaces are immediately evident, with global corporate brands, and relatively vibrant tourism. The urban feel is modern, clean, and government-maintained. On the Turkish side, it is less cosmopolitan, more deprived, and seemingly more chaotic. But, this apparent distinction underestimates the especially difficult physical and social environment faced by inner city Turkish Cypriots, living in a particularly scarred landscape, some of which looks abandoned and desolate. It highlights the way that urban informalism can be sometimes glorified for its resilence and ingenuity, when such plaudits may unintentionally absolve government neglect of proper civic provision.

In Cyprus, there is very little evidence that spatial divisions are being addressed through spatial planning. And to some extent, arguably, this represents a broader underdevelopment of spatial planning and its potential role in helping to facilitate reconciliation and the creation of sustainable communities. Indeed, there is a sense that government has invested so much political capital in addressing the macro problem of division that it neglects the basic everyday living issues, such as decent pavements

# Case study: Jerusalem, Israel

An example of language abuse that afflicts conflict resolution is the deliberate labelling of physical security barriers between the two main contesting sides in Belfast as 'peace walls'. At least, in Jerusalem, the name given to these cordons is more candid: the 'Separation Wall'. It traverses the city, reinforcing its severance from the Palestinian West Bank. Moreover, it helps to accentuate the separation of approximately 200000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem from the rest of the city. It provides another instance of where such 'planning' interventions in contested cities can inadvertently subvert formal public policy. The Israeli government is committed to retaining Jerusalem as one city, indivisible. Yet, their installation of the Separation Wall makes a major contribution to keeping it divided, and in a stark and ugly way. The International Court of Justice, the main judicial agency of the United Nations, has emphasised how the route of this Wall both ventures into Occupied Palestinian territory and at the same time provides within its Closed Area (between the Wall and the Green Line) land accommodating some 80% of settlers living within the Occupied territory. These settlements are seen as a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and as such are contrary to international law.



Figure 23: Motorway protected by a high security wall in Jerusalem.

Such geographies of ethno-national division closely correspond to the main social divide in the city. Though Palestinians in East Jerusalem come under Israeli authority, they face relative neglect in social opportunity and in basic services such as refuse collection and infrastructure. This makes them very visibly more derelict than their Jewish counterpart neighbourhoods, and this very perceptible environmental difference accentuates Palestinian grievance, while confirming for some Jewish citizens a stereotype of Palestinian disregard for proper stewardship of their habitat. Such binary senses of built environment --- modern and pre-modern in physical appearance and capacity -- cement the duality of residential status. This feeds into a familiar exchange in contested cities, whereby one side claims discrimination, while the other retorts that the alleged victims are the authors of their own misfortune. In fact, Jerusalem has to be understood beyond simple bi-communalism. For instance, various ethnic-social-religious divisions within the Jewish community show it to be layered in a complicated way rather than homogeneous, and such stratifications are common in cities that seem on the surface to be locked in dual contest. Again, such divisions can often find spatial expression in separations and segregations.

But, as in Belfast, it does not have a major and obvious barricade splintering the city. Jerusalem is fractured by roads -- ultimately more permanent than walls in the city landscape -- that act to keep the contesting peoples apart. As noted by Pullan (2013, p.29):

*'Instead of acting to reunify the inner city, Road 1 functions as a high-speed connection between the centre of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank, while simultaneously maintaining a rift through the core of the city, separating Israeli West Jerusalem from Palestinian East Jerusalem'.*

Similar impact can be evident in the route and use of the recent light rail system in the city. While holding potential for uniting and linking the city, the train is regarded by some Palestinians as a speed form of mobility for Jews to better access Palestinian suburbs, thereby facilitating opportunity for further territorial extension, annexation, and illegal settlement, and its route through East Jerusalem as physical manifestation of Israeli authority in what they regard as their rightful jurisdiction. Moreover, the Damascus Gate stop offers direct opening to the Old City, and with it, to deeply contested sacred sites, such as Temple Mount and the Muslim 'courtyard' beyond the Western Wall, scenes of recent clashes between elements of both sides, each keen to claim their perceived religious inheritance. At the same time, the train does not allow for easy access to Palestinian areas, such as the refugee camp of SHUAFAT, behind the Separation Wall. Thus, an impressive new transport infrastructure that would be taken in most other cities to be an instrument of connectivity is, in a contested city like Jerusalem, understood by some in the subjugated group as a means of deepening segregation and domination. Again, it shows that planning initiatives that may be normally construed as progressive in contemporary urbanism, may be considered the very opposite in conflicted cities.

**High quality design was in forefront of Health Estates agenda for new service delivery of Wellbeing and Treatment Centres.**
**Image Above:  Carlisle Wellbeing and Treatment Centre.**

# Overt and Covert Segregation

There are obvious forms of duplication in a segregated society. In Northern Ireland, the Education sector is often discussed as a primarily overt segregated system. However, less obvious are the services which on the surface present as a unified sector, but in fact operate unintentional covert segregation because their service delivery is based on the geographical boundaries of divided communities.

The role of the Education sector as a keystone facility within communities has been highlighted in this report. However alongside this, the Health Sector presents as a vital service and building typology within the city's urban fabric, and also one that exhibits similar duplication in service delivery. These sectors are of particular significance as they are dominant spending outlays from the public purse.



Public Sector expenditure on services by departmental group and function for Northern Ireland 2014-2015

- Social protection (£7,151M)
- Health (£3,905M)
- Education (£2,888M)
- Economic affairs (£1,525M)
- Public order and safety (£1,264M)
- Housing and community amenities (£820M)
- Recreation, culture and religion (£456M)
- General public services (£398M)
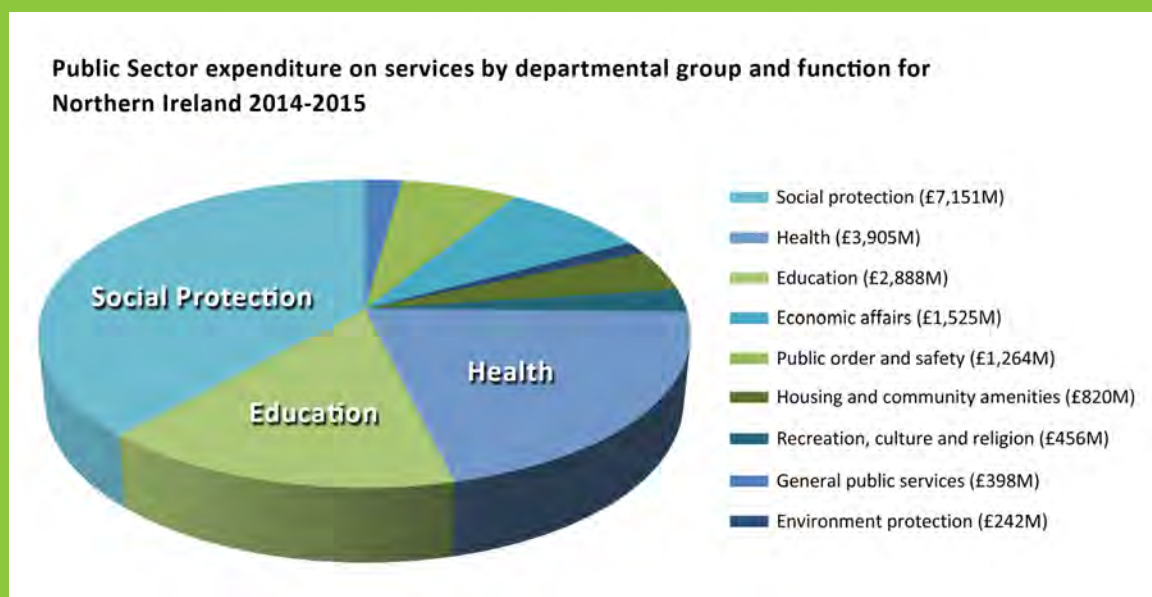- Environment protection (£242M)

Figure 24: Chart showing public expenditure by Departmental Group for Northern Ireland 2014-2015 (£ Million)
Data Source: HM Treasury 2015

Review of public sector expenditure on services from 2014-2015 shows the Health and Education sector responsible for £6,793m of public spending (Figure 24). The 2009 – 2015 statistics continually positions them second and third spending outlays after the highest sector of Social Protection (HM Treasury, 2015).

Health is a vital and key service. Therefore, the efficiency of its funding and its availability of service are of significance to everyone.  For that reason, we must question: does the planning of the service, in terms of location and spatial distribution, take account of financial efficiency, physical accessibility and psychological accessibility to all members of the wider community? Belfast contains various types of health service provision at numerous sites across the city. While the types of services are not in question, the spatial planning of the service should be considered within a wider strategic framework.

Within Belfast, there are four primary care hospitals, namely Musgrave Park Hospital located on Stockman's Lane, the Royal Victoria Hospital located on the Falls Road, the City Hospital located on Lisburn Road and the Mater Infirmorum Hospital located on the Crumlin Road. These hospitals are supported by outlying Health Care Clinics and General Practitioner Practices.  A key part of this supportive network is the relatively new building typology of 'Wellbeing and Treatment Centre'. These are centres aimed to house multiple and varied services for the public, accommodating services traditionally based in hospital sites, alongside the 'every day' services such as GP and dentist practices, all within a building which has been purpose built for multi-function. The centres have been established on a 'one stop approach' basis and sited so that they, "provide ease of access for all since they are located in well established hubs of community activity where people go to shop and access other services" (www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/contact/WellbeingTreatmentCentres.htm).

The undertaking of this scheme was seen in Belfast in 2005 with the opening of the first Centre, namely the Arches Wellbeing and Treatment centre, sited on the Newtownards road in East Belfast. Since its completion, the Trust has delivered six further centres, resulting in a total of seven sites in North, East, South and West wards of the city at a combined cost of approximately £58.9m (Figure 25).

The design quality of these buildings should be acknowledged and commended. They were completed under the direction of Health Estates manager John Cole, who led a directive to focus on the design quality of all new Health buildings. To facilitate this, they were delivered through a new procurement route, which aimed to support design integrity and collaborative working practices. Adequate resourcing to support the design process was cited as a reason contributing to the projects' success. This was supported by insistence that the design fee agreed with the appointed design team should be fair, to reflect the time and care required to achieve a quality design solution. Alongside this, the inclusion of Architects, Engineers and Quantity surveyors, in an in-house team, safeguarded the quality and design vision for the project, as they worked collaboratively through the process with the appointed Architectural practice (Buxton, 2011). The quality of the buildings delivered is reflected in the numerous design awards the Centres have received. This strategy by Health Estates to improve building quality should be a model to which other sectors can refer. Design quality is key to improving the overall quality of experience in our built environment. Therefore, it should be an ambition at the forefront in all sectors: Education, Housing, Leisure, Cultural and Commercial.



**Grove**
Contract Value: £19M

**Carlisle**
Contract Value: £6.4m

**Shankill**
Contract Value: £6.4m

**Beech Hall**
Contract Value: £6.4m

**Bradbury**
Contract Value: £5.8m

**Arches**
Contract Value: £8.46m

**Knockbreada**
Contract Value: £6.4m

Wellbeing & Treatment Centres delivered by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust: Site distribution and contract value. (2015)

Figure 25 (above): Diagram showing spatial distribution and contract value of Wellbeing and Treatment Centres delivered by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.
Data Source: Kennedy Fitzgerald LLP and Todd Architects.

Figure 26 (right): Images of Wellbeing and Treatment Centres in Belfast – the focus on design quality has been well received and highly commended.

While the quality of the building as an individual entity is praised, it is the spatial planning of the services which will facilitate the ability of these buildings to be fully and freely accessible to all members of the public. The Belfast Health Trust emphasize that they aim to create a 'safe and welcoming environment,' to all users and staff, stating: "The Trust will be proactive in challenging sectarianism and racism and will promote good relations to ensure access to services for everyone" (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust 2014, p.122). A neutral environment can be seen in the internal spaces in the centres, all of which have an interior design of welcoming contemporary style, in which no emblems or symbols of partisan 'community' nature are visible. While these inside spaces are the final spatial experience of the user, the first experience is the urban context surrounding the centre. It is this context which should be carefully considered if the centre is to be accessible for everyone.

In a divided city, creating new buildings within existing community spatial geographies generates the expected issues with territory and psychologic accessibility. Therefore, the creation of these centres within 'well established community hubs,' has led to four of the seven sites being situated in areas of high religious polarization. Only two of the seven sites are within the middle 40% to 60% 'mixed' range, namely Knockbreada and Bradbury Wellbeing and Treatment Centres, both of which are located in South Belfast. Three of the seven sites operate in ward areas of very high religious polarization, namely Carlisle, Shankill and Beech Hall Wellbeing and Treatment Centres, all reporting over 80% of one denomination. These religious demographics question the ability for the urban context of the site to remain neutral and welcoming, despite efforts from the Health Trust to ensure an inclusive internal environment.

Alongside ward demographics, the reasoning for constructing sites in close proximity should be reviewed. To take an example, the Grove Health and Wellbeing Centre located on the York Road, is only 1.6 miles from the Carlisle Wellbeing and Treatment Centre located on the Antrim Road, which in turn is located only 1.7 miles from Shankill Wellbeing and Treatment Centre. Is this the most effective way to deliver local services? Or could more 'shared' sites be considered to reduce building duplication? To emphasise, this report does not question the need for local health service provision, only the strategy for basing the provision of services on restricted territorial geographies. We consider that the 'city community' as a wider definition should be at the forefront of location decisions.

The need for careful review of the future spatial planning of Health Service buildings takes on new importance as the Health Trust progresses with an agenda of local integrated care provision, seeing a move of selected hospital services to community-based local locations (HSCT, 2011). The point of concern to address is the definition of 'community.' What department will define this? Often within the divided city context, the definition of 'community' offers a limited spatial area. Therefore, we consider that it is crucial for the Public Service Authority and the Planning Department to address this definition in order to have a clear and agreed strategy for the critical assessment for locating and integrating new sites for all public facilities.

**The Belfast City model, developed by the Forum for Alternative Belfast to promote a more three dimensional understanding of the city.**

# 7.  Alternative way of Planning

## What Can Be Done?

This section of the report looks at how the issues raised in sections one and two can be addressed. It starts with further reappraisal of past interventions and the lessons that can be drawn from this reflection. It then goes on to suggest a new planning model that is underpinned by some clearer definitions of spatial choices, as well as key terms such as 'planning' and 'community'. This is followed by an attempt to outline ten principles that should guide the development of policy and practice. Finally, this section offers some practical advice on creating a new, more relevant form of development planning, including new approaches to dealing with spatial deprivation.

Addressing the problems of divided Belfast demands radical reappraisal of intervention. Many deficiencies have debilitated city regeneration efforts. For the sake of brevity, some examples will suffice:

**1.  Policies tend to be based on very flimsy evaluation.** They move from one programme to another, without really testing what worked and what didn't in the previous programme, or indeed programmes from elsewhere. In this circuitous policy route, the underpinning concepts vary over time, giving a delusionary impression of innovation and progress: participation becomes partnership; poverty becomes social exclusion; multiple deprivation becomes multi-dimensionality; linkage becomes connectedness; etc. It is almost as if because we cannot change the problems, we change the names instead. As civil servants come and go, institutional amnesia takes hold, and thereby wheels are inadvertently re-invented, because no basis exists for learning from the past. For instance, as explained earlier, five years were spent on a process of intensive and comprehensive engagement around re-imagining Belfast in a major cross-sectoral City Visioning process in the mid-1990s. What happened? The resulting concept plan was set aside, for the whole process to be started again.

**2.  The spatial scale and model of intervention keeps changing.** No clear and consistent decision can be reached about the appropriate policy or territorial focus. For instance, Making Belfast Work eventually went for big geographies in their area partnerships, most of which embraced the two main communities, and offered a scale and scope that sensible strategies for long-term and deep-rooted regeneration demand. Then, along comes Neighbourhood Renewal, which retreats back into small, and often sectarian-enclaved, areas. The former was an organic home-grown intervention, while the latter was one simply cloned from the English model. No rationale was offered for this switch in emphasis.

**3.** **There is tendency to not distinguish between development in a place, and development of a place.** The former tends to focus on physical-led development, while the latter concentrates on people-centred development, enhancing the skills and capacities of the residents. Both are needed. But, the latter is the more difficult and long-term. Anybody can put up a building. But, building community is much tougher. Nurturing neighbourliness, friendships, trust, respect, and resilience -- this is the 'soft infrastructure' that is the indispensible scaffolding of sustainable place. A classic example of this flawed thinking is found in the plan to build a 'community hub' in the highly contentious and currently vacant space, known as Girdwood, long before there is any prospect of an actual community.

**4.** **There has been little connection between the urban programmes for deprived areas and the wider city regeneration.** This lies at the heart of the whole predicament. The token response to poverty areas embodied in early urban strategies since the 1970s gave way to the real serious investment, through Urban Development Grant and other significant

funding, in the City Centre and Waterfront, balanced a little by later programmes in the deprived areas, such as Making Belfast Work. But, the overall tendency has been to parcel the city into distinctive development zones; parse the various publics that are accordingly targeted: commercial business people; commuters; the disadvantaged; the professional class in anchor institutions, such as universities and hospitals; etc; and portion the investment in ways that favour the more privileged and powerful.

