

**CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE POLITICS OF
PEACEBUILDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND
AFTER THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT**

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SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

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Index of terms

BAN:	Belfast Urban Area Plan
BAT:	Belfast Action Teams
DCAL:	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DCMS:	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DETI:	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DFP:	Department for Finance and Personnel
DOE:	Department of the Environment
DRD:	Department for Regional Development
DSD:	Department for Social Development
DUP:	Democratic Unionist Party
EHS:	Environment and Heritage Service
EU:	European Union
HB:	Historic Building (Listing)
ICCT:	International Centre of Conflict Transformation
IRA:	Irish Republican Army
MBW:	Making Belfast Work
MLA:	Member of Legislative Assembly (Stormont)
NIAO:	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NIEA:	Northern Ireland Environmental Agency
NIO:	Northern Ireland Office
NIHE:	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFMDFM:	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
PbCRC:	Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Centre
PUP:	Progressive Unionist Party
RRI:	Reform and Reinvestment Initiative
RUC:	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP:	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SEUPB:	Special European Union Programmes Body
SIB:	Strategic Investment Board
TUV:	Traditional Unionist Voice
UDA:	Ulster Defence Association
UDC:	Urban Development Corporation
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UUP:	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF:	Ulster Volunteer Force

Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between cultural policymaking, cultural management and political conflict through a case study of Northern Ireland. As a site of protracted conflict in a region that is part of an advanced western economy, Northern Ireland offers useful examples of the tensions and contradictions that arise from instrumental uses of culture in social and economic policymaking. Sharing many of the same socio-economic problems as other post-industrial areas of the United Kingdom (UK), the region was strongly influenced by the cultural turn in urban regeneration policy from the late 1980s (Gaffikin, Mooney and Morrissey 1991; Evans and Shaw 2004; Harvey 2005; Yudice 2009). However, cultural development and culture-led regeneration strategies in Northern Ireland have inevitably focused on the need to manage and mitigate the socio-economic impacts of violent political conflict and normalize relations between the nationalist and unionist communities. In this way, the politics of peacebuilding has become a key factor shaping regional policy discourse and management practice.

This thesis identifies cultural development, planning and policymaking as fields of contestation between rival discourses, ideologies and interests. It argues that the focus on peacebuilding and the attachment of power-sharing goals to socio-economic policy objectives has given rise to distinctive post-Agreement policy discourses and cultural management practices, in which mediating between contested claims associated with different conceptions of national belonging have become a central preoccupation. The methodology was informed by an interest in exploring the interplay between the rationales of policymakers and planners and the political structures, social systems and economic constraints that constitute Northern Ireland's distinctive policy environment. It draws on the concept of the discursive moment (McGuigan 1996) and theoretical accounts of relationships between structure and agency and discourse, knowledge and power (Foucault 1980, 2002; Giddens 1984, 1994).

Rather than explaining the dynamics of cultural management in terms of simple bureaucratic responses to external policy dilemmas, the thesis applies a critical analysis of events, ideas and actions. The aim is to throw light on the different rationales and motivations that shape the ideas, attitudes and political imaginations

of the various decision makers and policy actors and managers engaged in development, consultation and decision-making processes. In other words, this thesis offers an analysis of cultural development in post-Agreement Northern Ireland as a discursive practice, in which dominant concepts and theories associated with regeneration and peacebuilding are applied to structural dilemmas in the economic and social sphere.

Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

1.1 . Cultural development and the politics of post-Agreement Northern Ireland

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Marx 2001).

I copied Marx's famous observation and pinned it to my office wall in early 2008. It spoke to challenges I was encountering as a cultural manager struggling to implement a development plan that was stalling and running off course. Marx was trying to make sense of the changed reality that was materializing in the wake of the failure of the European revolutions of 1848. As the Director of a small, publicly funded gallery of photography in Belfast's Cultural Quarter, I was simply trying to manage a process of organizational change. Although worlds apart, the sense of past traditions weighing down on future transformation resonated with my uncertainty about the organization's direction. The aim of the plan was to take Belfast Exposed into the next phase of a development process and complete its transformation from a community photography resource to a gallery of photography with a reputation for artistic excellence in the city and on the international stage. Since May 2000, Belfast Exposed had relocated, grown in size and undergone a radical change of purpose. Founded in 1983 to document community experience of the conflict, it had repositioned itself as 'the leading gallery of photography in the city', with a commissioning, exhibition and publication programme that 'reflected on the social and economic condition of post-conflict Northern Ireland' (Belfast Exposed 2006). Shaped and given meaning by decades of inter-communal conflict, the original community photography project was now competing for space and resources with audiences, artists and new communities beginning to emerge in the new post-conflict moment.

The decision to change programming direction largely arose from internal reviews of the organization's approach to photography practice, in particular its adherence to classic social documentation, in which participants were trained to use cameras to make visual records of day-to-day experience from community perspectives

(Hadaway 2007a).¹ Findings from reviews of community photography work between 1994 and 2000 attributed problems of visual repetition and a lack of communication across separate groups, to the organization's position in a city 'made up of a plethora of smaller, often mutually exclusive communities' (Bruhns 2002; Hadaway 2007b, p 40). This insight had prompted critical reflection on the value of the community photography programme. Had the programme's inclusive intention to 'promote the art of community photography and establish an open forum for community groups and individuals' failed to transcend the physical and political reality of sectarian division in the city (Belfast Exposed 1995)? Was it seeking to ameliorate rather than transform the conditions of inter-communal divisions? More to the point, had it become a mechanism for replicating and perhaps re-enforcing those divisions (Hadaway 2007b)? Belfast Exposed translated its findings into a new development strategy aimed at investing in 'socially-engaged photography and inclusive, enquiring artistic practices' that would open up new perspectives on the city as it emerged from three decades of violent conflict (Belfast Exposed 2000).

The organization's 2000-3 Strategic Plan was also informed by critical discussions taking place in art and documentary practice, concerning the relationship between photographic representation and the material and ideological world that the camera claimed to record, reflect and challenge. Reflections on the efficacy and ethics of photography, whether in its claims to act as a radical practice or as a 'certificate of presence' in the world, are well established within aesthetic discourse and practices (Barthes 1981, p 84; Adorno 2001). Photography in Northern Ireland was particularly alert to the politics of visual representation, whether in the suppression and distortion of information in the print and broadcast media or in political battles to establish legitimacy and win hearts and minds (Curtis 1984; Miller 1994). Throughout the Troubles, as international media focused attention on the immediate effects of violent conflict, many local artists and photographers had turned towards more reflective practices aimed at establishing a critical distance between events and images (Graham 2013, pp 70-73). Photography's potential as a medium for exploring Northern Ireland's past and imagining its future in the aftermath of conflict informed

¹ For an account and discussion of the nature and impact of changes in Belfast Exposed's community photography programme between 1983 and 2007, see: Hadaway, P. (2007b).

the development of Belfast Exposed's fledgling gallery and commissioning programme.²

The 2000-03 Strategic Plan set out a business development strategy aimed at securing the physical, financial and human resources necessary to realise the organization's programming ambitions. With its focus on delivering 'urban regeneration through the arts', the Laganside Corporation's 1998 Art Strategy provided resource opportunities and a discursive framework for developing the gallery. Re-positioned within a cultural cluster of arts spaces, restaurants, cafes and hotels, Belfast Exposed would play a role in the regeneration of the city's former mercantile district, newly designated as a Cultural Quarter (Laganside Corporation 2007). The Laganside Corporation offered a low cost rental in a refurbished Victorian warehouse, whilst the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), Belfast City Council (BCC) and the Department for Social Development (DSD) provided funds to relocate, build, equip and programme new gallery and workshop spaces. The National Lottery Fund's strategy for digitizing cultural and community collections provided additional resources for rehousing the old Troubles collection as a free on-line learning resource and community archive (Belfast Exposed 2001).