In the context of a city already fractured and fragmented by socio-spatial polarisations caused by increased social inequality and our enduring conflict, this 3P tendency to parcel, parse, and portion needs conversion to a 3S policy of *stitch*, *scale*, and *scope*: stitching the city together as one coherent entity to be planned and developed as a unit, as recommended by the Forum for an Alternative Belfast; scaling investment proportionately in both funding amount and time-frame to the challenge being addressed, while re-drawing the geographies of 'local community' to embrace cross-class and inter-denominational populations; and scoping the basis of all development strategy to include both the social needs and assets in an area, while drawing in all funding sources -- public, private, and voluntary-- behind a common vision and purpose for the city, so that, for instance, philanthropy money is complementing, rather than duplicating or substituting for, public money.

Unfortunately, the latest schemes for the city, such as the Belfast Masterplan, are still yielding to the conventional 'zoning' approach, whereby it ear-marks a development axis from Queen's University through to the city centre and the new University of Ulster campus out to the Harbour and Titanic quarter. While speaking the language of integrated development, anchor institutions, and the role of neighbourhood, it is still given to fragmenting the urban frame into the digital city, the learning city, the centre city, etc., when instead of such multiple cities, there should be ONE CITY.

## 5. Scant concern has been paid to quality.

Targeting has its virtues. But, one of the problems with the culture of targeting is that it tends to focus on the easily measurable, thereby reducing most appraisals to tick-box audits. There may be quality design invested in the central core, though visitors to the new Titanic quarter might query that, given much of its bleakness, blandness, and disconnectedness. But, whatever quality consideration is so invested, it is not rolled out to city neighbourhoods in a coherent quality design framework for the whole city.

## 6. The urban prospectus is not underpinned by robust analysis.

What is happening to the contemporary city derives from substantial structural and cultural changes over the last half century, including: economic re-structuring; related urban-rural shifts; growing social inequality, also reflected spatially in greater social segregation; the re-configuration of 'community' in the context of changing family formations and household structures, wider social networking, decline of religious observance, immigration, etc. These and other societal processes make for new urban complexities that are not reducible to old-style planning, based on 'predict and provide'. Put simply, this is a less predictable world.

## 7. There has been under-appreciation of how rewarding bad behaviour can encourage more bad behaviour.

Too often, there has been inclination to throw money after the violence in effort to curb acute outbreaks of disturbance. However, well-intended such intercession, allocation of investment should never be related to the degree of violent feuding, and the multi-layering of such impulsive initiatives over existing policy only promotes a confusing array of partnerships and plans, when what is really needed is clear, consistent, and carefully conceived intervention.

## 8. Problems with delivery persist.

Proliferation of plans seems to generate a law of diminishing returns. The more we have, the less we seem to use. One aspect of this problem is the lack of clarity about the hierarchy of authority accorded various plans, and how precisely they nest with each other, and how they will fit with the proposed Community Plan and Spatial Plan process. At least in the case of the latter, there is emphasis on building into the plan itself precise delivery mechanisms: when it is to happen; what agencies are responsible; where the money is coming from; who it is to effect? etc.

**9.** **Too often, international consultants have been employed at considerable expense and to limited effect.** Such consultants have a tendency to 'clone' standard urban regeneration strategies, often influenced by neo-liberal orthodoxy, and implant them here. Learning these lessons would be a good start. But, more is needed. New planning frameworks have to bring on board the range of sectors and funding bodies that can make a difference to the city, so that all energies and resources are working in synergy rather than rivalry.

That means that the substantial public spend from the mainstream departments, such as Education and Health, together with the important role of Foundation funders, together with the voluntary and community input, are brought more cohesively together to work collaboratively along a common grain of city development. Moreover, we need in City Council, as the body which will hold primary authority for much of the planning and regeneration, a multi-disciplinary team that traverses the current silos of Development, Community Development, Good Relations, Leisure and Public Parks, etc. It should be a team that brings together planners, architects, urban designers, community developers, economic developers, educationalists, conflict resolvers, etc. from a formative stage in the planning process, recognising themselves as urbanists, working together to take forward a visionary, strategic, inclusive, and proactive plan, with built-in delivery.

**But, any hope of developing a coherent regeneration strategy for Belfast has to address its long-standing sectarian division. Too often, planners have tried to airbrush this dimension out of their calculation, as beyond their remit and competence. Such apparent 'neutral' planning is not impartial. It is nonsense. Planning is not some apolitical, technical activity. It is meaningless, if it disregards the underlying social processes which shape space. In this context, as indicated in the earlier narrative, three key processes uniquely combined to create Belfast's current patterns of de-population and deep segregation:**

- First, following the Matthew Plan, 1963, the decision was taken to de-magnetise Belfast, in terms of both investment and population, and to de-cant many former residents to new satellite towns of Antrim and Craigavon, as part of an economic modernisation, based on the attraction of transnational capital to new greenfield-sited industrial estates. This strategy was enshrined in the 1969 Belfast Urban Plan.

- Second, the other key aspect of this strategy related to the comprehensive redevelopment of inner city Belfast at the same time, and the lower density housing and new roads infrastructure that accompanied this 'slum clearance' demanded that many former inner city residents moved elsewhere.

- Third, these intended two major 'pull' factors in population were unexpectedly supplemented by the 'push' factor caused by the emerging Troubles at exactly the same time, inducing some to leave a city that quickly became the primary location for the violent conflict. By the same token, many of those remaining, particularly in the most troubled areas, moved into tighter ghetto communities of their co-religionists for greater security, accentuating the long-standing pattern of city segregation.

Given the 'sprawl' effect of some of this de-centralisation, some 100,000+ commuters come into Belfast every day (Belfast City Council, 2015), half of the city's total resident number. It can be asked whether there are many of the important aspects of city-region planning, like office development, roads infrastructure and city parking, which are essentially designed with the commuter interest in mind. Many of these commuters take up the most skilled jobs in the city, a pattern which on a comparative basis with similar cities in Britain produces a high GDP per head.

So, a city that has been doing quite well economically in the recent past is also one where a substantial section of its residents is failing to share fully in that success, producing a 'tale of two cities' effect, a social fragmentation augmented by the ethno-national division. While there is no simple causal relationship between segregation and deprivation, there is an interactive relationship. Moreover, the continued inter-communal contest in relation to territory and identity contributes to the damaging fragmentation

**Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts on Antrim Road, Belfast, which has recently been developed by the 174 Trust - an example of excellent renovation.**

of the city, and thereby to its under-development. As with interventions around deprivation, we have had a series of 'good relations' initiatives over the decades.

Starting in 1969, the newly formed Community Relations Commission quickly decided that their ideal intervention in contested areas around bridge-building community relations was unfeasible, given the intensity of hostilities. Instead, they shifted to a strategy of community development, working within each community bloc, and trusting that the common issues of deprivation that would emerge from this focus would in time present opportunities for cross-community contact and collaboration. To a modest degree, it did.

**But, this critical decision to prioritise single-identity work ultimately accorded legitimacy to such separatism, and the corollary was that the integrated development that should have been embedded in public investment in these areas became aspirational rather than normative. From this flawed genesis, a whole structure and culture of 'community development' formed, inherently endorsing the sectarian geographies of many 'local communities' as an unfortunate inevitability of an ethno-nationalist contest, rather than calling it what it is: a narrow ghettoization, which locked these areas into constricted spaces and visions, and encouraged rivalries over allocation of urban resources. While this can be wrapped in plausible theories of social capital, how 'bonding capital' has to be nourished as a platform to 'bridging capital', and such like, the practice is that it reinforces a deformed concept of 'community' in contested cities like Belfast that is ultimately supportive of segregation and division.**

Accordingly, as the demography of places like Belfast changes to a more 50-50 share between the two traditional communities, contests over spaces are likely to intensify rather than abate. In such circumstance, we need a set of principles to guide the use of, and access to, the city. It cannot be proper that any group can claim part of the city as 'their territory' that other citizens can only access by compliance with their approval criteria. Such 'balkanisation' denies a view of the whole city as everyone's neighbourhood.

To work at its best, contemporary urbanism needs to be fluid, permeable, accessible – a pluralist place for a pluralist people. However, such principles can only take root in a shift from the politics of coercion to the politics of persuasion.

**The simple reality is that Unionists cannot rely any longer on the authority and sway of a secure majority. If they want to retain a UK-based sovereignty, they have to reach out beyond their core constituency to win the blessing, or at least voluntary acquiescence, from a section of the Catholic community. Similarly, since they have now signed up to the principle of consent, mainstream Republicanism cannot attain their goal of a united Ireland without earning the endorsement of a section of the current Unionist community.**

In this way, a changed political landscape is congruent with changing the urban landscape of contested cities like Belfast. In this complex context of a divided city, when addressing issues of the built environment and cultural identity in Belfast, policy has veered between ambivalence (McEldowney, Sterrett, and Gaffikin, 2001) to forms of planning and regeneration that positively engage around issues of contention. In the mid-1990s, urban policy in Belfast was marked by multi-sectoral dialogic consultations that openly acknowledged the impact of contested space (Gaffikin and Sweeney, 1995), and the results were evident in the final strategy. This spoke of linking regeneration into the peace process, the correspondence between deprivation and division, and the need to move away from narrow 'territoriality towards unifying goals, which heal as they help renew' (Making Belfast Work, 1995, p.19). This was followed by similar exercises in Belfast city-region planning, which addressed the 'implications of a divided society', including issues such as the 'peace walls'; the sensitivity of allocation of land for housing; and accessibility of employment to both sides of the community' (Gaffikin, Morrissey, Mc Eldowney and Sterrett, 1997, p.43). A subsequent regional plan process included engagement with around 500 community and voluntary organisations, during which issues of sectarian division were aired (Gaffikin, Mc Eldowney and Sterrett, 2000). The impact of

this discourse emerged in the final regional plan, known as Shaping Our Future, which recognised:

> "Internally, Northern Ireland is a deeply divided and polarised society. Evidence suggests that community divisions have deepened in recent years. This has obvious implications for planning, especially when rational planning choice is often constrained by a strong sense of communal 'ownership' of territory".
> (Department of Regional Development, NI, 2001, p.9)

For instance, at the onset of the current peace process, Belfast undertook a major visioning exercise in 1995 about its long-term future, involving the establishment of a representative City Partnership Board, which engaged in widespread consultation across the city's diverse constituencies, in a series of workshops, forums and seminars, lasting for just over five years. Unlike many previous policy and planning processes, the contentious issue of division was not sidelined. As expressed in the preliminary vision statement, the Board projected 'a city where people are valued more than the territory or the ideology that they hold, and where nothing is more precious than life itself, a city determined to move beyond the habit of hate to discover new ways of creatively living with difference' (Belfast City Partnership Board, June 1998, p.3). In similar vein, the final plan (Belfast City Partnership Board, 1999, I) spoke of how 'Belfast will belong to all its people. Supporting and respecting each other, all will play their part in the life of the city'. Importantly, the Board identified a rubric to facilitate the integration of all dimensions affecting prosperity, equity and quality. Guided by the core messages from its consultations, it adopted the concept of a Mutual City, taken to be one that encouraged links and collaboration amongst all sections and areas, while opening the city up to the wider world. But, after all of this protracted effort, and even after successfully reaching a broadly consensual conclusion about the way forward for the city, implementation of its action proposals came unstuck, when it became evident that constituent partners were unwilling to set aside their own priorities, corporate objectives, or interests in favour of strategic collaboration. In part, this impasse was related to the distinctive dilemmas faced by deeply divided cities in pursuing sustainable urbanism.

For instance, all cities are being encouraged to plan for compact form that promotes sustainability and efficiently optimises use of brownfield land. But, in Belfast, much brownfield land is in or near Protestant areas, given the decline in that community. Yet, new housing supply on many of these sites would likely face Catholic occupancy, given the higher Catholic need for housing. Such patterns, in turn, are likely to be viewed by some Protestant communities as territorial encroachment.

**It would help to have an agreed citywide framework, within which local negotiations about such re-definitions of space could be conducted. Just as it helped to open up the Northern Ireland conflict to a more global reference, so it is useful to ease the intensity of very micro conflicts about contested land distribution by framing them within an agreed set of fair principles. But a real shared city has to embrace also the issue of socio-spatial segregation. Recent developments in Belfast have risked generating a new tale of two cities, with new projects relatively bypassing North and West Belfast, which has long lacked a vibrant economic base, and remains scarred by 'peace' walls. A sustained strategic approach to the creation of a new development axis for this area is intrinsic to any serious objective to build a shared city. Alongside this, there is a difficult discussion about how the spatial concentrations of multiple deprivation can give way to more socially mixed communities, without the negative externalities associated with gentrification.**

A dynamic and differentiated interpretation of 'space' illustrates the problematic pursuit of shared space in a contested city. Is the notion of 'shared space' to be taken as inherently benign and its alternative of ethnic space to be regarded as universally malign? Conversely, is not the objective to create more 'shared space' in Belfast itself disputable? For instance, does it imply that the whole city should comprise shared space, whereby success would be calibrated in terms of the diminution of ethnic space? If a 'shared city' means an 'agreed city' and the latter embodies agreement to disagree, and thereby a high degree of separate living in a manner that is mutually respectful and non-threatening, that is one thing. But

if it means a significant increase in integrated social interaction and inter-communal collaboration, rooted in values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and interdependence, that is a much more ambitious project. How can this be accorded spatial form in a city whose sectarian signature is a predominantly Catholic/Nationalist West and a predominantly Protestant/Unionist East, fragmented from each other by both the natural environment of the river, and the built environment of major infrastructure?

No blueprint is available for such an outcome. Rather, it is an agenda that needs to be opened up for greater civic understanding and debate, and this task is the first thing that needs to be deliberately undertaken, supported by an investment in civic literacy and capacity.

A new approach to planning involves not simply a new system, but also a set of key principles that provide a framework for consistency and conflict resolution. As indicated, the idea of a 'shared' city has so many meanings to different people, in various contexts, that these multiple

meanings must be framed in one common code that is recognisable, and achievable, not only within the planning framework but also within a collaborative form of city governance.

## Shared Space in Neo-Capitalism

Talk about promoting a shared public realm has to take heed of the growing commercialisation and privatisation of public space in many cities. Regeneration is sometimes a cover for extending the reach of market rather than civic determination. For instance, Liverpool One is a massive retail/leisure/residential complex, owned by the Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor Estate. Nearby is the revamped Central docks, a 60 acre stretch along the Mersey, that will come under management control of Peel Holdings. Similar developments that are skewed in their appeal to wealthy and mobile consumers are to be found in sites, such as Birmingham's Brindley Place, adjacent to a central area of the city's canals. Some critics have remarked how such urban recasting can render the distinctive 'spirit' of cities to be soulless and sanitised, as well as beyond democratic



Figure 27: Ill-matched new apartment development alongside traditional communities in Sandy Row, Belfast

## Case study: Neve Shalom / Wahat Al Salam, Israel

In persistent conflict zones, such as Israel-Palestine, a city like Jerusalem becomes the microcosm of the central dispute, grounding it in myriad examples of separation and hostility. In such a cauldron, some argue that it is useful to step outside such discordant zones, and set up elsewhere an alternative way of engaging together, that may prefigure possibilities of more integrated living. An example here is Neve Shalom /Wahat Al Salam -- a village 'oasis of peace', established by Israeli-Arab peace-makers between Tel Aviv/Jaffa and Jerusalem. Our study visit there discovered a bi-national community, designed to amplify mutual empathy and equality as the basis for peaceful co-existence. But, for all its inventive painstaking effort to normalise living across the divide, the village is impacted by external events in the wider region, and by specific Israeli government policy. For instance, its Jewish young people are conscripted to the state army, whereas their Palestinian friends are not. While it shows the unfeasibility of a completely insulated 'shelter' in a war zone, the concept of an alternative model of integrated settlement in a deeply divided society, for all its limitations, is worth trying.

accountability (Townsend, February, 2016). In this regard, the prevailing model of urban regeneration, particularly in city centres, may be capable of delivering a more neutral venue for people as consumers, transcending traditional sectarian divides. But, they may do so at a cost of deepening the social divide in terms of forfeiting a concept of public space, whose currency lies in civic value rather than commercial price.

Experience of urban planning and policy in Belfast in recent decades continues to evidence a great deal of time and resources being spent devising futures that produce little dividend. One aspect of this problem is the lack of clarity about the hierarchy of authority accorded to the regional plan, the metropolitan plan, the Vision plan, the city masterplan, and urban regeneration elsewhere. The initiatives undertaken in Belfast derived from earlier interventions in Britain. To take an example of one city, Liverpool. It has had virtually every intervention, going back to the Educational Priority Area scheme in 1968, to the Community Development Project in 1969, to Inner Area Studies and Inner City Partnerships in the 1970s, to the Thatcher agenda of Enterprise Zones and Urban Development Corporations in the 1980s, to Major's Single Regeneration Budget in the 1990s, to Blair's Urban Priority Areas and Neighbourhood Renewal, and so on to the present. Yet, Liverpool remains a stricken city, according to many indicators of health and education performance, rates of workless households, etc.