Reflecting this shift towards authored rather than participatory practices, Belfast Exposed appointed a full time curator to develop working relationships among a new generation of visual artists and photographers (Belfast Exposed 2000). Using the camera as a critical tool for examining Belfast's post-conflict, post-industrial condition, many of these artists were drawing attention to the ambiguous interactions between the discursive imaginings of urban planning and the 'obdurate impossibilities' of Northern Ireland's complex histories and political condition (Kirkland 2003). As the post-conflict city became a testing ground for possible utopian futures, photographers like John Duncan, Claudio Hils and Kai-Olaf Hesse focused attention on the gaps between the claimed 'commercial neutrality' of the city centre and the increasingly excluded, segregated and sectarianized former industrial heartlands and left-behind communities at its fringes (Hadaway 2001, p 41; Brett 2003; Patterson 2003). Recording the condition of the new Belfast emerging amidst

² For a detailed historical and thematic account of the development of a distinctive Northern Irish photography, see Colin Graham (2013) *Northern Ireland 30 Years of Photography*, Belfast Exposed. For insights into the development of visual arts practices in Northern Ireland, see 'New Terrains' in Declan Long's (2017) *Ghost-Haunted Land: contemporary art and post-Troubles Northern Ireland*, Manchester University Press.

the residue of its past, these new perspectives disrupted the surface appearance of social and economic progress, promoted in the transformational rhetoric of regeneration and peacebuilding.

Resisting the impulse to de-politicize and tidy away contradictions that challenged up-beat claims of post-conflict transformation, this new generation of artists fostered deeper understandings of the political, social and economic realities discovered by the camera (Brett 2003; Graham 2005). Disturbing comfortable narratives of conciliation and dialogue, exhibitions like 'Archive_Belfast' (Hils 2003), 'Trees from Germany' (Duncan 2003) and 'Topography of Titanic' (Hesse 2005) drew attention to the 'radical separation' between those actively involved in brokering and promoting the political future and those struggling to defend or redefine their position at the margins (Graham 2005, p 567). In this way, the Belfast Exposed gallery supported an 'ethical way of seeing', where people were encouraged to measure utopian promises of prosperity and a shared future against the reality of inequality, exclusion and division in the present (Graham 2005, pp 567-569). In an increasingly instrumentalized policy environment, however, the gallery's ambition to 'maintain boundaries against political interest' demanded critical engagement with project planning and strategic decision-making. In other words, to defend critical space in the gallery, it was necessary to develop critical approaches to strategic management as a thoughtful and considered practice (Hadaway 2004, 2005 and 2007a).³

Operating within financial constraints and frequently under political pressure to justify cultural value in social and economic terms, cultural managers become highly attuned to the events, actions and discourses that constitute their external environment, often developing entrepreneurial approaches, which make best use of limited resources (Selwood 2001; Belfiore 1996). Beyond immediate opportunities and threats, strategic managers must also be alert to the flow of events over time, as yesterday's decisions effect the implementation of today's project plans and shape the strategies of the future (Pettigrew 1998). In making artistic programming a focal point of public policy, cultural managers have invited external political interests into internal decision-making and development processes in ways that challenge

³ I explored ethical and political challenges posed by the need to balance the preservation of artistic autonomy against the pursuit of strategic development interests in three articles published in *Circa Art Magazine* and the *Printed Project* between 2004 and 2007.

institutional autonomy. Thus, where market-driven agendas prevail, it is likely that funders will measure cultural value in terms of value for money and audience numbers, over and above the quality of artistic experiences (McGuigan 2004; Belfiore 2004). Similarly, where urban regeneration strategies prioritize attracting inward investment, artistic ambitions to critically engage with social and economic exclusion may be sacrificed in favour of more soothing cultural representations designed to ‘increase the saleability of the city’ (Chatterton et al 2004, p 377). However, whilst strategic plans may be fine-tuned to meet the priorities of external stakeholders, successful implementation ultimately relies upon internal agreement on values and goals.

Whilst Belfast Exposed’s 2000-03 Strategic Plan enjoyed broad support based on its capacity to deliver agreed economic goals, the new programming policy became evermore fiercely contested. The conflict arose from a decision to re-allocate resources from practical photography workshops to more theoretical and reflective practices, including curator and artist-led projects that questioned traditional mechanisms of visual representation (Hadaway 2007b). Whilst objections towards the new programme direction appeared to turn on different attitudes towards art and documentary practices, they were frequently framed as an appeal for or against a return to traditional ways of working. Whilst ostensibly a battle for resources between community-led and artist-led practice, the internal conflict was playing out as an ideological battle over the organization’s history, identity, founding mission and place in the community. In this way, as *new* Belfast Exposed occupied itself with the task of completing its future transformation, *old* Belfast Exposed grew more and more pre-occupied with the need to recover its authentic past.

These internal disturbances reflected a wider sense of political and cultural disorientation in Northern Ireland at that time. Theatre practitioner David Grant recalled the mood of the years following the 1998 Agreement as a ‘heady Janus mix of backward and forward thinking, memory and vision’ (Grant 2017, p 187).⁴ Anxiety about the nature of the future political settlement meant that many citizens remained wary of change and mindful of the need to defend their perceived sectional interests.

⁴ This thesis will refer to the Good Friday Agreement also known as the Belfast Agreement, as ‘the 1998 Agreement’. For an overview of the 1998 Agreement and the 2007 St Andrew’s Agreement, see: Northern Ireland Office (2013) *Devolution settlement: Northern Ireland*.

Whilst expressing support for political compromise, voters increasingly turned to the parties that presented themselves as the most effective sectional champions during the extended negotiations that marked the early post-Agreement years (Taylor 2009). The same paradox was evident in the growth of the physical barriers separating Protestant and Catholic neighbourhoods in Belfast and in their transformation from makeshift walls and fortifications into gentrified brick and landscaped environments (Hadaway 2001, p 40; Shirlow 2003).

The mood of backward and forward thinking was pervasive. As Director of Belfast Exposed, I was responsible for agreeing the organization's strategic direction, articulating its future vision and building consensus around a development strategy with clear, achievable goals. Increasingly, however, I felt that my role was changing from a focus on strategic planning and managing the organization's resources to mediating between two irreconcilable currents of thought. The issues I faced as a manager trying to build consensus echoed the wider crisis of politics in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. Whilst there appeared to be consensus on the need to adapt to a changed environment and maximise opportunities to achieve a future transformation, each side visualised that future from different standpoints linked to different understandings of the past. Struggling to implement a cultural development strategy in a small corner of the post-conflict city, the problem of how to visualise and agree goals in order to realise a shared vision appeared to have taken on a world historical character.