Similarly, many of the urban strategies in Britain themselves derive from earlier policies in the USA. So, for instance, the War on Poverty there in the mid-sixties cradled a lot of these subsequent initiatives. Apparently, Ronald Reagan liked to joke that 'we fought a war against poverty, and poverty won'. But, there has been a radical re-think in many American cities in recent decades against continual compensatory programmes into the concentrated spaces of poverty and race. Instead, cities like Chicago have been demolishing their notorious ghettos like Robert Taylor Homes and Cabrini Green with the intention of replacing these grim complexes with mixed income, mixed race communities in quality mixed tenure housing. The policy is not without many problems, not least for those former residents, now displaced and prevented from returning to the new developments. For some, it is not much more than another form of gentrification. For others, it is seen as providing a new start, combining physical improvement with social schemes of support and expected responsibility targeted at residents in need (further detail on this initiative can be found on page 97).

## (Inter)national Examples

A key learning point from our study visits to other divided cities, such as Nicosia, Jerusalem, Mostar, and indeed to cities in Britain, such as Bradford and Birmingham, relates to the value of good spatial planning practice. In the first instance, what is required is well-established good planning and design, before any consideration of special planning to respond to the particular conflict.



Figure 28: Bradford's City Park.

## Case study: Bradford, United Kingdom

Bradford has significant spatial divisions largely based on ethnicity and class. The riots in 2001 highlighted racial tensions in a city that was becoming increasingly spatially segregated. Since then, a number of planning / urban design initiatives have attempted to address the spatial dimensions of division. The Bradford masterplan (2005) introduced a 'world mile' in an attempt to celebrate the city's diversity and to counter the increasing insularity of spatial communities. More recently, Bradford City Council developed a City Park in the heart of the city as an inclusive space. Sometimes known as 'the great meeting place', the park has been designed to attract the diverse range of city communities. Crucially too, its ongoing management and stewardship are underpinned and driven by the 'ethos of inclusion'.

**Belfast City Council - the source of a new planning approach?**

# A New Planning in a New Context

As indicated earlier in this report, for planners to be most effective in contributing to reconciliation, it is necessary for them to examine the political context, within which they operate. This involves their appreciation of the way traditional political discourse has impeded scope for new thinking about how we make space for each other.

In Northern Ireland, dealing with the past has been couched pre-eminently in terms of defining 'legitimate' victims and conceiving of ways to support them that are both compassionate and fair. There is, arguably, another important dimension to dealing with the past, which focuses on the different and contradictory narratives of the past four decades espoused by Northern Ireland's two major communities. Any attempt to deal with the past must have a prospective dimension, i.e. what would help bring closure, heal divisions and change mind-sets right across the community and political spectra?

Alongside victims' work, there is a strong case for communities to be encouraged to review their own narratives. Grappling with contentious parades or deciding who should be awarded the status of victimhood are shaped by contesting and almost community-specific interpretations of Northern Ireland's political conflict, and rival claims of blame and responsibility.

Some suggest that since there are two 'narratives' of Northern Ireland's violent history, each side should accept the autonomy of the other's, even if disagreeing with it - the solution is to agree to tell both. This approach rightly acknowledges that the past is interpreted through many lenses - personal experience, individual values, belief systems, and what used to be called ideology – so that there can be no agreed, consensual version that would be shared amongst Northern Ireland's diverse political actors/communities. Moving forward involves accepting the existence of different, even conflicting, narratives and the deep meanings attached to them.

The problem is that the two narratives (probably more than two) are not merely different, they intersect, and where they intersect are places of violence, physical damage, personal injury and death. Those who have been subjected to such acts are unlikely to embrace a principle of historical relativity. Meanwhile, such narratives determine the contesting positions taken on a variety of contemporary issues threatening the development of a peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland. For example:

- *Are Orange or republican parades an unthreatening expression of a legitimate heritage and culture or a flaunting of triumphalist and menacing intent against the other side?*
- *Is celebration of paramilitary dead a respectful remembrance of dedicated, principled patriots, or deliberate insult to all those they killed, and their families, and to all those who saw their campaigns as cruel, vain, and anti-democratic?*
- *Amongst the nearly 4,000 fatal victims of political violence in Northern Ireland, should the status of 'real' victimhood be applied only to a subset of the total?*

Contesting histories always generate difficult questions for the present. When such histories are shoehorned into the tiny spaces and miniature populations of Northern Ireland, the dilemmas can be all the greater.

There is little point in trying to establish the 'primacy' of an 'authentic' history. Criticising the 'other's narrative' can merely reinforce it. A different approach is to find the means to encourage people to critically interrogate their own narratives and to assess their usefulness for accomplishing what they want in the contemporary world. Crudely put, the Unionist/Loyalist narrative is that a peaceful and democratic society was assaulted by a violent criminal conspiracy. Even those involved now in power-sharing insist that their former enemies were forced to accept democratic methods, if not all together give up on their revolutionary project. Any concerns about the way in which Northern Ireland was run in the past are subsumed in outrage about Republican violence. Moreover, for some unionists, sustainable peace can only arrive when nationalists and republicans renounce their project – a hopeless form of Unionist wishful thinking.

**Similarly, the Republican narrative emphasises the undemocratic, discriminatory and violent character of the 'Orange State' that left those desiring change with no other recourse than to take up arms. Opportunities for peaceful, democratic reform were unavailable and state violence was proactive and oppressive – a position still clung rigidly to by republican dissidents, but largely shared by Sinn Fein's version of Northern Ireland before the peace process of the mid-1990s. From a viewpoint outside these positions, each narrative has only a tangential relationship to the past 50 years. However, counter-posing contrary sets of 'facts' to either cuts little ice, since they are so deeply embedded in the 'common sense' of each protagonist community.**

Yet, a key problem of clinging to community-specific versions of the past is that they can act as an obstacle to either side achieving its own goals. Remaining in the comfort of one's own history is about accepting the status of a 'moral minority' rather than an 'intellectual majority' – speaking only to one's own community rather than trying to shape society as a whole. While Northern Ireland has been interpreted as having a 'double minority' problem, more properly this should be conceived as a 'double majority' problem. Nationalists might have been a minority in Northern Ireland, but saw themselves as a majority on the island of Ireland. Unionists were not only a majority within Northern Ireland, but believed they were part of a union-favouring majority within the UK. Since each side already had its majority, there was no compelling reason to reach beyond the limits of their respective communities.

The contours of that game were shattered by the Good Friday Agreement, followed by the Republic's referendum, a combined voice of both parts of the island which located the solution to the sovereignty question firmly on the shoulders of the Northern Ireland population. All sides to the power-sharing agreement inherently accept that sovereignty will only be changed by majority consent within Northern Ireland. Thus, for the first time, Unionism and Nationalism have both a vested interest in trying to mobilise internal majority support for their respective positions.

Given the nature of demographic change (and, indeed, relative low turn-out rates in elections in some Protestant areas), Unionism no longer holds guarantee of a built-in majority. Thus, if the fundamental goal of unionists and loyalists is to maintain Northern Ireland's position within the UK, they need to ask if current strategies are conducive to that goal. Regarding Irishness, or wanting a united Ireland, as being forms of subversion, will not create a sustainable majority in favour of UK citizenship. Insisting

that the sovereignty symbols of the UK are displayed even more prominently and permanently than in Britain will not bring the undecided over to the Unionist cause. It's true that, in a couple of speeches, Mr Robinson, as First Minister, argued for making Unionism a more comfortable home for Catholics. But that sentiment doesn't find expression in clearly changed policy and practice.

Within the outer fringes of Loyalism, the contradictions are even more apparent. A rational argument can be made that the arterial routes of a city should be open to walk by the Orange Order, despite the opposition of those who live nearby. If such parades are truly triumphalist and sectarian, they should be banned from marching anywhere. The fact that local residents seem prepared to accept parading so long as it is not contiguous to where they live suggests a belief in the right to exercise control over nearby arterial traffic. No city could thrive if those moving within and through it required a variety of permissions from various sets of residents. Thus, Loyalists have an argument that needs to be taken seriously. But, to then try to prevent a Lord Mayor performing a ceremonial duty in Woodvale Park, or to violently attempt to block an anti-internment commemorative parade, suggest a partisan concept of the right to walk on such routes.

A self-critical look at the Republican narrative would reveal similar anomalies. Republicans talk about reaching out to the 'Protestant Working Class'. But, Sinn Fein treats Britishness as a form of 'false consciousness' (people being led up the garden path against their own self-interest by a manipulative Unionist leadership). Yet, to get the 'within-Northern Ireland' majority to change the constitutional position, republicans have to convince a significant section of unionist opinion. Such an agenda would have to confront difficult questions, such as: is there a plausible way of feeling British within a United Ireland?

But, if it doesn't embrace this challenge of engagement, Republicanism is going nowhere. Republicans have 'apologised' for civilian deaths over the past four decades but, given the elasticity of their definition of 'legitimate target', should a more wide-scale apology be offered? Indeed, should much of their 'war' be considered 'sectarian'? Republicanism claims that it wants to go beyond the limits of a 'nationalist bloc', and to achieve its fundamental goals it would certainly have to do so, but it has yet to find any practical way of reaching beyond the comfort of its own history.

**In short, to achieve their own fundamental goals, both sides need to embrace what might be called 'smart pluralism' (being pluralist rather than majoritarian in pursuit of one's own interest, rather than some vaguely defined 'ethical good' for the whole society) and what John Gray (1995) calls 'agonistic liberalism' (accepting that one's own values cannot provide a comprehensive account of society, and being prepared to seek an 'uneasy equilibrium' with others' values). Self-critically engaging with one's own narrative permits the engagement between narratives to help resolve contemporary issues.**

It's interesting that British governments (in recent times) have taken modest steps in the direction of self-interrogation – the establishment of the Saville and other inquiries; the apology given by David Cameron in the House of Commons for Bloody Sunday, and state collusion in sectarian killing. Critics claim that such actions do not go far enough. But, it would be welcome if local political actors took similar first steps. Fostering a process of critical self-interrogation would be more productive than say establishing a Truth Commission. There are too many competing 'truths'. Attempting to interrogate them to unveil the holy grail of 'fundamental' truth is unlikely to find consensus.

Despite the activities of dissident republicans, the period since 1998 has seen remarkable decline in organised, strategic political violence. As the PSNI website indicates, Northern Ireland still has lots of disorganised, opportunistic pseudo-political violence – various expressions of hate crime, including attacks on Catholic churches and Orange halls. Associated with this decline of high-level violence,

the narratives of each side in Northern Ireland have been suitably reshaped.

For Unionists/Loyalists, the war might be over. But, a cultural and socio-economic struggle has gained momentum. This takes the form of persistent attempts to remove or undermine symbols of the Union, politically-determined objections to the expression of Unionist and Orange culture, and a decline in socio-economic position of many Protestant communities.

For nationalists/republicans, the Good Friday Agreement has not yet delivered socio-economic equality. There is little respect for 'parity of esteem', and Loyalist and Orange organisations refuse to engage meaningfully with local Catholic communities about sensible ways of sharing space.

In short, even in a decade of low-level political violence that is within the living memory of a majority of Northern Ireland's citizens, contradictory narratives continue to predominate.

Given that Northern Ireland's is probably the most researched local conflict ever and that the region is incredibly data rich, such claims can be tested. To re-emphasise examples:

- A report by the Institute of Irish Studies (QUB 2010) indicated that in the previous four years, Loyalist street flags outnumbered Republican by at least three to one. In these terms, the idea that Loyalist symbols have been suppressed is hard to sustain;
- The correlation between the percentage of area inhabitants who are of Catholic religion/religion brought up in (community background) and an area's spatial deprivation score has been positive and significant in every regional Multiple Deprivation study since 1991 (around 0.4) and has changed little over two decades. The correlation with Protestant religion is also significant but negative (Robson, 1994 Noble, 2010, NI Census, 1991, NI Census 2011);
- This is also true for the Relative Poverty Measure (2003-2005) for 'equivalised' households. Interestingly, the correlation coefficient for 'unequivalised' households is insignificant, suggesting that demographic differences between Catholic and Protestant households help explain the disproportionate participation of the former in the most deprived category; and

- In contrast, the Labour Force Religion Report 2011 points to a rapidly changing labour market. Between 1992 and 2011, the number of Catholics in employment increased by 123,000 (63%) compared to a Protestant increase of 7,000 (2%), (p.27). In the same period, the Protestant share of the unemployed increased by three percentage points, while the Catholic share fell by the same (p.22). Between 1993 and 2011, the percentage of Catholics without qualifications fell from 32 to 14 percent, compared to 30 to 16 percent for Protestants (p.34). Finally, in 2011, the Protestant median hourly wage rate was actually lower than the Catholic median (p.31).

However, rather than establishing an 'incontestable' truth, the data allow both sides to cling to narratives of grievance. Poorer Protestants feel that the direction of change has been inimical, as evidenced by the loss of labour market advantage. Catholics continue to predominate in the most deprived areas, reaffirming the view that the equality agenda has been side-lined. The friction between the direction of change and the relative position of the two communities is a fruitful bed for claims and counter-claims. Moreover, technicalities like equivalence scales mean nothing on the streets where the risk of conflict is high. Equally, multiple deprivation measures, where half of the aggregate score is determined by benefits dependency, are seen as being biased in favour of Catholics, whose economic inactivity and unemployment rates have historically increased the value of deprivation scores for the areas in which they predominate. Indeed, differential benefits dependency tends to be linked to the wider UK discourse about 'strivers and scroungers', and this feeds into common-sense perceptions in Northern Ireland.

Belfast has been at the heart of such controversy. For instance, other local authorities accepted 'designated days' for flying the Union flag without recourse to violence. The Ardoyne March stand-off has rumbled on, punctuated by outbreaks of street violence. A key factor is that the regional capital now sees Sinn Fein as the largest political party on the local council and its councillors (unsurprisingly) pursue a republican agenda at every opportunity. Even so, the reaction of Unionists and Loyalists seems excessive, particularly to those who would prefer a complete absence of partisan symbols.

However, another key factor has been the city's violent history – particularly inter-communal violence. Between 1969 and 1999, 40% of all political violence in Northern Ireland took place within the city though its population share was mostly below 20%. Within Belfast, twenty wards (of a total of 51) accounted for 60% of all conflict-related fatalities and almost 70% of all sectarian killing (Morrissey & Smyth 2002). In these areas, containing around 5% of Northern Ireland's population, lived a quarter of all those with a Northern Ireland address who died in the Troubles. The intensity and concentration of political violence in these wards were unmatched across the region.

It is no co-incidence that these 20 wards are more residentially segregated than the city as a whole – 18 had populations made up of at least 70% a single community background in 2001, and 15 in 2011. Equally, their socio-economic position has been worse than the city as a whole – all have appeared in the most deprived decile of Northern Ireland wards in every regional spatial deprivation study since 1991, and in Belfast studies going back to 1971. Across a range of indicators (unemployment, economic inactivity, reported health, qualification attainment, recorded crime and anti-social behaviour) their rates are substantially higher than for the rest of the city. Yet, they have also been the major beneficiary of almost all spatially targeted regeneration, anti-poverty, conflict transformation and urban development programmes of the past three decades – probably more spent per head than any other similar population in Europe.

There have been some fundamental problems here. Their persistent location within the most deprived decile raises questions about programme effectiveness While spatial targeting requires an accepted set of allocation criteria, use of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure is seen to favour Catholic over Protestant areas, thereby complementing political contest with squabbles over resources. It also facilitates a 'race to the bottom', whereby communities want to be amongst the 'most deprived', since that is the gateway to urban resources. Meanwhile, conflict transformation projects seem unable to develop a robust methodology for identifying and evaluating outcomes specific to their activities. Consequently, it is hard to identify (never mind measure) any kind of cost-effectiveness. It's reasonable to ask when so much is known and so much has been done, why so little has been achieved.

More recently, more innovative programmes have been attempting to grapple with the downside of traditional development and conflict transformation initiatives – the Social Investment Fund, Delivering Change, and the Child Poverty Strategy, all launched in a time of fiscal retrenchment and austerity. Others are worth considering – the Community Budgets (following from Total Place) pilots in Britain have been positively assessed as bringing a more fruitful approach to local spending – new ideas about local development emphasise investing in community assets (rather than just needs) to maximise resilience and readiness to grasp opportunity. There remains, however, a need for a new approach to conflict transformation that is more measurement than process oriented, less subordinate to political interests, and completely focused on outcome achievement. But, whatever is done, dealing with the past particularly means dealing with the specific legacies of Belfast.