All over Northern Ireland, the problem of the past weighed heavily on policymakers, planners, strategic managers and political leaders responsible for cultural development in the post-Agreement moment. Written in the immediate post-Agreement years, 'One Belfast', the city's bid for 2008 European Capital of Culture articulated the same backwards and forwards mixture of expectation and nostalgia that was holding back development plans at Belfast Exposed (Imagine Belfast 2002). The Capital of Culture bid team included cultural managers, policymakers and planners, business, community leaders and arts practitioners, supported by cross-party representation from Belfast City Council, the regional Executive, academic institutions and arm's length bodies like the Arts Council and Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (Imagine Belfast 2002, p 51). Although representing different sectional interests, the team shared similar views on the utility of cultural

development as a mechanism for bringing about a future social, economic or political transformation. They also appeared to share the same ambiguous conceptions of culture and heritage. On the one hand, the Capital of Culture bid idealised Belfast's culture and traditions as resources for 'putting the heart back into the city' and building 'new common ground'; on the other hand, it saw both as potential sources of 'division, distrust and hate' that stood in the way of 'connectedness' (Imagine Belfast 2002, p 16). Capturing the contradictory mood, the bid spoke of Belfast's fear of letting go its identity as a city 'acquainted with grief' and its yearning to re-imagine itself as a contemporary European city (Imagine Belfast 2002, p 20). This ambivalence towards the past as a site of hurt, loss and failure reflected external political tensions between a perceived duty to acknowledge the ethical claims of the past on the present and a pragmatic desire to draw a line under the past so that everyone could move forward.

1.2. 'Time to put the past behind us'⁵

During the years running up to the 1998 Agreement, the key political priority had been to keep the unionist and nationalist parties around the negotiating table. Recovered memories or historical evidence that might disrupt the peace process, whether associated with Northern Ireland's 'difficult and embarrassingly recent past' or its 'irritatingly non-conforming present' (Graham 2014, p 188) would be tidied away out of sight. Around the world, however, this was a period of growing public awareness and interest in anniversaries, monuments, films and books commemorating and memorializing the past (Hewison 1987; Furedi 1992; Lowenthal 1998). Whilst Northern Ireland saw a proliferation of murals, memorial plaques, monuments and gardens of remembrance, mourning the dead and marking events associated with the conflict, these were largely contained inside the region's segregated communities.⁶ Disrupting the studied *placelessness* of the city centre, Belfast's Shipyard Memorial Wall sought to engage communities in Belfast's declining industrial areas, by inviting them to deposit pictures and objects representing personal memories of the Yards (Nash and Williams 2011). More controversially, the 1998 Agreement authorised the transfer of former military and

⁵ Address by Prime Minister Tony Blair at the Royal Agricultural Society Belfast, May 1997.

⁶ For an extensive archive of material relating to memorials in Northern Ireland, including a catalogue of memorial sites, visit Memorials database, CAIN [Conflict, Archive and Internet]. Available on: https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims/memorials/memorials_commem.html (Accessed 16 September 2018).

security bases to the new power-sharing government. Promoted as part of a peace dividend for Northern Ireland, the regeneration of the sites, which included the former Maze/Long Kesh prison estate, posed a difficult question: how to reconcile and coalesce antagonistic views about the history of the conflict into a coherent development plan that would drive economic growth and build peace across the region. Understanding how policy makers and planners sought to harness cultural development to the politics of peacebuilding is a central problematic in this thesis. This question, however, invites another of equal importance. Given the contested nature of culture and heritage in Northern Ireland, how had cultural development become such an important field of regional policymaking?

In his 2014 study of economic regeneration in Belfast, Phil Ramsey identifies a revealing turn of phrase in a 2007 promotional document advertising investment opportunities in Belfast's Titanic Quarter. Emerging from three decades of violent conflict, 'completely underdeveloped and under-regenerated', Belfast presented 'a pleasingly blank canvas for regeneration', ripe for economic exploitation (Harcourt Developments, 2007, p 44 cited in Ramsey 2013, p 25). Demonstrating the ease with which the interests of property developers and their political allies folded together within discourses of peacebuilding, Ramsey's study suggests that the attraction of Titanic Quarter as a regeneration model turned less on expectations that it would deliver economic benefits and more on its capacity to act as a force for de-politicizing and wiping away the past.⁷

The predatory role of finance capital and property speculation as forces shaping the built environment emerged as a central concern for many critics of the cultural economy during the years leading up to and immediately following the 1998 Agreement. Many architects, planners, urbanists, academics, artists and community activists saw market-led regeneration models as vehicles for promoting neo-liberal economic interests and masking the 'serious, structurally-induced problems' of poverty, unemployment and sectarian division that challenged comforting narratives of peace and prosperity for all (Neill 1995; Hadaway 2001; Cultural Policy Collective 2004, p 11; Shirlow 2006; Shirlow and Murtagh 2006). Others drew attention to the debasing and destructive effects of the marketization and commodification of culture

⁷ Ramsey's study of the Titanic Quarter regeneration is examined in greater depth in the introduction to the Titanic Belfast case study in Chapter 5.

in regeneration and tourism initiatives, where local experiences of conflict were simplified and exploited to promote a sanitised, visitor-friendly, post-conflict city brand (Neill 2006, 2011; Meredith 2011, 2012).

The rationale for these market-led forms of regeneration was largely explained by the spectacular rise in land and property values fueled by the global expansion of the market economy, alongside new sources of capital and credit flowing into the North from Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' economy. Fearing that Belfast's regeneration agenda was driven by powerful economic interests, many activists pointed to the absence of an authoritative strategic plan, leading to a situation where Belfast, seen as 'nobody's project', was washed over by the forces of neo-liberal economics (Forum for Alternative Belfast 2009). Others blamed the opportunism of regional politicians, intoxicated by the prospect of cash-rich investors and 'property buccaneers' arriving from Dublin and indifferent to quality of design or the needs of citizens (Brown 2008; Neil 2013). Albeit tongue-in-cheek, academic and writer David Brett's attribution of property-led regeneration in post-conflict Belfast to the arrival of 'a huge amount of money [that] was looking to be transformed into...hotels, office blocks etc. even if they could not yet be filled' captured the fatalistic mood of the time (Brett 2004).⁸

The re-imagining of a 'new post-conflict Northern Ireland' with a modern, vibrant economy was supported by wider economic changes taking place in the region (Shirlow 2006; Ramsey 2013). From the late 1990s, Northern Ireland had been enjoying a consumer boom, largely fuelled by the availability of easy credit in the South. Signs of the 'peace dividend' were already 'tangible and obvious' in the region's booming property market and the arrival of retail giants like IKEA and Wagamamma (McLaughlin and Baker 2012, p 292). As Northern Ireland opened up to the global economy, the assumption that jobs and prosperity would radiate from the economic centres of Belfast and Dublin to the region's poor and marginalized communities was widely held by politicians from both sides of the community. Beyond this crude economic matrix, political support for investing in the cultural economy was also driven by powerful claims of a direct causal link between investing in arts and cultural sectors and the delivery of transformative social and economic benefits (Matarasso 1997; DCMS 1998; DCMS 2001).

⁸ Published in *The Satan* issue of *The Vacuum*, 2004 and quoted in Declan Long's *Ghost-haunted land* (p. 193).