The challenge is to find a way not just to encourage but to oblige a process of critical self-reflection. In that respect, the significance of an 'authoritative outsider' is paramount. One of the anomalies of the Northern Ireland Peace Process is that, when things are going well, we want to 'export' our success, but, when less well, we call on others to bail us out. Notwithstanding the peculiarities of the Northern Ireland psyche, authoritative (those awarded authority to mediate from all sides) outsiders have made a crucial contribution – George Mitchell being an obvious example. A key lesson from such interventions suggests that the stages involve: first setting out principles for dealing with the past, and then engaging with key actors to seek agreement on these, before specifying this or that mechanism. This approach (derived from John Rawls 1971 method for devising Principles of Justice) attempts to separate the principles under which things should be organised from the self-interests of those engaged. Thus,

to summarise, it might be suggested that:

- **there are a variety of 'pasts' constructed and interpreted through experience, value systems etc. But they cannot be regarded as completely autonomous or universally explanatory in a small 'contested' place, where people still have to engage with each other;**
- **criticising the 'other's past' is both inappropriate and ineffective – being critical of one's own past is not merely more productive, but awards the moral authority to be critical of others;**
- **a good starting point is for people (and organisations) to ask themselves (with the benefit of hindsight) what they regret most about their own actions over the past four decades and what they would do differently if such an opportunity existed – a focus on what was done wrongly, rather than recital of past triumphs; and**
- **regarding the present, people should make greater effort to be clear about the principles that underpin their actions and to ask, in a divided society where majoritarianism has failed, what are the most productive ways to achieve their own goals.**

We may ask whether leadership on such an agenda can come from the reconstituted new local governance.

## The New Councils

Two linked processes of change are just now underway, offering unique opportunity to address division. First, as part of reform of public administration, a great deal of planning and regeneration responsibility is to be transferred to a re-shaped local governance. Second, the form of planning itself may be set to change radically.

The introduction of community planning and spatial planning brings prospect of an innovative approach that gets beyond 'land use planning', to a more comprehensive and holistic model, linking the physical with the social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of development. Importantly, this new planning approach facilitates clearer insight into the spatial needs and impact of all other policy sectors, such as health, education, and social services. It also allows for a clearer picture of the spatial needs and impact of Good Relations policies across the whole of governance.

However, interviews conducted as part of this research highlight the fact that the understanding of concepts like 'community planning' and 'spatial planning' can vary widely. Moreover, the new planning model offers a more inclusive and participative process that could help promote more 'bottom-up' forms of planning and regeneration. Evidence from other conflict-ridden societies, afflicted with contested space, shows that such planning is best adapted to peace-building, and to addressing more candidly the divisions reflected in deep spatial segregation of communities and services. In addition, this new approach could deal with the awkward issue of 'community'. At present, there are two uses of the term: first, 'community' as in 'local neighbourhood'; and second, 'community' as in 'the two main communities: Protestant and Catholic'. In deeply divided societies, 'community', in the sense of local area, can be an exclusive concept, whereby the solidarities within an area can be nurtured in part by hostility to, and rivalry with, those outside it. A planning process, that responds mainly to the preferences of such local segregated areas, risks reinforcing the division and ghettoisation. By contrast, the idea of 'community' in the concept of community planning is much broader, and more civic rather than ethnic. For instance, in Belfast, such an approach encourages all residents to consider the wider city as their 'neighbourhood', and to look to the mutual benefits involved in its city-wide development.

## Policy Choices

Finally, the emergence of planning as a more inter-disciplinary profession focussed on place-making, rather than land use planning, promotes a holistic view of urban development that includes themes like education and health. But, policy in these areas is still framed within the wider societal divisions, and the 'choices' these rifts suggest. People living and working amidst division and conflict are faced with four broad options:

● accept the social engineering that enclaves separate communities in sectarian zones marked by exclusivity and absolutism, and thereby resign urban development to continuous reproduction of segregated territories of single identity;

● adopt a minimalist 'live and let live' approach, that acknowledges a tendency for divergent groups to seek security in the similar and familiar, thereby managing a peaceful co-habitation of the city, in which little real inter-cultural engagement across traditional divides is facilitated;

● endorse a respectful democratic politics of identity and belonging, whereby conflicts are addressed candidly through principles of equity, and regular processes of mature negotiation and reciprocal accommodation; and

● develop a more pluralist vision of the city, whereby no one culture or ideology has pre-eminence over others, and positive interaction across diverse traditions and spaces promotes mutual enrichment.

Spatial typologies can be identified as follows:

**Ethnic space:** signified and separatist, and stamped as belonging to one specific clan, this terrain is reflected most obviously in segregated communities, prone to mutual mistrust, if not hostility. Tribal references and associations prevail over ties that bind across the traditional enmity;

**Dead space:** often, large tracts of land that are subject to deep discord are abandoned indefinitely for delayed development until some agreement can be reached about their use. This 'lost city' is usually subject to blight and neglect. It fragments the urban fabric further, and usually not even given opportunity of 'meanwhile' use;

**Neutral space:** providing a secure, safe preserve, outside territorial claims by any of the protagonist groups, it has the potential for cross-community use and encounter, without prospect of substantial or sustained engagement around divisive allegiance;

**Shared space:** this ensures a safe dialogic arena for proactive and deliberate exchanges across the divide. Candidly related to competing interpretation of the roots and expression of the contest, it offers, at once, recognition and inclusion of difference. Thereby, forthright, but respectful, challenge can be encouraged -- often as agonistic conversation, without assurance of conversion; and

**Cosmopolitan space:** offering space that is above and beyond the local animosity, this embraces a more global contour and perspective. Multiple cultural identities are on display. Diversity is celebrated and interrogated within a witness of common humanity. From such cross-pollination, springs new hybridities. It recognises that as humans, we are creatures of both being and becoming. We cannot be tied down to one simple designation or affiliation.

In turn, this spatial typology is linked to six dominant discursive themes in conflict societies:

**Identity:** the distinctive and often tribal senses of belonging can emphasize enmity to the attachments of their opposition, as in the maxim: 'external force creates internal cohesion';

**Equity:** contests around equality and discrimination between the contesting groups can cloud more effective ways of assessing need;

**Security:** issues of community safety and justice systems are viewed in partisan terms;

**Territory:** physical terrain becomes both the actual battlefield and symbolic marker for group dominance or survival;

**Proprietary:** the issue of ownership of place -- whether it be a local neighbourhood or society at large -- particularly marks those contested spaces locked into wider sovereignty disputes; and

**History:** the past is an active spirit, persistently haunting the present and prospect of societies, multi-layered with ancestral animosities. Contending narratives of that troubled history remain a crucial component of contemporary rivalry, what to observers can be an obsessive fixation with a legacy that can't be 'fixed'.

Such 'themes' come to ground most clearly in those 'ethnic spaces' that experience the most acute form of the conflict --- very small local communities -- whereas they might be dealt with best in a context where 'shared' and 'cosmopolitan' spaces are extended. But, this seismic shift would entail a new attitude to 'community'.

## Re-thinking Space

In turn, these broad policy choices are influenced by how we think about space in a divided society. Space, in this context, is not understood as an inanimate stage upon which the drama of social life is daily unfolded. Rather, it is an active agent in the shaping of ever-changing society. It is relational. As such, its meaning changes over time with varied ownership, designation, and use. Not only is it socially made, it also 'makes' a key aspect of the social. In conflict societies, five main types of space can be specified (see above).

## Re-thinking Community

An old understanding of 'community' (Redfield, 1947; Tonnies, 1957) emphasises a place with a mainly uniform culture; where human relations are primary and bonded; social status largely ascriptive; and where the population is well-settled and largely immobile. This tradition of shared cultural affinity and legacy made for intimate and durable affiliation to locality and its residents. Those clinging wistfully to this view are sometimes dismissed as indulging in a romanticised retreat from the complexity and atomism of modern urbanism (Halsey, 1974). Certainly, the nostalgic craving for 'community' as the genial, cherished, and familiar, in preference to the remote and removed centres of financial power in the new globalism, is explicable. It is reflected in contemporary discourse about government devolution and the 'new localism'. It seems that as the economic realm drives people to attain scale, scope, and shelter, through being part of large multi-national blocs, the political domain drives people to seek smaller spheres of social connection to optimise civic participation and influence. The economic space is getter bigger, as the political space is getting smaller, both in terms of geography and ideology.

At what level of localism does it become easiest to animate civil society and nurture citizen capacity? In an age geared to more individual autonomy, personalisation, and self-actualisation, is the collective impulse enshrined in 'community' a residual legacy of paternalistic welfarism? Is 'community' a 'trapdoor' that cages the most marginalised publics in ambivalent solidarities such as 'disadvantaged areas' (Herbert, 2005)?

The apparent human inclination for attachment, meaning, and continuity may indeed be met best by human-scale settlements, whose proximities and daily social interactions foster bonding and mutual support. But, the 'composite commodity' that constitutes neighbourhood (Galster, 2001), with all its relational complexity, can be an ambiguous refuge for those intent on preserving an intimate, customised living place in a standardised, mass-produced globalised society.

## Re-thinking Segregation

Re-thinking what we mean by 'community' also leads on to re-considering how to address segregation. Housing developments that segregate the two dominant communities are most evident in the most deprived areas. Thus, over 90% of social housing areas are cast into mainly single identity communities, a figure that increases to 94% in Belfast (Shuttleworth and Lloyd, 2009) Yet, evidence from the Life and Times Survey suggests that a clear majority (80%) of people would prefer to live in mixed residential areas. The gap between this desire and its delivery cannot be bridged in the main by communities taking their own initiatives. It demands political leadership. Yet, as indicated elsewhere, this leadership faces an obvious dilemma. Most of the big political parties in Northern Ireland have their core constituency anchored in a single identity community. So, how can politicians who are tied to sectarian electoral arithmetic be the very ones who steer us out of these sectarian geographies that underpin their voting base?

**Certainly, government agencies like the Housing Executive have adopted a proactive strategy to progress towards more shared living. Its Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 outlines its objectives in these terms:**

- **To play a role in the formation of more stable, safer and cohesive neighbourhoods;**
- **To partner with other stakeholders in tackling the multifaceted and difficult issue of housing need in a contested society;**
- **To react promptly and competently to the needs of those endangered as a consequence of inter-communal strife; and**
- **To assist and support mixed housing where this is feasible, desirable and safe.**

To take this approach forward, it piloted an £1 million 3-year Shared Neighbourhood Programme (2008-2011), designed to develop areas that accommodate people's choice to shared residential living, irrespective of neighbours' religion or race, in a secure and welcoming environment for all. In turn, this led to the Shared Communities Programme, which concluded in December 2015, and the two initiatives together have developed 50 shared estates across Northern Ireland. From 2006, a total of 11 schemes have been advanced in cooperation with

Housing Associations, adopting Shared Future principles of a signed Community Charter, encouraging good relations and upholding the right to diversity within the estate. But, those behind this effort to promote shared living recognise the impediments posed by the various means of 'territorialising' areas (Housing Executive, 2016, p. 22):

> "*Political and sectarian displays are prevalent within our estates and symbols such as murals, flags, kerb painting, bonfires and paramilitary memorials can create a significant 'chill factor' for visitors to our estates. Proactive negotiations with communities and the funding of locally based re-imaging initiatives have had significant impact on our single identity estates and we work with both sides of the community, at the communities pace in order to affect change (e.g. Lower Newtownards Rd, Sandy Row, Ligoniel, Lower Falls, Milltown, Doury Rd)".*

In addressing such features, the Housing Executive extols the protocol recommended in a report it produced jointly with the Inter-Community Network (Inter Community Network and Housing Executive, June 2008), a guide that acknowledged:

1. the speed and rate of change will be established by the local community;
2. the process is reliant on local circumstances; and
3. this process will demand flexibility and may, from time to time, need review.

Thus, the vision of this approach affirms the right to live in safety, in a tolerant, diverse society where cultural differences within and between communities are celebrated, appreciated and respected. However, it concedes, in effect, the contingency of locality and circumstance, and the ultimate arbitration within the 'local community'. As explained elsewhere, we can see great difficulty with such concession.

A somewhat different approach -- with which we find greater favour -- is adopted in a recent report (Nolan and Bryan, 2016). Included in their main findings is that the package securing the greatest public support is for: (a) the Union flag to be flown on 18 designated days; (b) this stipulation to be rolled out across all of Northern Ireland;

and (c) this protocol not to derive from Westminster, nor from a series of separate negotiations by each council, but rather, from agreement amongst the main political parties at Stormont.

In a wider sphere, the authors advocate that flags should only be flown on key fixtures such as the Twelfth or Easter Rising anniversaries, for duration of two weeks around these events. Flags should not be placed outside premises delivering public services, such as health centres, hospitals, schools, and community halls, nor in community 'interface' areas.

While their polling demonstrated that 7 out of 10 people approved more regulation of flags in public spaces, the authors acknowledge practical difficulties in monitoring and implementing legislative-backed regulation, amongst which are: would there be licences? who would issue them? who would have the 'authority' to apply? and, what penalties would be imposed for non-compliance? Moreover, since flag-flying in the wider public realm is part of a more general 'identity display' that includes painted kerbs, bonfires, and murals, specific legislative-based intervention may not be as effective as a set of guidelines that offer good practice, geared to respectful relations. We would hold some reservation in this regard. Evidence of the positive impact legislation has made in the area of fair employment shows how it can be important in leveraging change. Pressure and persuasion are both required. On this basis, we would argue in favour of a legislative framework that would provide a consistent and enforceable intervention.

Overall, the Nolan-Bryan report raises the right slant, in our view: the need for a standardised approach to 'official' flag display, legitimated by the regional government. As such, it makes an important contribution to the discourse set to be generated by the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition, set up by the recent Stormont Agreement, known as A Fresh Start, and due to be operating from March 2016, and to conclude by September 2017.

As the demography of places like Belfast changes to a more 50-50 share between the two traditional communities, contests over spaces are likely to intensify rather than abate. In such circumstance, alongside a legislative framework, a set of consistent principles may be useful to guide the use of, and access to, the city.

> **Fundamentally, a set of planning principles would challenge the proposition that any group can claim part of the city as 'their territory' that other citizens can only access by compliance with their approval criteria. Such 'balkanisation' denies a view of the whole city as everyone's neighbourhood. To work at its best, contemporary urbanism needs to be fluid, permeable, accessible – a pluralist place for a pluralist people. However, such principles can only take root in a shift from the politics of coercion to the politics of persuasion.**

There are problems with our current arrangement for settling contentious issues like marches. In essence, the key criterion used by the Parades Commission is whether a particular march is likely to cause significant disturbance and violence. Yet, this may invite opponents of a particular march to suggest that it will be greeted by such violence. In other words, it inadvertently delivers the very threats society wants to avoid, and ends up possibly rewarding bad behaviour. Moreover, if we concede that groups claiming to represent whole areas can determine the conditions under which other groups march through 'their' area, we are effectively agreeing to a balkanisation of cities like Belfast, in which territories are seen to be legitimately under the control of sectional rather than civic interests. Such control of 'turf', particularly arterial routes, prevents the kind of open, accessible city demanded by successful urbanism.

At the same time, there is a real concern about provocative parades triggering aggressive reaction from groups who feel insulted and offended. At a general level, of course, to be offended is one of the paradoxical rights in a democratic society. Arbitrating this competing set of rights involves assessment about the nature and intent of organisations, and the judgement is for the whole of society. It is not for the partisan consideration of any particular interest. If marchers and bands behave like those in the recent past outside St Patrick's church in Belfast, deliberately going round in circles, while playing provocative tunes, their civic entitlement to city space is forfeited by their own irresponsible actions. If on the other hand, they behave like their brethren in Derry/Londonderry in more recent years, a more consensual acceptance of such festival can be cultivated.

# Planning Principles in a Divided Society.

The adoption of a set of planning principles in a charter for a civic society involves dialogue about key concepts that dominate this debate, such as rights, needs, and equality. These terms can be deployed to advance partisan political objectives, rather than to achieve genuine equity and mutual respect.

**The following principles try to outline an approach to the creation of an open, magnanimous society, in which we deal with difference through inclusion:**

**1.** **No one has a right to claim any territory on behalf of a communal identity. All of the city should be considered as shared space.**

**2.** **Since the city as a whole is every resident's neighbourhood, urban policy and planning should be concerned to create a pluralist city for a pluralist people -- open, connected, and inter-dependent.**

**3.** **Civic values of equity, diversity, mutuality, and social cohesion should take precedence over those ethnic or community values, rooted in tribal partisanship.**

**4.** **Capacity for such interlocking networks and good relations should be cultivated as a central mark of genuine community development.**

**5.** **Initiatives concerning peace-lines and contested spaces should be considered within the regeneration of their wider environments.**

**6.** Development of disadvantaged areas requires a collaborative and co-ordinated approach involving cross-community local groups working with multi-agency teams to achieve deliverable outcomes, reviewed by an informed external body.

**7.** Poor physical connectivity among neighbourhoods, and from those neighbourhoods to sites of employment, services and education, should be addressed as a priority. Road engineers need to acknowledge the role that they should play in helping to stitch the fragmented city back together again.

**8.** New housing developments need to avoid the replication of single identity social and/or religious communities and should aim to create mixed neighbourhoods, well-linked to wider city opportunities.

**9.** Such mixed developments, designed to create high-quality diverse communities, should become the model to help break down the social and sectarian divisions of existing city neighbourhoods.

**10.** Location of key public services is crucial to their accessibility. Public services should be sited in areas that are securely accessible to all communities.

# Rights and Responsibilities: Sense, Sentiment, and Sensibility

The principles above are rooted in a re-examination of rights and responsibilities in a divided society. The concept of inviolable human rights has for long been prominent in democratic political discourse, and behind this notion lies related ideas of freedom, justice, and good governance. The classical liberal position has tended to emphasise an individualistic perspective that focuses on entitlement to certain social goods -- the *right to* free speech; to assemble; to self-determination and such like (liberty), whereas the socialist perspective tends to underscore collectivist solidarity as being the basis for the *right from* -- the right to be secure from poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion (equality). Alongside these traditions, is a civic/republican stance that argues the importance of bridging these sometimes contradictory or competing set of rights with social empathy, affinity, and reciprocity, rooted in rapport, fellowship, and bonds of common purpose (fraternity). Such latter attributes are seen as the 'social glue' that fastens society as it grapples its way through the frequently rival priorities of liberty and equality.

These perspectives have considerable philosophical pedigree. For instance in the modern period, Mill (1859) argued for optimal freedom of expression that facilitated pursuit of ideas to their logical conclusion, regardless of the offense, upset, or embarrassment, caused in the process. But, even he recognised that this right was qualified by consideration of the 'harm principle' -- inviting necessary exercise of civilized power to preclude detriment to others. More recently, some have stretched this stipulation further with an 'offense principle' -- though Feinberg (1985) has conceded the complexity involved in assessing whether a particular professed affront can be actually substantiated. Accordingly, he has identified an intricate calculus for estimating abusive purpose and impact, including: the scope, duration and social benefit of the expression; the effort required for its evasion; the objective of the promoter; the amount of public offended; the depth of distraught caused; and the broader consequence for wider society. As considerations, these are instructive. As composite computations, they are impracticable. For one thing, in a digital age of netizens as well as citizens, estimating the 'reach' of any alleged slur or vilification would be challenging.

Going back to the 'dark age' of medieval history, it remained common for curbs on communication to be based on claims of heresy and blasphemy. Even yet, development in democratic thought over the last two centuries has continued to temper absolutist forms of free expression with certain eligibilities, concerning perjury, slander; obscenity; privacy; security; and, in more recent times, hate speech. The latter involves whole groups being negatively stereo-typed in ways that spur discriminatory or hostile behaviour against them. This suggests that there is a potentially pernicious 'creep' from abhorrent words about a group, to inflamed animosity, to incitement to injurious action against them. Yet, legal proof of direct causation or intent, of this outcome is highly problematic.

The persistent conundrum consists in the reconciliation of these three distinct tenets. Some insist that such resolution is unachievable since they are inherently incompatible. For instance, they argue that to secure equality demands the oppressive power of the big state that ultimately diminishes liberty. In these terms, espousal of equality is a denial of individual freedom to be different -- richer, cleverer, luckier, and such like -- traits that are innate to the human condition. Conversely, others propose that to protect effective liberty for vulnerable groups, such as the destitute or disabled, demands removal of inequalities that sustain their disadvantage.

Recourse to other conciliatory terms, such as fairness, offers little prospect of escape from these dilemmas. What might be more helpful is the concept of responsibility. Sometimes, not exercising your right may be the responsible thing to do. For instance, in 1999 in the USA, the National Rifle Association (NRA) held a rally in Denver, nearby to what had been a recent massacre of children by gunmen in Columbine school. While it can be maintained that the Association had the right to thus assemble, it can be said that its timing and location were highly insensitive. Freedom, unrestrained by consideration of negative impact on others, can be an abuse. Conversely, civility and courtesy, and related generosity to 'the other', can be more persuasive advocates of a position than ramming home one's 'right'.

Whatever of these qualifications, principles such as the Rule of Law, and equality before the law, are central to arbitration of conflicting claims about rights. In Northern Ireland, if a citizen takes a paint brush to the public realm, such as cable wall or kerbstone, such misconduct can be considered illegal criminal damage, subject to potential prosecution. Yet, sectarian interests can repeatedly deface the built and natural environment with partisan political depictions, with apparent impunity. Response to this transgression involves no more than common sense and civic sensibility. For instance, it is absurd for a community to protest about its health deprivation if, at the same time, an organisation, claiming to act on its behalf, piles old tyres on a bonfire, with hazardous carcinogenic consequence.

Parades, bonfires, murals, public display of flags, and such like, occur in space, and have impact on future use of space. Thus, they are of significance to planners. Again, it shows that disciplines that examine such behaviours -- psychology, philosophy, law, sociology -- are relevant to planning curriculum and training. To address these issues, planners have to work with others, including people in the justice system, to help resolve the conflicts around such contentious conduct.

In different regard, planners encounter claims and counter-claims about housing rights and equality. Given the demographic sensitivities and electoral impacts, the issue of housing remains central to a conflict about territory and identity. But, two aspects of this have to be distinctly drawn. People categorised in housing need have a right to affordable accommodation. But, they do not have a right to determine the particular location of that housing. Commonly, voices from within each of the main traditions speak of their community's housing need, and seek to get that need met in proximity to, if not contiguity with, their existing community. Concession to that claim would unintentionally reproduce sectarian geographies, and could become complicit in a process whereby each bloc tries to extend its spatial sphere of influence in unremitting rivalry for territorial dominance.

In such a way, housing policy becomes less about its important features -- such as attending to genuine need, quality design, mixed tenure, and socially diverse residence --- and more about reinforcing segregation and separatism.

For planners, this pattern is tied into the administrative spatial units, used to estimate in part social housing delivery and management. If designated 'Housing Districts' are overwhelmingly of one religious/political persuasion, it may skew the way 'waiting list' data show up a preponderance of need on one side of the community divide in that locale. Whereas, if the geography for assessing such housing requirement is extended, the results for differential need may prove to be different, perhaps showing a more even split between the two main traditions.

But again, these disputes are tied in with contesting definitions of equality. The on-going 'Rights Camp', in Ardoyne's Twadell interface, adopts terms like 'rights' and 'equality' that have been long associated with their political opponents, and uses them to present a picture of Protestants being suppressed and treated unfairly, relative to Catholics, in a drip-drip erosion of their British identity. But, in this endeavour, they conflate unionism with Protestantism and Loyalism -- the PUL identity, which is a sectarian exclusion of any potential Catholic adherents to a unionist politics. On the other side, equality is presented by Sinn Fein President, Mr Adams, as a 'Trojan horse' to wider republican objectives, or as expressed by another leading republican:

> "We want to build sustainable economic growth across the island. We intend to achieve this by tackling inequality, and that means ending partition. We cannot deliver an equal society when partition ensures that Ireland is unequal" (Alex Maskey, 2015, p.4)

This view tends to suggest that equality within Northern Ireland is inherently unobtainable, since the equality objective has to be seen in an all-Ireland frame, thereby claiming 'equality' as a preserve of a particular political cause that is subject to dispute in the island. A viable form of planning has to challenge these partisan interpretations of key concepts underpinning a real shared society.

# Changing Chicago and its Ghettos

As the third most populous US urban centre with 2.8mn people in the city and 9mn in the metropolitan area, Chicago stands out in many respects: its modernist skyscraper built environment; the genesis of a distinctive urban sociology that addressed the impact of ethnic diversity, and with forms of community activism exemplified in Alinsky's concepts of 'people power'. Moreover, its tradition of ambitious and comprehensive city-building that exudes urban optimism has been rooted in Burnham's pioneering 1909 Plan of Chicago, with its expansive grid development and major infrastructural and 'public space' projects.

However, following its notable growth from the early 20th century, Chicago experienced typical post-war de-centralisation, with centrifugal forms of suburbanisation and manufacturing job re-location, and later by the 1970s, de-industrialisation.

In more recent times, downtown Chicago has been significantly remade. Grand public projects, particularly along the lakefront from Navy Pier through to the half billion dollar Millennium Park to the Field Museum and Soldier Field and round to an expanded McCormick Place, have all carried a daring signature of new city capacity for recreation, culture, heritage, and tourism. Advocates of this inventive and magnet urbanism emphasise its essential democratic and levelling character, with free public arenas such as Millennium Park, with its distinctive architecture, public art, and urban landscaping transforming a largely derelict site into Chicago's version of New York's Central Park. Accompanying these dramatic urban statements have been strategic programmes of environmental improvement, including significant tree and flower planting, to 'green' and beautify the central city.

But such dramatic re-shaping of the city has its sceptics, who emphasise that behind the re-cast urban façade lie persistent realities of social and racial discrimination, evident in problem social housing and under-achieving public schools. Indeed, a different reading of this

spectacular change sees greater delineation between prosperous areas stretching from the Gold Coast in the north to the gentrified parts of Michigan Avenue in the south and concentrated spaces of deprivation and race in places like the city's Southside, home to a high share of Chicago's African Americans.

The racial divide is not black and white. It is now 36 percent black; 31 percent white; and 28 percent Hispanic, with the remaining 5 percent largely Asian. The most poverty-intensive neighbourhoods are disproportionately inhabited by racial and ethnic groups. Chicago has been long infamous for its forbidding public housing. As expressed by Popkin (2010, p.44):

> *"Decades of failed federal policies, managerial incompetence, financial malfeasance, and basic neglect had left its developments in an advanced state of decay. Conditions inside the developments were appalling, with crime and violence overwhelming and gang dominance nearly absolute".*

Having tried in vain to make positive impact on this embedded poverty through various modestly-funded urban compensatory programmes since the War on Poverty era of the mid-60s, the city government in the last two decades decided on a radically different tack. Since 1999, Chicago has adopted the Plan for Transformation to tackle its distressed public housing, including targets to demolish all 53 high rise buildings, comprising almost 21,000 of the city's 39,000 units of public housing. In their place, the Housing Authority planned to create 25000 housing units in mostly mixed-income developments, and by the end of 2009, the plan was on course to have revitalized 71.7 percent of this target, with total completion expected within the following decade. Importantly, the objective was not merely to alter the image and use of public housing, with more efficient occupancy rates, rent collection, and maintenance of property values. While purportedly offering enhanced housing opportunity for low-income

Figure 29: Cabrini Green before (above) and after redevelopment.

families, this was connected to a goal to move 'dependent' families from welfare to work, with linked workforce development and related services, and additional supports such as counselling and guidance in accessing services like child day-care.

The comprehensive strategy has included a 'compliance' scheme for former tenants of demolished projects, as they now have to earn 'eligibility' for allocation to the improved replacement units by meeting the 'work requirement'. Generally, working age adults have to be in job training, education, and/or regular employment for a minimum of 15 hours per week in the first eighteen months, and subsequently for 20 hours per week. Other criteria embrace evidence of law-abiding behaviour and absence of, or therapy for, drug addiction. Thus, the citizen 'right' to good affordable housing, regardless of income, is supplanted by a 'responsibility' to show worthiness for social housing, via a rehabilitated capacity to co-habit neighbourhoods with those of higher income.

With demolition, and lower density social housing designed to fit in with mixed-tenured quality development schemes, some former residents have been displaced, and given subsidy by way of vouchers to access the wider rental market. Yet alongside this major dislocation, the idea of 'building community' in mixed-income developments contains four appealing dimensions: (1) positive social relationships among residents across incomes; (2) creation of safe, inclusive, and diverse community, supported by quality housing and amenities; (3) encouragement for raising individual aspiration, access to opportunity, socio-economic well-being, and civic responsibility; and (4) scope for reducing prejudiced and racist attitudes and behaviour among residents.

Interestingly, in much of the policy documents outlining these agendas, very little direct reference is made to race per se. Instead, the term 'mixed income' is used as a proxy, showing a familiar failing in public policy in these regards to address candidly the divisions that under-pin the pattern of segregation. Subsequent assessment of these deliberate strategies for residential integration raises scepticism about progress, particularly in regard to creating a sustained diverse sociability (Chaskin, Joseph, and Khare, 2009). Meanwhile, the effort to deconcentrate poverty and desegregate racial groupings, under the framework of mixed-income settlements, may further shrink the stock of affordable rental accommodation.

Thus, the Chicago initiative can be seen to be 'transformative', given its innovative and radical character. But, the social costs of its informal 'eviction' of some poor residents, its emphasis on marketising these former blighted areas, and the limited progress of its social engineering for better relations among diverse residents raise difficult questions that relate to a long-standing challenge of how to regenerate without gentrifying out the ethnic character and presence of sizeable sections of the deprived. In Chicago's example, mixed communities can still 'hide' continued segregation within. This dilemma poses ambivalence about a viable strategy. Doing the same failing things repeatedly is a futile option. But, embarking on place-making that is genuinely concerned about development in a place as well as development of a place requires investment in patient community capacity-building as well as in physical renewal, particularly in areas that have endured intensive inter-generational poverty. Such reservation suggests that in cities deeply divided on social, ethnic, or ethno-national lines, housing strategy designed to promote greater integration has to pay heed to possible inadvertent impact such as: a reduction of public housing stock; potential raised rent levels for remaining tenants; land valorisation that can accentuate the displacement aspects of gentrification; the sacrificing of viable community infrastructure and solidarities that can attend massive demolition programmes; the way that dispersing the poor into other fragile neighbourhoods can be a 'tipping point' that jeopardises the survival of those areas; the contested concept of 'proper' neighbourhood behavioural standards; and the reluctance to address the issue of race and division more directly.

# How Can a New Planning Model be Developed?

The following outlines a new framework for local development, and the particular priorities that derive from that. Then, in exploring how such a new approach would impact on particular development schemes, it proceeds to examine the important role of anchor institutions in this new model, finally examining how all of this would assist in developing an innovative response to urban policy, such as anti-deprivation strategies.

## Local Development Planning

The development plan is a key component of what was described in the introduction as 'broad planning'. In the context of new legislation each of the new local authorities is likely to produce its own Local Development Plan (LDP). But what might a new development planning process look like and how would it respond to the range of challenges identified in this research? A number of points can be made in this regard. Although these largely relate to Belfast City Council, they are transferable to the other 10 new local authorities.

## A New Conception of Planning

As noted before, there needs to be a paradigm shift away from the minimalist, largely non-interventionist land-use planning to a form of spatial planning that captures and gives expression to the development of place. The concept of place is key to good planning, but place is about the experience of everyday life and cannot be properly addressed by a regulatory land-use system. Everyday life is experienced three-dimensionally: it is about the quality of the streets and spaces we traverse day and daily; it is about our health, but not just where we put health facilities, but also how we design and develop the city to encourage walking and cycling; it is about education and the role that spatial planning can play in facilitating the development of schools and learning centres that respond to the challenges of greater sharing and integration, as well as the unacceptable high levels of under-achievement; it is about work and access to work, and how we can reduce the dependence on car commuting and provide good connections that are walkable and are particularly accessible for disadvantaged communities; and, of course, the experience of everyday life includes how we use and enjoy our leisure time - outdoor spaces and the public realm generally are crucial here. Again, quality, access and management are key components of this.

Significantly too, and in light of this research, we need to ask about what sort of places we want our cities and towns to be. What are our aspirations? If TBUC and other local and regional ambitions are to be realised, then there is a broad aspiration for creating a more shared and integrated society. The key question for planning is about how this is captured and given expression in the new development plans and in other complementary local regeneration initiatives. A plan designed to respond to these challenges would look very different to the traditional development plans that have been produced in the past in Northern Ireland.

## What Changes in Development Plan Preparation are Needed?

Traditional planning practice undertakes research as part of the development plan and policy making process. This is mostly a technocratic process that involves the examination of land-use trends and future needs for categories such as population and households, offices and retailing, car-parking and traffic. However, to achieve the above, a very different research agenda is required. This requires other layers of analysis including: spatial analysis of the changing patterns of ethno-religious and social geography; urban design analysis such as the structure and form of the city and the quality of access and connection, as well as the barriers; and the distribution of key services such as health, education and open space facilities. All of this needs to be strongly underpinned by meaningful public consultations that connect planning to everyday life and to people's aspirations for their town or city.

This research has also shown that for many communities, particularly deprived communities, traditional planning has been an irrelevance. As with much of the wider population, planning is simply understood as the regulation of planning applications. A new planning, and one that embraces the notion of creating place, needs to consider how it can be relevant to local communities. This, in turn, prompts the question of how the neighbourhood can relate to the town or city. In the context of the development of a city plan, for example, what role can the neighbourhood play?

Again, this research would suggest that in relation to territorial geographies, be they ethno-religious or social, that single identity, small scale neighbourhood planning and regeneration should be avoided. Otherwise, there is the possibility, albeit unintended, of reinforcing exclusivity and territory. If we want to create an open and connected city, that is, as Jane Jacobs suggested, everyone's neighbourhood, then we have to think carefully about the geography of local initiative and how local aspirations can be linked to city aspirations. What this might mean in practice is that the aims of the city plan are captured and given expression at local level. For example, if one aim of the Local Development Plan and/or City Community Plan is to create a shared environment, then the challenge locally is how to manifest this through local actions and initiatives.