In 1999, as part of the early advocacy for Belfast's Capital of Culture bid, Belfast City Council Arts and Heritage Office invited members of the team responsible for Glasgow's 1990 Capital of Culture to meet local politicians sitting on the City Council's arts committee. Setting out the rationale for Capital of Culture bids, the Glasgow team put forward a very simple formulation 'along the axis of culture and economics':

The Capital of Culture designation is like a slot machine that you always win with. Every one pound you put in, you'll get five back out.⁹

Presented with evidence of Glasgow's economic revival and transformation from a violent, sectarian, post-industrial city to the UK's first European Capital of Culture, Belfast's arts committee embraced the rationale for investing in cultural tourism, culture-led regeneration and the creative economy.

Whilst some critical voices challenged these instrumental claims, the assumption that the arts and culture could act as forces for social transformation was widely held across the whole of the UK (Appleton 2001; Selwood 2001; Belfiore 2002, 2006; Brighton 2002; Hadaway 2004; Heartfield 2006; Mirza 2006). However, whether claiming to deliver social and economic benefits in Manchester, Belfast or Glasgow, the cultural economy that blossomed in the regeneration models of the late 1990s and 2000s was rooted in the 'dung of deindustrialization' that had occurred in the preceding decades (Heartfield 2006, p 81).

1.3. Northern Ireland: sameness and distinctiveness

For a cultural development manager moving from the North East of England to work in Northern Ireland in 1996, the two regions appeared strikingly similar. This should not have been surprising. As part of the UK economy, Northern Ireland sits in a policy framework, which has largely been defined and shaped within the political and territorial structures that constitute the UK as a whole (Ruane and Todd 1996). Significant as a global centre of manufacturing until the mid-twentieth century, Belfast faced many of the same socio-economic policy dilemmas as the economically declining towns and cities of Tyneside. Both regions had been scarred by decades of industrial decline and strongly influenced by policy debates, which identified culture

⁹ Interview with Chris Bailey.

as an instrument for building economic growth and social cohesion. Gateshead Council's first Public Art programme was launched in 1986 as a strategy for improving the urban environment and engaging the wider public in creative processes designed to foster a sense of shared ownership (Gateshead Council 2006). Newcastle's Quayside regeneration (from 1991) and its conservation-led Grainger Town regeneration (from 1996) focused on improving the public realm of the old mercantile quarter of the city, supporting business and enterprise and investing in heritage and cultural tourism.

Similar strategies for assimilating social and economic objectives within arts and cultural heritage initiatives were well established in Northern Ireland by the early 1990s, with Belfast's Lagan-side and Cultural Quarter regenerations promoted as vehicles for reclaiming post-industrial land and attracting citizens, communities, consumers, tourists and inward investment into the capital city (McCarthy 2006). Although shaped by regional political priorities and contexts, all these programmes expressed a positive belief in cultural participation as an instrument for driving economic growth and resolving inequalities and conflict in society. Whether on Tyneside or Belfast, the change from regional centres of heavy industry and manufacturing to capitals of culture was taking place in the context of wider patterns of global change. De-industrializing capitalist economies had been shifting towards new modes of production and more flexible systems of employment in the service, cultural and retailing sectors since the late 1970s (Harvey 1989a; Heartfield 2006). During the same period, governments moved state resources away from national industrial and welfare strategies towards locally targeted, privatised models. Rather than seeking to eradicate poverty, policy interventions increasingly sought to mitigate and manage its impacts. The 1980s and 1990s thus saw a decisive policy shift from a focus on 'state provision of the means of security' to an emphasis on building 'the internal capacities of individuals' to cope with risk and uncertainty (Chandler 2013, p 57).

The re-imagining of policy dilemmas in terms of moral and cultural rather than social and economic factors provided community and cultural organizations with opportunities to promote the value of their work. As politicians and policymakers grappled with the effects of social fragmentation and political disengagement, cultural value was increasingly articulated in terms of social transformation rather

than solely economic objectives (Selwood 2001; Belfiore 2002). As economic, social and moral discourses converged in cultural policy, the goals of cultural development strategies oscillated between tackling major structural problems such as unemployment and poverty and addressing social, cultural or even therapeutic dilemmas such as low self-esteem or a diminished sense of well-being (Mirza 2006).

Whilst regional policy dilemmas tended not to diverge too far from wider British experience, where differences occurred they were invariably grounded in Northern Ireland's distinctive history as a site of communal conflict around different claims to national sovereignty (Birrell 1994). Throughout the Troubles, policies for economic and social development had evolved within an overall framework of normalization, aimed at reforming and restoring devolved government in a stable Northern Ireland.¹⁰ During the early years of the peace process, culture-led regeneration and cultural development were utilised in normalization strategies for mitigating the impacts of conflict. As the peace process progressed, militarised security and surveillance measures gave way to shared visioning models of urban control of the kind used to manage public disorder in racially divided cities such as Detroit and Baltimore or 'riot torn Brixton or Liverpool 8' (Hadaway 2001; Bean 2007, p 24). In this way, wider policy discourses associated with cultural development, economic regeneration and neighbourhood renewal frequently converged with regional discourses associated with security normalization and conflict management (Hadaway 2001).

Completed in 1997, Belfast's Waterfront Hall was the centrepiece of a regeneration strategy, which saw the arts and culture as catalysts for recovering the city as a place of social, economic and commercial exchange (Walker 1998). With its elegant structures of chrome and glass, the Waterfront Hall stood as a component in the cultural economy, a shared cultural space and a symbol of hope and defiance in a city that had endured decades of political violence. Initiatives like the Waterfront Hall, the cycle paths along the River Lagan and the emerging Cultural and Titanic Quarters spoke to a yearning for normality that had grown in response to a highly distinctive experience of conflict. The ambition to re-imagine the city as a shared space, a central theme in Belfast Exposed's 2000-2006 strategic planning, spoke to concepts of civic space familiar to many in Newcastle and Gateshead and further afield across Britain

¹⁰ Normalization, a central theme in Britain's Reform and Reinvestment policy for direct rule in Northern Ireland was first enunciated in the 1972 Green Paper, 'The Future of Northern Ireland'. The background to and implications of this policy are discussed at length in Chapter 3.

and Europe. However, in spite of the familiarity of everyday regional attitudes and public discourse, the question of what constituted *normal* social and economic conditions has always been highly contested in Northern Ireland.

Judgements of what constitutes normality can be made on the basis of actually existing, potentially existing or previously existing values, standards, conventions and attitudes (Bowling, Neumann and Murphy 2006, pp 9-11). Normality may be conceptualised in terms of the restoration or conservation of a natural, familiar or previously pristine state of being or, conversely, in terms of transformation and building anew. These different conceptions of normality, whether as customary and organic or as radically transformative have been reflected in different, and often highly contested, approaches to social and economic development, urban regeneration and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. Like many disputes in Northern Ireland, differences are frequently expressed in the form of cultural antagonisms between Catholic and Protestant or nationalist and unionist communities, with one side defending their particular traditions, histories, cultures and norms against the other.¹¹ The commitment undertaken in the 1998 Agreement to set aside sectional differences and for each community to respect the ‘identity, ethos and aspirations’ of the other, appeared to represent a major step towards realizing a new Northern Ireland, founded on values of tolerance, compromise and willingness to participate in dialogue. Rather than being managed at the margins, the recognition of cultural difference became a central theme in economic and social development strategies after 1998.

With Northern Ireland’s new power-sharing government promising political partnership and greater investment in arts and culture-led development, the post-Agreement policy environment appeared to augur well for ambitious cultural development plans. Ideas for using cultural development and culture-led regeneration as instruments for building a more prosperous and inclusive society appealed to

¹¹ Catholic and Protestant communities are internally differentiated along religious, cultural, political and class lines. Protestants may identify as Presbyterians, members of the Church of Ireland, secular, British, Ulster Irish, Ulster Scots, loyalist or unionist. Catholics, meanwhile, may identify as secular, Irish, Northern Irish or British, republican or nationalist. This thesis uses the terms selectively, for example, applying nationalist and unionist to describe the two political blocs sharing power in the post-Agreement settlement. The terms republican, unionist and loyalist are used to describe the protagonists to the conflict. Given the ambiguous nature of the post-Agreement settlement there is a significant overlap between these terms. For a detailed exposition, see The Reconstruction of Communal Division in Ruane, J. and Todd, J. (1996) pp 49-83.

politicians and community activists across the communal divide. ‘One Belfast’, the city’s bid to win the crown of European Capital of Culture was one of the most ambitious plans. Explicitly linking arts, creativity and developing cultural infrastructure to the 1998 Agreement’s peacebuilding goals, the bid reflected familiar conceptions of art, culture and creativity as catalysts for economic growth, and as tools for breaking down social barriers and building new forms of shared citizenship. ‘Made in Belfast’ promoted Belfast as a global cultural destination and centre for investment. ‘Through the Eyes of a Child’ prioritised projects that placed regional forms of creativity at the forefront of educational strategies for enhancing young people’s job prospects and enabling them to ‘play a full role as citizens’. ‘To Live without Walls’ was aimed at developing ‘the capacity of under-represented groups’ to fully engage in the life of the city. However, the bid’s overarching goal was to use culture to effect a re-imagining of the city, by transforming its peace walls into sites for inter-community dialogue and peacebuilding (Imagine Belfast 2002, pp 21-22).

Whilst identifying culture as a bridge to the future, the bid also revealed tensions between different understandings of culture, whether as unifying and potentially transformative or as a source of conflict and division. Asked to define a concept of culture for the city, the bid proposed a list of ambiguous and conflicting assertions. Culture in Belfast was expansive, ‘embrace[ing] every aspect of social, political and creative life’; it also expressed ‘concepts of citizenship, civil and human rights and the principles of dissent and consent’; it was also exclusive and alert to the ‘nuances of language, faith, loyalty and disaffection’ (Imagine Belfast 2002, p 18). The weaving together of these different ideas of culture masked the contradictions and lack of shared vision that were identified as key factors in the bid’s failure (Collins 2003; Gray 2003). In this way, culture in Northern Ireland can be understood as a force for driving development plans, as a potential source of conflict and as rhetorical camouflage for masking underlying policy weaknesses and political failures.¹²

1.4. Policy weaknesses and the politics of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland

The 1998 Agreement and subsequent legislation not only failed to resolve conflict

¹² A leading member of the bid team observed feelings of discomfort among the Capital of Culture judging panel on their visit to the city in 2002, with ‘what they saw as overt sectarianism and division’, which they feared would not be resolved by the bid or in time for it to be delivered in 2008 (Collins 2003).

around the question of who determines the political future of Northern Ireland, but intensified existing communal antagonisms about history, cultural identity and national belonging (Gilligan 2002; Aughey 2005). The weaknesses of the post-Agreement settlement are both structural and conceptual. Firstly, in seeking to reconcile two antagonistic political visions, the Agreement promised to guarantee the rights of Irish nationalists to self-determination in a unified, sovereign Irish nation. However, it offered these guarantees only on the basis that nationalist aspirations remained conditional upon an acceptance of the continued reality of the union between Northern Ireland and Britain within the UK. By acknowledging the reality of the Union, but not its permanence, the 1998 Agreement rendered the political goals of both Irish nationalism and Unionism indeterminate (Gilligan 2002). With no clearly stated interests or agreed endpoint, the peace process would become the ‘permanent politics of Northern Ireland’, a process of managing rather than transforming communal conflict (Darby and McGinty 2003, p 75). The conceptual weakness of the 1998 Agreement arose from the tactical use of ambiguous language as a strategy for weaving the aspirations of unionist and nationalist communities into a shared vision. The political instability that subsequently dogged Northern Ireland has frequently been attributed to the unravelling of the ‘constructive ambiguity’ that was deployed to secure consensus during the peace negotiations (Powell 2009).

This thesis will show how conceptual vagueness in an already highly politicised policy field has encouraged political interventions that undermine the professional authority of cultural policymakers, planners and managers and marginalise politically unaligned or otherwise excluded communities from political and peacebuilding processes. Reflecting on weaknesses in Northern Ireland’s post-Agreement policy framework, Milena Komarova argues that attempts to keep opposing political parties in the peace process by being ‘all things to all people’ had worked against definitional clarity in regional policymaking (Komarova 2008, p 9). Conceptual vagueness in cultural policymaking and planning had in turn opened up space for opposing factions to exploit different discourses associated with peacebuilding and cultural development for their disparate political ends (Komarova 2008). Political actors and community gatekeepers became adept at attaching particularist agendas to development initiatives under the rhetorical cloak of inclusion and peacebuilding (Murtagh and Ellis 2011). Thus, in addition to policy weaknesses arising from the use of constructive ambiguity, the lack of a common language through which to

articulate terms like citizenship, shared space and reconciliation frequently masked exclusionary practices.

The question of how cultural development managers mobilize competing interests to agree policy objectives and realize a shared vision in a highly politicized environment is central question in this thesis. Cultural policy provides cultural planners and strategic managers with a guide to action, procedural systems and regulatory frameworks for making and authorizing decisions. It also enables cultural planners and development managers to set, achieve and systemize goals. Cultural policy can thus be understood in terms of its functions as part of a structural framework and system of rules, procedures and 'institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life' (Miller and Yudice 2002, p 1). Identifying culture as an instrument for shaping attitudes and effecting social and economic change, cultural policymakers have drawn correlations between different policy fields beyond the immediate sphere of arts and cultural production (Mommaas 2004). Unequal power relations are often implicit in the field of cultural policymaking, where power emanates from a multiplicity of sites, ranging across government departments, political parties, civil society organizations and individual citizens. In this way, cultural policymaking operates as a terrain for regulation *and* resistance (Bennett 1996).

Joined-up policymaking is a way of systemizing and imposing order across the diverse networks of political, social, economic and community interests that are required to reconcile differences and negotiate shared goals (Ahearne 2009). In the public and voluntary sector, joined-up policymaking frequently proceeds on a presumed consensus around the benefits of collaborative working (Bryson 2018). Smoothed over in consultation and planning processes, differences often emerge only at critical points of implementation, as strategies are realized in practice (Mirza 2012). Development managers should therefore be attentive to the 'idiosyncratic untidiness' that may be glimpsed in the 'critical incidents and social dramas' that disrupt partnership building, planning and consultation processes (Pettigrew 1979 p 269-274). The following section provides a brief observational study of a public consultation around the future development of the former Maze/Long Kesh prison estate, organized by Belfast Exposed in April 2004, which provides a vivid example of the way different actors and groups mobilize inclusive structures and discourses

of consultation, peacebuilding and planning to serve their exclusive interests.