A changed approach to the research and content of development plans consequently requires, as noted earlier, multidisciplinary teams with the appropriate skills and understanding of issues that planning hasn't tackled before. While mainstream planners have a focus on 'appropriate' spatial patterning, others can bring other layers of understanding and analysis that can enrich the process and outcomes. Urban designers are particularly important because they bring skills in the examination of the structure, form and connectivity of places. If we want to create more shared and connected places then this dimension of analysis is crucial. Critically too, we need health and education experts to feed into our understanding of the role that spatial development can play in meeting health and education objectives. And of course, we need economists who can offer the development plan process an analysis of the economic impact of different spatial solutions. Moreover, in order to generate local community interest and involvement in a new Planning, then community development experts should also be part of the team.

## A More Co-ordinated Approach to Planning and Regeneration?

This action-research project has confirmed the view, held by many, that the lack of co-ordination between government department and agencies has had a detrimental impact on good planning and regeneration. The shift of some responsibilities to the new eleven local authorities offers the possibility of dealing with this, at least in part. A number of key services such as housing, education, health and transport will remain the responsibility of central (Stormont) government. However, spatial planning as a local government responsibility can become the key mechanism for better co-ordination.

An example here is the rather un-coordinated range of major developments scheduled for inner north Belfast. These include the University of Ulster campus, a number of student housing schemes, the York Street Interchange, City Quays development and Royal Exchange. Responsibilities for these extend across various Government Departments including Regional Development, Social Development, Employment and Learning, Environment and Culture, Arts and Leisure. An overall plan is required for this area in order to maximise the outcomes, particularly the synergetic outcomes for local neighbourhoods and, of course, for the city as a whole. City Council should take responsibility for this. It needs to assert its authority to achieve better planning outcomes for the city.

In this context, it is important to note that ultimately most developments in the city, or indeed in any of the new local authorities, will require planning permission. If we are moving away from a site by site process of planning determination to a more co-ordinated approach which emphasises city needs and developer contribution to supportive infrastructures, then development management (formerly development control) has a crucial role to play.

## Linking Community Planning to Spatial Planning

A key innovation in the new planning arrangements at local government level, is the statutory link between spatial planning and community planning. If, in broad terms, community planning is about capturing a long term vision for the city and delivering it through co-ordinated service deliveries, then how can this be complemented and strengthened by spatial planning processes? This question needs to be asked at every level of the process, but certainly, based on good practice elsewhere, the spatial plan should give expression to the main aims of the community plan. An example here might be the community plan's aim

The importance of multi-disciplinary teams and inclusive engagement.
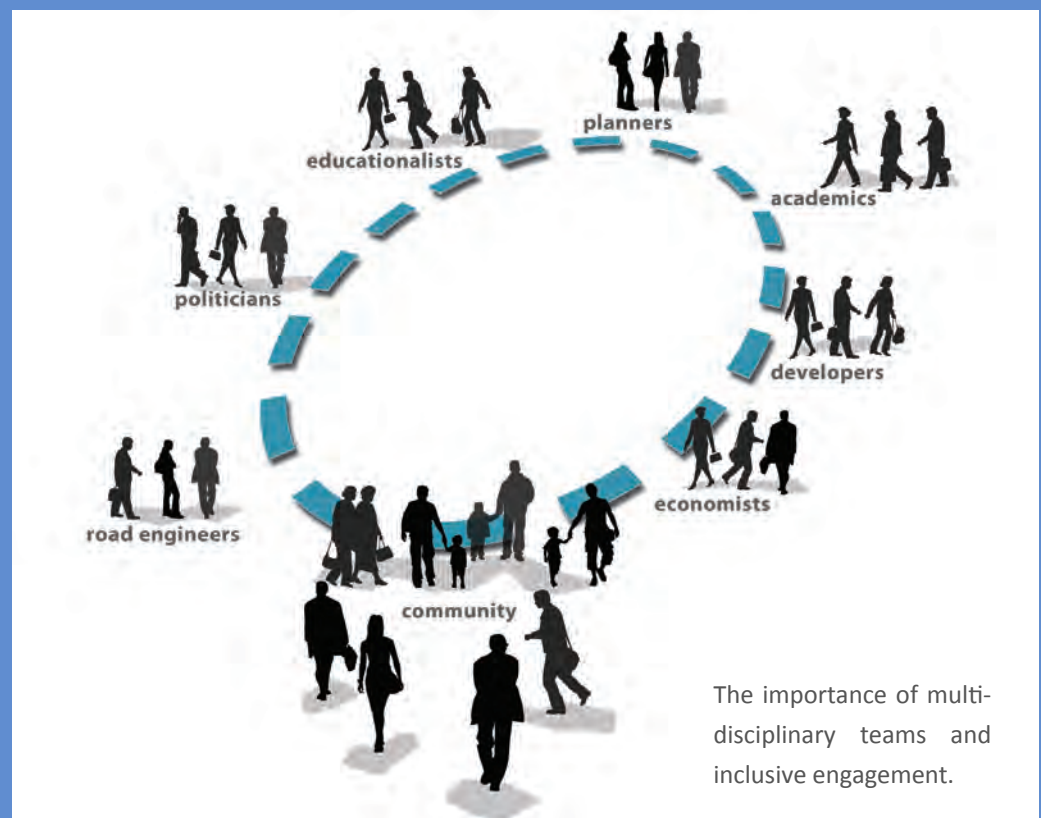
to improve and support 'good relations' across various sectors. A key challenge for the Local Development Plan, and indeed any local planning or regeneration scheme, is how to capture and give expression to this spatially. At city or local authority level, this might suggest that the LDP has a specific shared space strategy, for example.

Another illustration relates back to the previous discussion on health. Firstly, it noted the importance of having in-house design professionals who can ensure the delivery of quality buildings and external environments. Such people can help translate the ambitions of community planning into spatial planning and regeneration outcomes and indeed connect spatial planning objectives to better co-ordinated service delivery. Secondly, given the context of a divided city, the spatial location of facilities is crucial if we want to encourage safe and comfortable access for all communities. This leads to a third point about procurement. Identifying appropriate, accessible sites for key facilities should not be constrained by ownership issues. It is more important to get the right site in the right location than to be tied to existing sites in agency ownership. Compulsory purchase processes should be used for this purpose. Lastly, as noted elsewhere in this report, there is a major problem about the definition of community. If we default to territorial communities in the context of planning, then

we are likely to simply reinforce ongoing division, both ethno-religious and indeed social. Community planning and spatial planning offer opportunities to redefine what we mean by community - arguably a definition that will broaden the geography to capture the ambition of a more united city that bridges divides and dilutes spatial territory.

If a new approach to planning includes facing the challenges of an ethno-religious and socially divided society, then opportunities to address these will be most apparent in new development areas. In Belfast, for example, the long term decline of population in the inner and central city has generated new thinking about residential-led regeneration initiatives. This presents an opportunity to create a new approach to planning and development. First, a co-ordinated strategy is required that is underpinned by a vision of the sort of inner/central city we want. This would be a very different approach to the market-led initiatives of the past. Rather, the vision would translate into a broad masterplan that includes the sort of infrastructure that a 'new' place needs. Schools, open spaces, health facilities and reconfigured walkable streets and spaces would provide the visionary frame for private sector investment. But more than this, the development of such a new place should ensure that this is a 'mixed' environment. In other words, there would be a mix of old and young; small

households and larger households; Catholic, Protestant and others; and of course, social residential as well as private residential.

As noted earlier, a lot can be learned from good practice elsewhere. And this is not necessarily just about the specific spatial problems identified in this report. Rather, good planning practice is a prerequisite for the sort of ambitions and interventions advocated here. Crucially, it is one that acknowledges the necessity of both co-ordination and strong leadership. The successful regeneration of Nottingham city centre is testimony to this. Professional and bureaucratic separations may offer certain administrative efficiencies. However, in order to maximise effective interventions to achieve real progress on the ground, then issues must be tackled in the round. Decades of separate administrations in Northern Ireland undertaking separate tasks has delivered: road schemes surrounded by vacant, unplanned land; housing regeneration lacking wider facilities; commercial regeneration without mixed use development and all the 'unintended consequences' of narrow decision making that is overly focused on one dimension of one site. Moreover, there is growing evidence from Continental Europe that a more proactive and interventionist form of planning can induce developer confidence and achieve significant socio-economic outcomes (Lord, et al, 2015).

**To address these kind of deficiencies, the 'new planning' can:**
- **acknowledge more openly the big issue of the sectarian spatial divide, and how it is sometimes augmented by physical infrastructure. This includes: analysis of changing patterns of segregation; the negative impacts of peace walls; and issues of accessibility and linkage, hindered by impermeable estates and road schemes, and the impact of all these spatial features on the functioning of an integrated society;**
- **overcome and address the deficiencies of past practices which separated a range of key planning functions such as roads, housing and regeneration. Critically, in terms of this research, roads planning and management needs to be integrated into the broader planning process given its crucial role in helping to create well connected places characterised by shared civic spaces including streets. Although the new Councils have limited powers, the planning function can exercise a significant degree of control over other functions in order to achieve more integrated outcomes;**
- **consider the city/wider town area as the 'neighbourhood', for the purpose of an 'administrative unit', whereby analysis of need, functioning, etc., and related intervention, are undertaken at a wider geography, since deeply divided societies can produce too much divisive localism in relation to resource allocation, especially with regard to social housing;**
- **set strategic objectives and delivery targets to remove interfaces, reduce segregation, and promote shared neighbourhoods, as precisely stated priorities for the plan strategy;**
- **appraise the social sustainability of locating new single-identity, social housing-only schemes, in areas already afflicted with multiple deprivation, and how such ghettoisation impacts on the spatial concentration of poverty;**
- **in the Local Policies Plan, focus new public amenities in locations that are accessible to all communities, especially those near interface locations;**
- **in the Local Policies Plan, adopt policy flexibility in interface locations to allow for temporary uses in ways that 'normalise' what otherwise would be dead 'no man's lands', and also to facilitate re-use of vacant buildings and unused sites;**
- **re-humanise the city by creating more passive city centre spaces, calming traffic and improving walkability and cycling facilities; and**
- **deploy vesting powers for regeneration agendas to counter limits of 'ad-hocery'.**

**The question is how would this approach to planning impact on specific development proposals, particularly in sensitive locations, such as Girdwood in North Belfast, and how would it engage serious civic stakeholders in a new approach to development, including new ways to tackle persistent problems like poverty. The following three examples sketch a way forward in this endeavour.**

# 1: Example of a 'Different Girdwood'

When the Ministry of Defence vacated Girdwood Barracks, an important site adjoining the Crumlin Road prison in North Belfast, its future development was destined to be subject to protracted and contentious negotiation. Just over 15 years ago, some of this report's authors were commissioned to draw up a development brief for the Crumlin Road Prison, and their consultations with a range of local stakeholders, across the community divide, demonstrated the feasibility of a consensual approach to developing the facility as a social/educational/cultural centre, a proposal which subsequently came to pass. The core disagreement centred on the possibility of any new housing around the site, and indicated the highly sensitive issue of new housing; its relative allocation to each side of the community; and the electoral implication of a resultant demographic change in the locality. Furthermore, the study emphasised the importance of using all the potential of this site and related facilities such as the Courthouse, and the immediate arterial routes, to regenerate North Belfast in ways that connected it into the wider city.

In the intervening period up to recently, proposals for Girdwood were to go back and forward, in what was effectively an impasse, due to the lack of cross-community agreement. For instance, in 2007, the North Belfast Community Action Unit (NBCAU), an agency within the Department of Social Development, set up an Advisory Panel to examine future development of the Barracks site. It concluded that the vision should be for an international quality development, which offered inclusive and mixed use, with access by both communities, and one that paid regard to values of equality, diversity, and a shared society. Despite widespread subsequent consultations, agreed decision about what precise form this should take proved elusive. By 2011, Department of Social Development Minister, Mr Attwood, made proposals for 200 houses, only for there to be a decision by his successor, Mr McCausland, not to so proceed, on the basis that the proposal was in conflict with an objective to achieve shared space.

This contrast reflected views associated with each side of the community: the mainly Catholic argument for more housing to meet need, and the mainly Protestant concern that more housing, most of which would likely accommodate Catholics, might impact negatively on Protestant areas like Lower Oldpark, and take away the possibility of more neutral or shared space, and thereby threaten to ignite new flashpoints around this locale. Other voices, such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, argued that meeting housing need should not rely on a single site, but rather that the site's development should be framed within a more comprehensive strategy for the wider area. Also, the agency had previously emphasised that any new housing should be mixed tenure.

Essentially, these different perspectives reflected a tension within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which speaks of the duty to promote equality, while at the same time having regard to the desirability of promoting good relations, though it is understood by the Equality Commission that pursuit of the latter objective should not validate failure to comply with the primary duty of delivering equality.

It shows how concepts such as 'equality' and 'shared future' can be taken up by each community as a convenient leverage for their own advocacy. In this case, broadly speaking, the Protestant side could argue that pursuit of 'equality', that effectively favoured a greater Catholic presence on the site, was contrary to promotion of good relations and a shared future. By contrast, the Catholic side could argue that sustainable good relations depended upon implementation of equality.
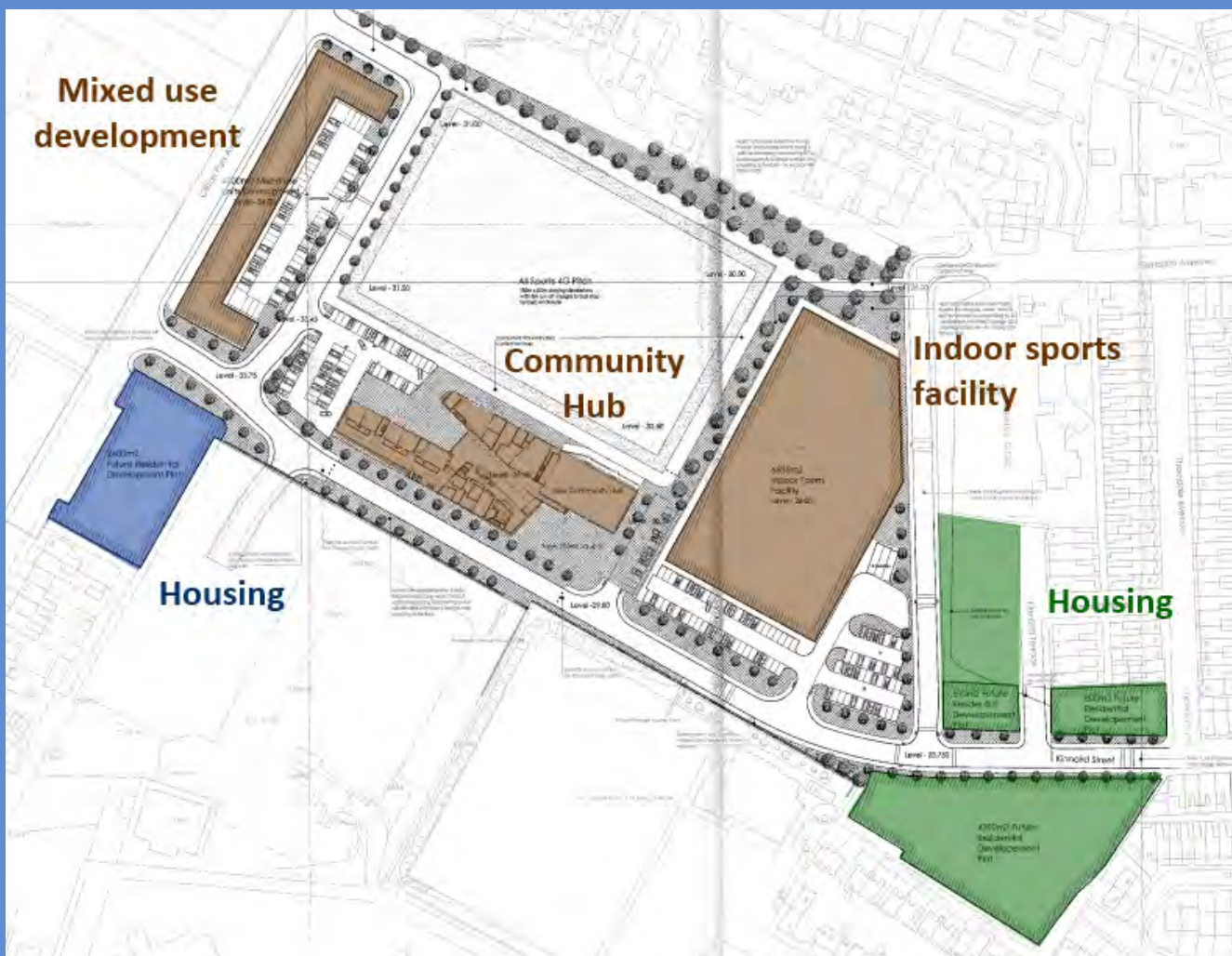


Figure 30: Belfast City Council proposal for the Girdwood area prepared by Michael Whitley Architects.

Controversy, expressed in these indivisible terms, promotes a zero-sum outcome of deadlock and delay. Moreover, it can be speculated that attaining political agreement about a site like Girdwood can be drawn into a 'trade-off' deal about other sensitive sites, like the Maze/Long Kesh -- making for a bigger game at stake.