1.5. ‘The Future of the Maze’: observing the shortfall in inclusive practice.¹³

HM Prison Maze was a microcosm of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Built in 1976 to confine men convicted under special anti-terrorism legislation, it had held 1,700 prisoners at its peak capacity during the mid-1980s. As members of opposing republican and loyalist paramilitary groups, prisoners were confined in segregated units. These units, known to republican supporters as the H-Blocks because of their distinctive design, became the site of violent protests, hunger strikes, mass escapes and deaths of both prisoners and prison staff. The prison was closed in September 2000 as part of the post-Agreement strategy for normalizing security arrangements. After the closure, the government of Northern Ireland helped set up a major public consultation to elicit ideas for the redevelopment of the site. Launched in autumn 2003, ‘A New Future for the Maze Long Kesh’ invited proposals that would address the strategic objectives of bringing economic, social and community benefits to all the people of Northern Ireland.¹⁴

Whilst the development of the former prison estate was a central plank in the power-sharing government’s economic strategy for post-conflict reconstruction, planning processes had been dogged by controversies associated with the prison’s deeply contested history. Regarding the prison as a symbol of the legitimacy of their struggle against British rule, Republicans argued for its conservation as a site of historical significance. Unionists called instead for the prison to be demolished and its history erased. In a fragile peace and at a moment of growing historical self-consciousness, plans for the future development of the former prison estate seemed likely to founder amidst these diametrically opposed and irreconcilable views. Belfast Exposed participated in the consultation by hosting a public discussion on ‘The Future of the Maze’ on 7 April 2004. Part of a strategy for putting the gallery on the city’s cultural map as a welcoming civic space, the discussion coincided with the launch of an

¹³ ‘The Future of the Maze’ was a public discussion hosted by Belfast Exposed on 9 April 2004. The following account is based on my notes as Chair of the discussion.

¹⁴ The rationale behind the many different formulations for naming the former prison estate is discussed in Chapter 6. This thesis uses the same formulations as the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) in its 2011 comprehensive review and evaluation: *The Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive* (The NIAO review is a key source for the case study in Chapter 6). Exceptions are made when quoting from other sources, as in this instance, where the consultation is titled ‘A New Future for the Maze Long Kesh’.

exhibition, which considered ‘the physical and psychological impact’ of the prison in Northern Ireland's recent history (Magnum Photography 2003). The product of a 100-day residency on the former prison estate, ‘Maze’ by Belfast photographer Donovan Wylie documented its physical structures as a regime of power.

The exhibition provided an important conceptual frame through which to engage with questions surrounding the development of the site. ‘Maze’ was one of a series of photographic works developed between 2003-2006, as part of the gallery’s new artistic programme. ‘Belfast becoming past, becoming future’ invited individual artists to respond to the question: what kind of city is emerging from three decades of violent conflict? The rationale for commissioning authored representations of the post-conflict city was informed by an understanding that the experience of communal conflict had both shaped the physical contours of the city and narrowed its field of vision (Downey and Hadaway 2004, p 8). From the recently deserted shipyards to the new apartments, shopping centres and boutique hotels, ‘Belfast becoming past, becoming future’ documented the displacement of the old Belfast by the new. The idea was to create a record of the changes and open up space to talk about the question confronting all the citizens of Northern Ireland: whether to act as the ‘custodians of tradition, or - through critical engagement with history - to try to build another future’ (Downey and Hadaway 2004, pp 8-9). Reflecting the concept of the artistic programme, the public discussion utilized the idea of the archive as a record and repository of the past, which also shapes the way we imagine the future.

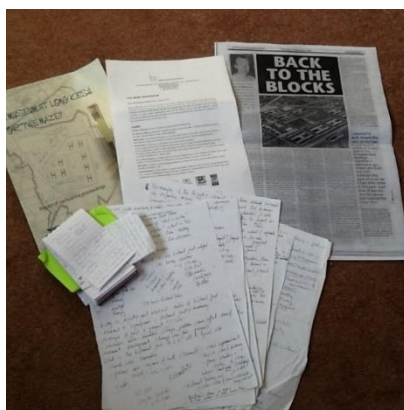


Fig. 1. Chair’s notes, ‘The Future of the Maze’ (Belfast Exposed, 9 April 2004)

The speakers invited to lead the debate reflected different interests and perspectives on the development plans and different approaches to recording histories and sites of

memory.¹⁵ The discussion was aimed at exploring proposals for the Maze/Long Kesh development in the context of the cultural, architectural, historical and political meanings attached to the site. Reflecting the high level of public interest in the Maze/Long Kesh development, the 80-strong audience included regular gallery visitors, community participants and representatives of unionist and republican groups and parties. The speakers set out their positions in five-minute presentations. My job was to chair the discussion and engage speakers and audience in a structured conversation. The following summary of the debate is drawn from seven A4 pages of handwritten notes (Fig. 1) recorded during the event, checked, and amended the following morning.

The discussion opened with two questions: how do we value objects from the past and by what criteria do we select certain objects for preservation and study? As a member of the ‘Memory, Identity and History’ research group at the University of Brighton, Louise Purbrick had published a detailed study of the archaeological and historical value of the Maze/Long Kesh site. She had also contributed research to Coiste na nIarchimí (Coiste), spoken at their 2003 conference at the Island Arts Centre, Lisburn and contributed a paper to the Report ‘A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze’ (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003).¹⁶ As part of her research into memory, identity and history, Dr. Purbrick had commissioned Donovan Wylie to undertake his forensic photographic record of the prison and had contributed a chapter to the ‘Maze’ exhibition catalogue. The argument for preservation advanced in her contribution to the Coiste research paper rested on the capacity of the former prison estate to increase understanding of the conflict and its human consequences. Whilst the architecture might not qualify under standard definitions of aesthetic or architectural interest, the rationale for selection and conservation turned on the question of social relevance.

¹⁵ The panel included two political spokespeople, Stephen King, Special Adviser to former First Minister and Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader David Trimble and Mike Ritchie, head of the republican ex-prisoners group, Coiste na nIarchimí, who was working with Sinn Féin on proposals to build a museum to the conflict on the site. The academics on the panel included Dr. Louise Purbrick, a researcher in exhibition and museum practices; Dr. Kevin Bean, an academic in Irish political studies and Dr. William Neil, an academic in the field of spatial planning, interested in the way identity is spatially contested and affirmed. The panel also included cultural commentator Josie Appleton, editor of a collection of essays, ‘Museums for the People’, exploring the role of the museum in society.

¹⁶ Louise Purbrick’s contribution to the research and development of the proposed ‘Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze’ is examined in greater depth in Chapter 6.

Reflecting the different research interests, political perspectives and expertise in the room, challenges were raised to the emphasis on social relevance as the basis of collections and programming policies. For example, if museums and galleries based decision-making on criteria of social relevance, might they be in danger of privileging external economic or political agendas over curatorial expertise and aesthetic judgment? Where interpretations of history were contested, might arguments about resources, relevance and inclusion become sublimated forms of political conflict? Some challenged the very concept of a museum of conflict, asking if it could be anything more than a museumification of the Troubles. A particular problem related to the incongruence between a commercialized Troubles' heritage site and the duty to present truthful representations of the past that fostered reflection. However, the problem of encouraging partisan representations of the conflict was weighed against an official culture that demanded a tidying away of the past into history. Were there more ethical ways of remembering the conflict that opened up space for people to collect their thoughts? These opening questions attempted to locate the discussion in philosophical and ethical discourses that problematized the values attached to historical objects and the relationship of museums to society and conflict. Contributions from the political representatives on the panel and in the room, however, suggested a desire to reposition the discussion within the framework of political controversies about different meanings attached to the site.

Two clear and irreconcilable political positions emerged. Those, mainly Republicans, advancing the Coiste proposals argued that the museum be dedicated to peacebuilding, whilst insisting that no development could take place unless the plans acknowledged the meaning of the prison estate as a site of political struggle. Those opposing the Coiste proposals, largely Unionists, simply insisted that the prison estate be 'razed to the ground'. Both sides acknowledged the potential economic value and peacebuilding potential of the site. However, one side understood the value in terms of capitalising on its identity as a site of political struggle, whilst the other saw it in terms of a cleared site upon which to *reconstruct* a peaceful and prosperous Northern Ireland.

Contributions from the audience expressed the sense of frustration and mistrust of political leaders that characterised the public mood at that time (Irwin 2003, p 75). One woman asked, 'how are we supposed to make plans for the future if politicians

can't stop arguing over the past'? Another asked whether the controversies dogging the Maze/Long Kesh development reflected 'power struggles in the here and now' or were simply 'a continuation of the old battles?' One audience member questioned the purpose of involving the public in discussions when 'the real political decisions were being taken in another place'. Another, speaking 'as a lifelong Republican', questioned Sinn Féin's denial of the spiritual meaning attached to the H-Bocks through the Hunger Strikes:

I don't believe any Republican that says we don't want a shrine. I'm a Republican and I want to take my child to visit the place where Bobby Sands died.

One of the panelists linked the widespread suspicion that politicians were acting in bad faith to the indeterminate nature of the 1998 Agreement. As recorded in my notes:

Where the standard narrative of post-conflict reconstruction is premised on clear winners and losers, victors and victims, the parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland had agreed to blur the political and moral distinctions in order to achieve inclusive dialogue.

The debate had exposed gaps between the claims of political parties ostensibly committed to drawing a line under the past and their refusal to compromise on fundamental questions about the future. These disagreements over the political meaning of the site - past, present and future - overshadowed wider discussion, whether around the practical realization of the project or the ethics of remembering and forgetting. However, the surfacing of political tensions around the historical meanings attached to the site provided an important insight into the underlying nature of two very different conceptions of the future development, observed in my notes:

Where one side sees it in terms of re-establishing a golden age of peace and prosperity, the other sees it in terms of the completion of an unfinished revolution.

This insight helped formulate a key problematic in this thesis. Given the 'representational gulf' between the unionist and republican positions, might the future development of cultural heritage sites like Maze/Long Kesh pose a significant risk for policymakers and planners seeking to develop effective projects aimed at achieving economic regeneration and social transformation?

Conducted six years after the discussion held in Belfast Exposed, M.K. Flynn's study of the first phase of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration examined a similar set of assumptions (Flynn 2011). The study focused on the gap between the stated desire for consensus made by political parties and their political gatekeepers and the reality of cultural competitiveness on the ground. Seeking to explain disruptions and delays in decision-making that were stalling development plans, the study identified a perceived gap between the 'inclusive intent' set out in the plans and the 'shortfall in inclusive practice' that characterized actual planning and implementation processes on the ground (Flynn 2011, p 397). In particular, Flynn's study showed that individuals and communities contributing to consultations surrounding the future development of Maze/Long Kesh believed that their interests were being marginalized by the powerful political actors that dominated planning and decision-making processes (Flynn 2011, p 393). Although frequently consulted by government departments and regional development agencies, participants complained of being invited to participate in pre-determined, tick-box exercises, designed to manage rather than engage with stakeholder opinion. It seemed that strategic decision-making remained in the hands of elite groups of politicians, civil servants and their specialist advisers, who regarded consultation processes as little more than window dressing for the promotion of pre-set political agendas.

Flynn's study had discovered that the stated intention of the plans to open up space for dialogue had masked antagonisms between the political parties and their supporters, which had ultimately risen to the surface to dominate consultation processes. Flynn rightly proposed that the gulf between the different political meanings ascribed to the former prison combined with the shortfall in inclusive practice in consultation and planning processes would turn the development into a liability for the public purse rather than a public asset for peacebuilding (Flynn 2011, p 397). However, gaps between the stated aims of inclusion and peacebuilding and the reality of exclusionary practices and communal conflict are not restricted to the field of cultural development and culture-led regeneration but are far reaching problems affecting political decision-making and policymaking in Northern Ireland. Whilst Flynn proposes that these problems exist '*despite* the negotiated settlement' [my emphasis] (Flynn 2011, p 385) that brought the Troubles to an end, this thesis argues that they have continued and in many cases intensified *as a consequence of* structural and conceptual weaknesses in that negotiated settlement.

1.6. The rationale for this research

Whilst much critical literature reviewed in this chapter has drawn attention to weaknesses in Northern Ireland's post-Agreement policy framework, assumptions that economic development could drive political change and potentially resolve political conflict had become deeply embedded in policy and practice and in the consciousness of politicians, policymakers and planners during the preceding twenty-five years of direct rule. This thesis is interested in the way that the assumptions of post-Agreement policymaking were formed in earlier policy responses, not only to the decline of Northern Ireland's manufacturing base but also to repeated political failures to manage and resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland. It is important to understand the effects of this permanent interlinking of political and economic strategies, in terms of the recurring pressure placed on policymakers and planners tasked with finding political support and financial investment for new initiatives that might deliver, or at the very least, project an image of stability and peaceful normality. In this way, the rationale informing post-Agreement regeneration models like the Titanic Quarter cannot be explained simply in terms of political opportunism or surrender to the interests of property developers or the impersonal forces of the market.

The 1998 Agreement does however represent a significant moment of historical change, which achieved many positive practical outcomes. After three decades of violent conflict, all the parties committed to enter a process of demilitarization to ensure a return to normal security arrangements. Britain agreed to dismantle the securitized state and reduce its military presence, especially along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Agreement succeeded in drawing militant Republicanism into political dialogue and opened the door to Sinn Féin's entry into the structures of government. This ultimately saw all the main paramilitary groups signalling their willingness to put down their weapons and agree terms for the release of prisoners and long overdue reforms in the administration of security, policing and justice. Recognising the problems of inequality and economic and social exclusion that had fuelled conflict and division, the 1998 Agreement laid the ground for a regional development strategy aimed at rebuilding the region's shattered public infrastructure and regenerating towns and cities. Above all, the Agreement spoke to a widely held and deeply felt longing to end decades of bloodshed in Ireland.