Most recently, the development scheme for the site includes housing that is near New Lodge, and is likely to be Catholic, and housing near Lower Oldpark, likely to be Protestant, with a Community Hub in between, funded by the Belfast City Council and European PEACE 3 money. At this stage, the housing will be mainly, if not totally, social housing. Without under-estimating the difficulty of achieving cross-community agreement, this scheme is set to pose great challenge for a shared future. The housing reproduces the social and sectarian geographies of class and ethnic space in the city, while the Community Hub has no common 'community', and is likely in the foreseeable future to act more as a buffer zone between each side. What a disappointing outcome this is for such a crucial location, a significant lost opportunity that exposes the shallowness of rhetoric about shared futures.

Our critique here is not to under-estimate the sterling work undertaken by North Talks Too --- a cross-interface partnership, embracing Lower Shankill, Lower Oldpark, and Lower Cliftonville. This initiative seeks to enable 'residents and young people to develop an understanding of neighbouring communities, helping to improve relations and respect; and reduce conflict and tension' (North Talks Too, (undated) Peace building on the Frontline, p. 3).

Working with the Belfast City Council and relevant government agencies and voluntary groups, they are in the process of developing a Shared Space Action Plan for Girdwood, based on the need for local residents to share the socio-economic dividend of Girdwood's regeneration. From their recent residents' survey, they have found that over 80% of those questioned approve of the Community Hub as a space

to be shared and managed by both communities. In taking this vision forward, detached youth workers in the area have been developing a Youth Forum, as the basis for involving young people in this enterprise. Such local campaigning can potentially transform the amenities in the area for sustained cross-community engagement and collaboration.

The development framework proposed here offers prospect of greater ambition than settling for such familiar 'balkanisation'. The principles, values, and priorities underpinning it would emphasise the following precepts:

- needs analysis would be in bigger geographies that avoid looking to one site as a solution to meeting existing local accommodation requirement;

- compliance with good planning that embeds diversity, mixed-use, mixed tenure, and good relations, would avoid the reproduction of sectarian enclaves;

- situating the development in a comprehensive scheme that addresses its 'fit' with the rest of the city, underlined by the value of quality design of international merit, would make for more inspirational vision, offering greater coherence and inclusion;

- appreciating the site's history and symbolism, would bring in more concern about conservation and restoration. The 'spine' of the development --- Cliftonpark Avenue, and the once grid street pattern adjoining it, such as Roe, Avonbeg, Annalee, streets -- use to be, back in the 1960s, mixed income and mixed religion in residence. Even a 'back to the future' perspective would have recognised the realistic ambition of re-creating this character, and the pre-figurative 'push' this would have given to developing a more shared city;

- transparent engagement with local stakeholders and wider civic interests would offer greater protection from decisions becoming political 'trade-offs', concerned with electoral geographies, rather than good place-making.

# 2: Optimizing Anchor Urban Institutions --- the Example of the University: not only IN the city, but OF the city

Universities are high profile, resource-rich urban institutions, enjoying social status, and benefiting from the institutional continuity that facilitates forward strategic planning. Unlike many other forms of economic investment, they are more 'rooted' to place. To their local urban-regions, they can provide civic leadership, together with significant economic multipliers in terms of their consumption and employment. Moreover, their role in the local property market can be significant. For instance, in Belfast, in terms of real estate value and share of listed buildings, Queen's University ranks high among the top property holders in the city. Moreover, Ulster University is significantly increasing its campus on the north side of the city centre, giving potential for a 'university corridor' between the two institutions.

Use of their applied research can help to clarify and to redress social problems, while their role in knowledge, skills and technology transfer can support capacity-building and self-help within the community. In the shift to the integrated development of spatial planning, their cross-disciplinary perspectives can penetrate the linked dimensions of sustainable local development.

Comparative policy analysis can illustrate on an internationally comparative basis the good practice that has been most transformative. Moreover, academy can support the urban networking that underpins effective social capital, and, particularly in the case of contested societies, it can provide a safe dialogic space for difficult discourses between protagonists, with university facilitation where appropriate. The scholarship that links teaching to community needs enriches the student learning experience, in the same way that student community service also provides participants with a 'real life' learning arena that connects theory to practice.

Within a now more marketised context, public policy prioritises three goals for the university sector that do not always sit comfortably together: raise academic standards; improve equality of access across the social classes; and extend the global reach and reputation of research. This search for both excellence and equity can lead to some contentious resource decisions. In a wider sphere, increased emphasis attached to the sector's role in advancing the UK's competitiveness in the new globalised economy could demote other potential agendas for the academy, such as working with under-developed communities to promote greater social equity and inclusion.

Universities increasingly attempt to be global in their purpose and profile because they recognise the imperative to be internationally competitive. In essence, they are competing with each other for staff; resources to attain state-of-the-art facility and technology; research grants; market-based and patented spin-offs; and, finally, international students, particularly post-graduates, who provide the most lucrative fees. But, this keenness to be global in focus has tended to imply that the local is no longer an appropriate arena for world-class research. This shift in agenda has to be set against the university's typical three main tasks: teaching, research and service to the community. Often the latter has been residualised, relative to the core status of the other two, and the three have tended to function separately rather than supportively.

Certainly, in recent times, there has been a re-awakening about the pertinence and potential of academy for society, and of the reciprocal benefits involved in links between the two. For instance, the increased attention paid to research impact is part of this shift.

## Moving from Stereotype to Partnership

The strengths and weaknesses within both campus and community can prompt each side to stereotype the other, leading to a dialogue of the deaf between 'the remote ivory tower' and 'the ever demanding ever complaining community'. US experience suggests that beyond such misunderstandings, partnerships can be built between the two interests:

- mutual understanding of the respective 'worlds' of community development and academia requires continuous investment and sensitivity;

- differences in interest, culture, class and power need to be openly acknowledged;

- productive division of responsibility between partners that may, for instance, separate roles in academic research and community advocacy, can be helpful. But, this should not deny the integrity of participatory action-research, which involves a total integration of both partners in the process;

- institutional support and 'imprimaturs' from the leadership of both partners are required for a long-term strategic alliance;

- progress in the relationship demands patient processes of capacity-building within both partners; and

- overall, a written protocol between the two sides is useful —— laying out in clear detail the mutual obligations and supports, so that ambiguities and confusion do not confound the relationship.

## Engaged Urban Universities

As indicated earlier, in the 21st century, there are many pressures on universities to rethink their mission. In considering what this new role might be, it is instructive to re-visit the three models of academy that have predominated to date:

**1.** the 'ivory tower' model of detachment from the wider society is no longer tenable. This 'Platonic' concept of elitist and contemplative learning sites the university as 'a place apart'.

**2.** the 'service' model sees a modest role for the university in encouraging staff to respond voluntarily to requests from deprived communities for assistance and expertise. In this approach, the power, status and discretion rest exclusively with the institution.

**3.** the 'outreach' model has the academy as more proactive in extending itself into city and community. Indeed, often it will set up 'offices of extension' to coordinate the delivery of such expertise. But, the 'outreach' perspective risks being paternalistic and restrictive, assuming that the dynamic is between a brimful 'jug' of knowledge and grateful empty 'mugs' of relative ignorance.



Queen's University Belfast - moving to an engaged institution?

The radical alternative to these standard models is that of the 'engaged' university, one that seeks an equitable and mutually supportive relationship between academy and wider community. In essence, this model seeks to transform the relationship between the two in the production and application of knowledge. Traditional and simplistic dichotomies between the 'experiential' knowledge of community and 'formal' knowledge of the academy are dissolved, as both parties explore a new synthesis of how collaboratively they can compose, exchange and use knowledge. Indeed, in the complex environments that constitute contemporary city-regions, this process acknowledges the synergy between traditional and non-traditional sites of knowledge. Institutional outreach to the community and city is complemented by civic in-reach to the academy. A protocol between the two enshrines commitment to a long-term strategic partnership, involving not only the minority of staff already attached to such work, but rather the very core of the university.

But, behind these kinds of explorations and arrangements, evidence from practice elsewhere, such as the US experience outlined earlier, suggests that the following platform is needed:

1. the 'imprimatur' from the university authorities to endorse and support this mission.

2. corresponding systems of recognition and reward that give staff incentive to participate.

3. the appropriate structures to facilitate inter-disciplinary collaboration — perhaps, a distinctive Institute charged with clustering staff for periods of secondment for such research projects, and resolving any dilemmas around attributions for the Research Assessment Exercise.

4. long-term partnerships / memoranda of understanding between the institution as a whole and leading community and civic agencies.

## Encountering the Reservations

Given the financial and globalising imperatives faced by universities at present, these ideas will probably encounter scepticism and resistance. It may appear that universities face hard choices. For instance, they can take comfort in their traditions or embrace the risks of change. But, given that change is all around — the shift to new economy; the re-invention of governance; the re-alignment of welfare towards mixed funding and provision; and the transformation of community — it would be foolhardy of the university to seek insulation from this general dynamic. So, there is no respite in 'enclave'. Indeed, the apparent choice as to whether to operate behind academic walls, or whether to be open for engagement is, in fact, an illusory choice.

Related to this, given the myriad new sites of research, information, and learning, there is no real choice about whether to be involved in exclusive or inclusive forms of knowledge creation and distribution. Only the latter will produce a credible epistemology in the contemporary period. Similarly, other apparent choices on offer —— for instance, between the local and global research agendas —— are not, in fact, so dichotomous. Good local research, rooted in a problem-solving methodology, with appropriate international comparative, has global worth and transferability. In short, an urban institution like a university, does not enhance its global ambitions by abandoning the local 'urban' component, as if it was some kind of virtual campus. Rather, seen from this perspective, the city-region is its major asset, its international recognition and 'calling card'. Yet, academy and city can be both partners and protagonists, and this ambivalence is evident in recent discourses in the US around the theme of 'the university as an urban developer'.

# 3: Addressing Spatial Deprivation

As indicated earlier, Spatial Deprivation studies in Belfast have been undertaken for almost four decades (see for example: Belfast Areas of Special Social Need, 2007) and all have shown certain places immersed in permanent deprivation. Indeed, in all regional deprivation research between 1994 and 2010 (1994, 2001, 2005 and 2010), around 40% of its wards (about 35% of its population) have been consistently in Northern Ireland's most deprived decile, even though the city contains only 17% of the regional population. Moreover, the expansion of the city into its 2014 format will only continue the problem since it will include some of the most deprived Super Output Areas currently beyond its boundary. This consistent appearance amongst the region's most deprived spaces has survived successive rounds of urban initiatives and special programmes, suggesting, at least, the need to complement such with something radical and tailored specifically to the particular needs of Belfast.

## A City Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Belfast City Council has been concerned with this problem for some time, having commissioned a Belfast Poverty Study in 2008 and holding, in January 2014, a Poverty Forum that attracted almost 200 participants. Tackling poverty undoubtedly features in the preparation of the city's Community Plan. There is, however, an urgency in addressing the issue, particularly since work commissioned from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (OFMDFM, 2013 and TBUC, 2013) suggests that fiscal austerity and welfare reform will impact most severely on the growing numbers of those with lowest incomes falling into poverty. Other research from NICVA (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013) points to the particular vulnerability of the city to welfare reform, estimating a loss of £840 per working age adult. The size of this figure has been challenged, but even the low estimate (about £450) would have dramatic income impact. Admittedly, welfare reform was deadlocked in the Assembly and certainly, there are important regional initiatives (The Social Investment Fund, Delivering Social Change and the Child Poverty Strategy), but the history of deprivation in Belfast suggests that, unless poor households and deprived areas are the focus of additional effort, a problem of considerable intensity and duration will remain.

The new shape of public administration in Northern Ireland gives the Council a dramatic opportunity to re-imagine the city as a competitive, inclusive and cohesive place. In that vision, tackling poverty and deprivation has as great a priority as economic development or good relations. Moreover, the assumption of more powers and responsibilities (Tackling Disadvantage, Physical Regeneration and Community Development) are entirely congruent with this new urban role. It would thus be timely if the Council indicated its commitment by putting out a Belfast Anti-Poverty Manifesto.

In good part, the prospect of Belfast transforming its approach to issues of regeneration and deprivation depends on the City Council's mobilisation and integration of civic capacity to this core objective. In times of fiscal restraint, getting the most out of this greatly under-tapped social capital is imperative. Examples of such systematic effort include:

- adopting a creative and proactive approach to planning, that abandons the minimalist model, which concentrates on what is legally mandated or economic development that accords with corporate priorities, and instead locates planning within broader social policy;

- undertaking a profound and urgent commitment to move from a managerial to a transformational approach to social inclusion and cohesion, that prioritises poverty reduction. Data on poverty should be part of all survey analysis in plan-making, and social outcomes and equality impact assessments should be integral to plan evaluation;

- following a 'total place' or 'whole place' strategy -- a ONE CITY --- approach, as outlined elsewhere in this report;

- linking these outcomes to related objectives about the healthy city and environmental quality; designing mixed communities -- in other words, mixed tenured, mixed-use, balanced communities of choice, where residents select rather than are compelled to live; addressing educational inequality; and pioneering initiatives around participative governance;

- developing an explicit link between specific development projects and their 'community benefit' or 'planning gain';

- ensuring that its research and evaluation team tracks and assesses the distributional impact of all its main spending, and that of regional government in Belfast, particularly focussing on health, education, and income inequalities;

- explicitly linking housing with employment and training opportunity, with appropriate design, access, and transport, while minimising infrastructural and other physical barriers;

- promoting corporate social responsibility in the city, through annual awards, that offer publicity for good private sector practice; linking any grants/contracts to ethical and environmentally sound corporate behaviour, including, at minimum, paying the living wage;

- working in concert with critical friends, such as City Reparo and PLACE, offering expertise in urban planning and design, beyond the scope of expensive international consultancies that often 'clone' a standardised renewal agenda, framed in clichéd neo-liberal assumptions about market-led rescue from dependency and decline, expressed in a script whose familiarity is only matched by its banality;

- developing a 10 year memorandum of understanding with its local universities, whereby a strategic agenda is agreed about how the considerable resource of the 'built environment' scholarship in architecture, planning, design, and engineering is synergised with other relevant disciplines, such as medicine, social policy, education, creative arts, conflict resolution, etc., and marshalled to offer an independent critical voice to the City Council's development and good relations programmes; and

- while addressing the 'big issues' of economic viability and social fairness, not ignoring the everyday niggles that blight the lives of citizens: poor street lighting; litter; dog mess; derelict areas; lack of choice in local retailing in deprived areas, often dominated by tanning salons, fast food outlets, hair-dressing, charity shops, betting shops, pubs, etc; and deficiencies in accessible and affordable public transport.

## First Steps towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy

In the first instance, such a project has to start with recognised parameters: the tight fiscal environment; the futility of reproducing (or working against) existing regional initiatives; the necessity to work collaboratively with partners, for example in education or health. Despite such limitations, the Council can take important first steps that would be almost cost free and would not jeopardise future partnership relationships. For example:

- the Council could guarantee the priority of poverty reduction in the city by setting out an Anti-Poverty Manifesto. In the first instance, this need be no more than proposing a set of principles for a Belfast Anti-Poverty strategy. Local authority anti-poverty strategies have been numerous in the rest of the UK and have been comprehensively documented (see, for example, the work of The Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research at the University of Bristol). It would not be arduous to draw on these strategies to shape a set of principles specific to Belfast;

- the Council could utilise its own research capacity and the good will of interested academics and organisations in the community and voluntary sector to monitor patterns of deprivation and poverty within the city. In addition, Northern Ireland is one of the most data-rich places in the world and there is ample material to draw from the NISRA, OFMDFM and DSD websites. Equally, there is a need to monitor and evaluate what is already being done to assess what has had most impact within the city;

- the Council could begin a conversation with possible, interested partners about what a Belfast Anti-Poverty Strategy might look like. The Community Planning framework makes this eminently possible; and

- finally, the Council could look at its own services and its own employment to see how it could best minimise poverty risk for those it serves and those it employs.

In 2015, a new Belfast will come into being with a population of 333,000 (about 50% greater than the second most populous of the new 11 councils). Current data sets suggest that around a third of this population will live in areas designated severely deprived. This represents not just a moral dilemma for the city, but a practical obstacle
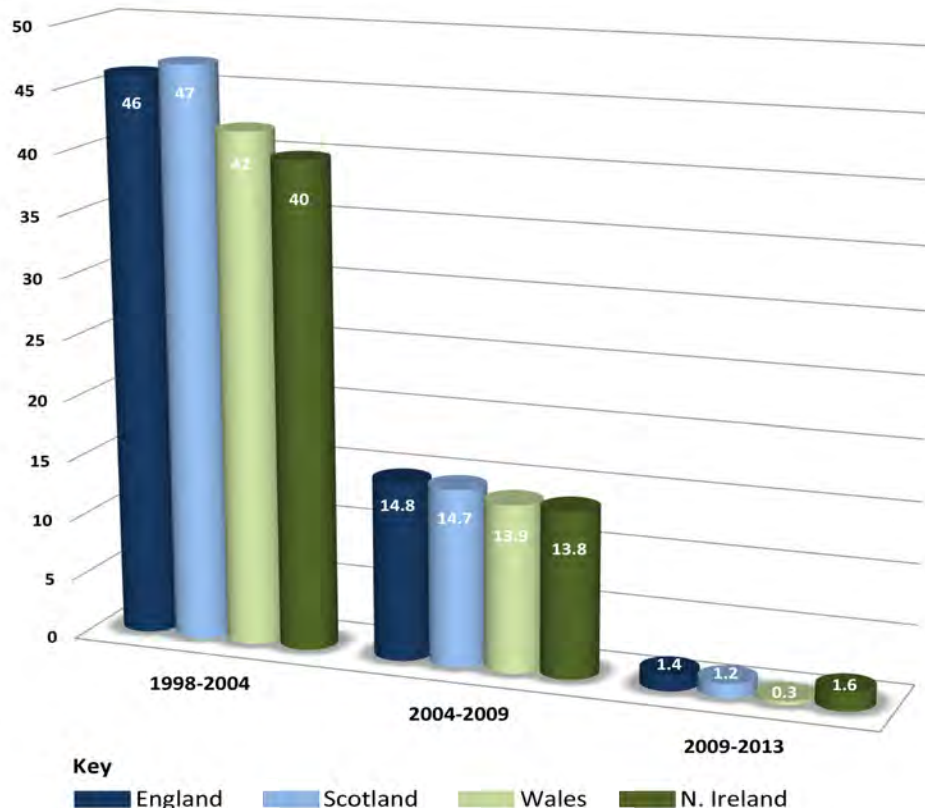
Figure 31:  % Changes to Public Expenditure by UK Country: 1998-2013
Source: Harding and Nevin, et al 2015

to the city achieving its full potential – its most deprived spaces are dramatically more segregated than the city as a whole and have been the most prominent sites for political violence over the past 40 years.

The city has the opportunity to overcome this legacy, but doing so requires an explicit commitment and a readiness to begin the process with urgency, diligence, and strategic thinking. Unless interventions for 'deprived areas' are an inherent part of an overall urban regeneration strategy, which itself is embedded in a reconciliation strategy, then the same problems in the same places are likely to persist. Of course, the formidable challenge of addressing inequality and poverty in the coming period, in the context of resource constraint in terms of public spending, European funding, and 'foundation' funding, has to be acknowledged for Northern Ireland as a whole. Over the last four decades in the UK, spending on specific 'urban programmes' to tackle deprivation has always been modest, relative to total public expenditure, whose volume growth has been significantly declining in recent times. From very substantial increases in the 1998-2004 period, the decline has accelerated in the

recent period, as can be seen in Figure 30. In the case of Northern Ireland, this has gone from 40% to 1.6%. Within these broad data, the figures for spending per head give a more detailed picture of the dynamic over the recent period.

As can be seen over this period, Northern Ireland consistently receives higher levels of public spending than the UK average (between a quarter to a fifth, see figure 29), due to the Barnett formula, differential need, and special security circumstance. Moreover, its expenditure growth in the most recent 'austere' times (2009-2013), though very modest at 1.6%, is higher than elsewhere in the UK. Nevertheless, together with reduced spending from Europe, and support funds such as Atlantic Philanthropy, the current funding environment is a testing one for redistributive programmes addressing various forms of social deprivation. Added to this fiscal consideration, is the trend for greater urban competition coming from the BRIC countries and the global south in general.
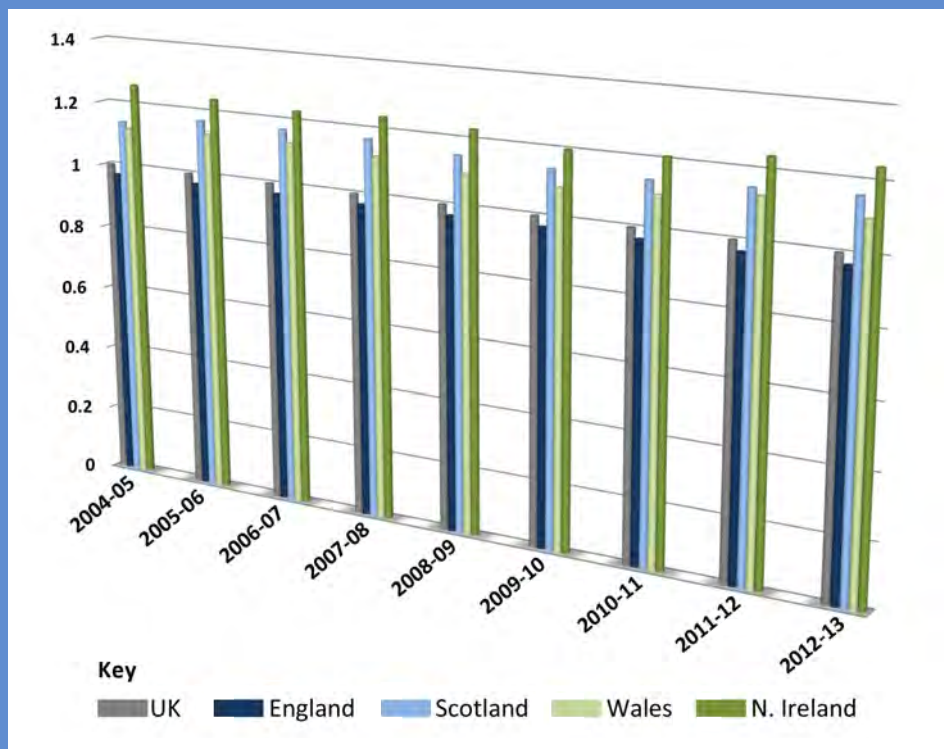
Figure 32: Per Capita Expenditure by UK Country; 2004-2012 (UK = 1) Source: Abstracted from Harding and Nevin, et al (August 2015, 21)

In thinking through a different approach to issues of urban deprivation and neighbourhood dereliction, and related problems such as educational under-attainment, it is useful to distil the key broad patterns of intervention over the last 60 years: (a) the development of a 'fordist' post-war welfare state; related comprehensive urban redevelopment and creation of new towns, up to late sixties; (b) the' rediscovery' of poverty; persistent inequality of educational outcomes; and greater use of de-centralised regeneration programmes, up to the late seventies; (c) major economic restructuring accelerated by the 1973 'oil crisis'; related de-industrialisation; continued compensatory intervention in the most deprived communities; alongside greater marketisation of the public 'realm'; and greater de-regulation, including in land and property markets; with socio-spatial polarisation, including emergence of a so-called 'underclass', from the eighties through to 'noughties'; and (d) the retrenchment aftermath of the financial and fiscal crisis, with greater emphasis on 'from welfare to work' agendas and economic 'austerity' measures designed to redress the deficit and debt, in part through a smaller state and 'bigger society'.

Amidst all these shifts -- and certainly from the late seventies, there have been common threads in the policy language: the need for more 'joined up' and 'smart' governance; the synergic role of inter-sectoral partnership; the priority of education in the transition to a knowledge economy; the greater scale and scope offered by agglomeration economics, such as found in larger metropolitan and regional networks; increasing imperative of low carbon development; the importance of socio-spatial connectivity; and so on. But, as with the data on public expenditure, it raises questions about effective progressive policy:

1. If great success has not been achieved in tackling multiple deprivation in periods such as 1998-2004, when public investment was at its height, what are the realistic prospects of doing so, now that it is substantially reduced?

2. Is it likely that Northern Ireland can make a compelling case for substantial extra UK resources, when even recent figures show that it continues to be already favoured?

3. Can the region continue indefinitely to make a case for special treatment as one 'coming out of conflict', or does this increasingly sound to others as indulgent pleading, particularly in current circumstance of persistent if sporadic violence and institutional failure in governance?

4. In a more general policy context, if research has shown, for at least 40 years, the benefit of connectedness, joined-up governance, integrated development, etc. why would the public not be forgiven for believing that this language, now central to the new planning framework, is just more rhetoric, with no record of serious implementation?

Such considerations suggest that tackling poverty, and related problems such as educational inequality, demand hard choices, rather than merely more soft language. So, to take some obvious practical examples in Belfast:

a. can the proliferation of hospitals (including four in Belfast alone) be justified, if the central goal is a health service, based on quality rather than quantity?

b. in a small region of 1.8 million people, can provision for teacher training in Queen's University, University of Ulster, Stranmillis College, and St. Mary's be justified? When an attempt is made to rationalise such provision, can government, committed to effective use of public resources, submit to resistance to merge St Mary's and Stranmillis College on the basis of protecting a local institution in West Belfast?

c. given the major problem of education under-attainment in North Belfast, does it make sense in tackling this problem to fund three primary schools within yards of each other on the Cliftonville Road --  Cliftonville Integrated Primary; a Catholic Boy's Primary, and now a new Irish Language medium school --- instead of devoting resources more effectively to the over-riding issue of under-achievement?

d. in the case of local arts/culture centres, is it preferable to have an increasing number of these -- for instance, in a small area of inner North Belfast, Crumlin Road prison; Girdwood Community Hub, Duncairn Arts Centre; and renovated St. Kevin's Hall -- rather than a substantial amenity that can be generously resourced, and accessed by all traditions?

In general, proliferation and duplication of provision are incompatible with efficient and effective resource allocation in the current and foreseeable public spending environment. In some cases, it tends to genuflect to our self-imposed separatism and parochialism, rather than pay due attention to good service provision for all, particularly the most socially deprived.

Figure 33: Maps showing distribution and duplication of schools across North Belfast (upper diagram) and cluster of three primary schools off the Cliftonville Road, Belfast (lower diagram).

**One way to address unnecessary duplication is to achieve more shared housing. But such achievement is compromised by any group marking territory as its own.**

None of this is to under-estimate the difficult choices involved at local levels, where institutions, such as schools, are considered significant physical manifestations of viable community. For instance, recently the Belfast Education and Library Board intended to close the long-standing Malvern Primary in the Lower Shankill as part of its rationalisation of primary education provision. Following a local campaign of resistance to this proposal, the Education Minister reversed this intention, permitting a school of relatively low pupil numbers and financial deficit to remain open. At one level, this represents success for local parental and community interests to maintain a school that means a lot to them. At another level, this decision has to be considered in a wider context of the Greater Shankill being designated a Children and Young People's Action Zone, which is targeting improvement in educational outcomes for the area's students, supported by resources from modest funds, such as the Building Successful Communities Programme. Would children in the Greater Shankill benefit more educationally in the long-term from school amalgamation that concentrated resources for effective tackling of the important issue of educational under-attainment?

Such questions arise, even if provision of a unified school system, that could accommodate all children learning together, is not considered an intermediate prospect. Yet, a key part of this civic engagement around the future of our education system is missing at present. For instance, under financial pressure to rationalise school provision, the Department of Education, Northern Ireland, has been undertaking 'an area planning' process to elicit the most effective co-ordination and efficient use of its school plant. But, this exercise has tended to focus on the thoughts of existing education lobbies --- like Education Boards, the Catholic Maintained Schools Commission, and the Integrated Sector -- which, in itself, is all well and good.

But, where is the voice of parents and other civic interests in this debate?

# 8.  Final Thoughts

Already in Northern Ireland, there are quiet but effective steps being trod daily towards a better way of sharing space. The mixed-religion Delaware housing development at the Limestone Road interface and related cross-community work in that difficult vicinity, the Black Mountain Shared Space Project, etc. all offer insight into how this agenda can be advanced in practical terms in both the built and natural environment. It is proper to recognise the myriad initiatives to promote shared space. One such recent proposal is for a 'Youth Hub'  - a pop-up space in Belfast city centre, organised by Belfast Council's Youth Forum in February/March 2016, and designed to identify and provide dedicated 'youth friendly' sites and services. The Belfast Youth Forum's Shared Space Pilot Project is set to be based in the T13 activity bus at an assortment of city centre sites for five Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons over this period, starting at Writer's Square, opposite St Anne's Cathedral. Activities to be provided on and around the bus include: a BMX course; Parkour; Urban Art; Fashion Design, DJ Skills; Chill Out Zone and Scooters. Response from young people to this 'pilot' provision will inform the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and the Belfast Agenda about how common youth services across the city can be accommodated in a 'shared' environment.

Like much else in Northern Ireland, celebrating positive steps towards new ways of doing things, cannot be a substitute for facing up to the difficulties in effecting change. For example, the central mechanism for achieving co-ordination in urban programmes has been the principle of partnership. Yet, a comprehensive review of the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (2014) found many defects in the practical operation of partnership. Thus, while the need for the co-ordination and integration of all urban interventions has been amply demonstrated, the mechanisms for doing so remain flawed because of bureaucratic inertia and the absence of really shared agendas – 'joined-up government' has become little more than an empty mantra.

Changing Northern Ireland requires a civic will that pushes the political will to make things happen. The record has, at best, been patchy. On one hand, we boast about the achievements of the 'peace process'; on the other, every obstacle requires both the interventions of external actors (the British and Irish governments and more marginally these days the US) and the demand for more money. When the going really gets tough, we pass the responsibility to someone else (welfare reform) or use constitutional protocols designed to protect minority rights to overturn Assembly votes designed to give rights to a minority (gay marriage).

This is important not merely because it actually impedes the transition from the place Northern Ireland was three decades ago, but because a public spending region with a poor record in productivity is having to face up to the remodelling and reduction of the British state to its smallest scale in half a century. Paradoxically, in a globalised world, the determinants of success are being increasingly deconcentrated to regional level. Regions that can adapt and thrive amid such change are (as endless studies have shown) characterised by truly collaborative governance and high levels of productivity. Despite our infinite capacity for 'boosterism' around industrial development, tourism etc., Northern Ireland is not actually well placed to survive in this environment. Eventually, our claim to special preference will depreciate, exacerbated by our inability to really address division or recognise that internal problems have to be solved by internal actors.

Development is about the relationship of people, place, and power. The power of those with vested interest in social and sectarian division needs to be challenged. In a society dominated by two major political blocs that rely heavily on appeal to sectarian geographies, this means that civic leadership is at a premium in helping to clarify the meaning, and deliver the outcome, of a shared society, beyond current partisan interpretation. People involved in planning, design, architecture, and development can make a distinctive contribution to this objective.

In thinking about how the changes proposed in this report may find traction, we have to acknowledge the difficult political environment that still pertains – both globally and locally.

Again, current tumult around what is labelled as 'militant Islam' offers some scope of comparison with other sovereignty conflicts, though such comparison can be over-stretched. Explanation for why a section of young Muslims is ready for suicide, while a much larger group is ready to offer cover and logistical support, tends to point to greater poverty, higher unemployment, and less opportunity among this 'disaffected' group, along with the failure of EU states to adopt integrative policies in the false name of 'multiculturalism'. Such rationalization about limitations of social equity and cohesion tends to miss the point that if the sovereignty of the Divine is absolute and uncompromisable, integration into any form of secular diversity is impossible. Simply put, from a particular interpretation of Islamist theology, only a Caliphate can express the Divine in the material world, hence the attraction of ISIS. Such moral certitude places itself outside the realm of rational political discourse.

In this society, faithful and infidel are depicted in much less fundamentalist religious terms. Nevertheless, ethical priority is invoked. For instance, in the cohesion/integration debate in Northern Ireland, the Equity/Diversity/Interdependence framework for co-operative engagement is essentially a moral exhortation. To facilitate its adoption, a funding support model is advocated, one that inhibits groups being incentivised to pursue self-interest without committing to some form of collaboration. Largely, this hasn't worked because in a 'top down' governance, (limited) collaboration at the top does not necessitate substantive engagement on the ground. Besides, any such model may be impossible in an environment of contested (or, in our case conditional) sovereignty, whose historical narratives still permit the eulogising of groups who

have used violence to enact their grievances while perfectly democratic alternatives existed. Hailing such 'heroes' of the past as martyrs allows for their re-incarnation as role models of the present.

Integration of diverse religious/ethnic/political groups only makes sense in an environment where there is not only tolerance of diversity but also acceptance of the surrounding system of governance, the rule of law etc. Yet, when the Deputy First Minister seems incapable of using the term 'Northern Ireland' to describe the entity of which he is the second most senior political figure (followed by the rest of Sinn Fein and many in the SDLP), some doubt the viability in this place of any process that can lead us out of sectarian blocs and 'bring people together'. In this view, only when the sovereignty issue is set in stone one way or another, can we talk of productive inter-communal engagement.

On the other hand, some others will argue the importance of not conflating national and state identities, insisting that it is feasible to accord all of civic society a sense of belonging, without everyone having to conform to a uniform state identity. Indeed, the Good Friday Agreement recognises both Irish and British identities. The inference can be taken that it is possible to achieve social cohesion without people being compelled to affiliate to the Northern Ireland state identity. But, for others, this creates an ambivalence of citizenship that makes 'building a society together' highly problematic.

This reservation finds echo in many of the wider conflicts of our time. Pessimistic reading of the volatile and violent world in which we live is that we are being driven back to a Hobbesian state where protection is the absolute value and where notions like human rights, privacy etc. are seen as being either less relevant or downright obstructive. If that perspective takes hold, Northern Ireland has a very modest 'space' in which to find new ways to change our ways.

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