Although overwhelmingly approved in two all-Ireland referenda held on 22 May 1998, the Agreement did not represent the culmination of the conflict or even a transition towards an agreed endpoint.¹⁷ Rather it established the necessary institutional and discursive frameworks for a process aimed at facilitating political power-sharing between the parties to the conflict (McGinty and Darby 2002; Gilligan 2002). Acknowledging the ‘substantial differences’ remaining between the ‘equally legitimate’ aspirations of Irish nationalists and Unionists, the 1998 Agreement committed ‘both communities’ to ‘exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences’ based on ‘parity of esteem.... and just and equal treatment for [each other’s] identity, ethos, and aspirations’ (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). In doing so, it structured the government of Northern Ireland around the management of two politically and culturally distinct communities and identified the protection of cultural and communal rights as central themes in subsequent legislative and policymaking processes (Nic Craith, 2003).

The years following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement were dominated by the challenge of bringing the more unyielding elements of the unionist and nationalist parties into the power-sharing process, whilst preventing the more moderate elements from walking out. Offers of resources for social and economic development became key negotiating tools for achieving trade-offs and building consensus between the different sides. Principally supported by the UK Treasury but with additional resources available through European Union (EU) funds, the strategy of using regional planning and development as tools for managing conflict and building political power-sharing built on Britain’s long-standing strategy for governing in Northern Ireland by harnessing economic investment to social equality and political reform. In the post-Agreement years, however, the use of economic development, planning and consultation processes as vehicles for consolidating power-sharing increasingly resonated with peacebuilding models that sought to engage former enemies in processes of social and economic reconstruction.

¹⁷ Citizens of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland voted on the ratification of the 1998 Agreement as follows: Northern Ireland - Yes 71.12%, No 28.88% (turnout 81.10%); Republic of Ireland - Yes 94.39%, No 5.61% (turnout 56.26%); Ireland overall - Yes 85.46%, No 14.54%, (turnout 53.70%). For more details visit CAIN web services. Available at: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/ref1998.htm> (Accessed on 14 September 2017).

Peacebuilding is the broad term applied to activities aimed at building or rebuilding long-term relationships between former combatants. Contemporary peacebuilding studies identify conflict as a universal feature of all societies. Conflict is positive and consensual when it arises around areas of shared concern that can be resolved through dialogue (Galtung 1990). Conflict only becomes destructive when the conflict parties believe that their values and goals are mutually incompatible and therefore non-negotiable (Ramsbotham et al 2011 pp 7-8). Whilst conflict management seeks to contain hostile, discriminatory and violent behaviours and attitudes, the long-term goal of peacebuilding is to establish a moral and cultural framework through which mutually incompatible political aspirations may be rendered mutually comprehensible and even desirable (Lederach 2005). In the absence of these moral and cultural pre-conditions, the political structures and institutions of post-conflict societies will remain unstable. This transformative approach to peacebuilding begins with an agreement to confront and change negative attitudes and behaviour as a first step towards overcoming the structural contradictions that give rise to destructive conflict. (Galtung 1990, 2004). The next step on the journey towards positive peace is to open up shared spaces for dialogue, where people can recover their sense of shared humanity and begin to imagine, negotiate and build a shared future (Lederach 2005).

Following an act of reconciliation, conflict transformation describes the process through which destructive conflict is changed into a 'battle of words' and finally to positive peace, where 'the parties are working together to find a solution to a problem' (Galtung 2004, p 38). Strategic planning and cultural development processes appear to offer ideal terrains for peacebuilding, as the parties to the conflict agree to work together to confront their own discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in the interests of achieving tangible goals. In the case of the planned museum to the conflict at Maze/Long Kesh, the planning process promised to open up space for the conflict parties to imagine different futures 'that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday' (Hayner 2003, p 161). However, the practice of attaching power-sharing and peacebuilding objectives to social and economic development in Northern Ireland has introduced structural and conceptual complexity into the rational world of project development and planning. In her comprehensive study of the International Fund for Ireland and the EU Special Support Programmes for Peace, Sandra Buchanan links the 'theoretical confusion and associated definitional morass' in this

area of conflict transformation to weaknesses in the planning and evaluation of regional peace programmes (Buchanan 2014, p 4). In other words, whilst providing space for dialogue, the conceptual vagueness of terms associated with conflict transformation and peacebuilding mitigate against their usefulness as coherent objectives in development plans. Having assimilated the structures and discourses of a peace process with no agreed endpoint, policy initiatives aimed at social and economic reconstruction have come to reflect instabilities and lack of clarity in the external political environment.

Culture is also an inter-linking and recurring theme in this thesis, defined in terms of its role in establishing distinctive ways of life and historical narratives around which Northern Ireland's different political communities coalesce. This thesis considers the way different ideologies and values attached to culture came to be inscribed in legislative and governance structures in Northern Ireland's post-Agreement political settlement. It also explores how these different perspectives and meanings of culture were reflected in cultural development, planning and policymaking. It finally uses case studies to interrogate the connection between culture, economic development and political power, focusing on the way state actors and their community partners intervene in processes of cultural development, planning and policymaking to establish and reproduce their desired narratives, ideologies and values.

The thesis draws on Raymond Williams' understanding of culture as a convergence - or even sublimation - between general processes of 'intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development' and creative projects and practices involving intellectual and artistic activities that is universalized to become sets of shared or common meanings (Williams 2000, p 17). This idea of culture, as a *practice* of artistic and intellectual production, a *process* of social development and a *place* for social and cultural exchange informs the policy fields of cultural development and regeneration that are the focus of this study. Jon Hawkes articulates a similar view of culture as a synthesis between 'the medium and the message', through which values and aspirations are developed, manifested, received and transmitted between the world of the imagination and the world of social interaction (Hawkes 2001, pp 3-4). These ideas will be explored in greater depth in the following chapters. For the purpose of this introduction, however, the term cultural development describes development processes aimed at enabling cultural activities, including artistic and intellectual

production, for the purpose of achieving social, economic and cultural exchange. Culture-led regeneration specifically refers to uses of cultural development as a tool for effecting social transformation or as an asset for creating economic value in urban and regional development plans (UNESCO 2009).

Writing a hundred years after the publication of Matthew Arnold's 'Culture and Anarchy' and more than a decade into the Troubles, the Irish historian F.S.L. Lyons explained the cultural dynamic of the conflict in Ireland in terms of a dialectical struggle between Arnold's view of culture as 'a unifying force in a fragmented society' and culture as a force for division:

My thesis is that, in Ireland, culture – or rather the diversity of cultures – has been a force which has worked against the evolution of a homogenous society and in doing so has been an agent of anarchy rather than unity (1979, p 2)

This dichotomy is not confined to Ireland or Northern Ireland. Just as culture provides the imaginative glue for binding communities together around distinctive traditions, narratives and ways of life, so cultural development has frequently been harnessed to projects aimed at establishing political or communal solidarities, including the telling of national stories (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 112). However, Northern Ireland is a region in which different conceptions of culture are closely bound to different conceptions of national identity and belonging (Lyons 1978; Ruane and Todd 1996). The idea of culture as an imaginative space where national identities are formed and bound together (Anderson 1983) is key to understanding the dynamics of inter-communal inclusion and exclusion in cultural development in Northern Ireland.

Similar dialectics between inclusion and exclusion and unity and division have emerged in discussions of heritage as an asset for cultural development. Two critics have questioned the relationship of the 'heritage industry' to history and memory, in terms of authenticity and truthfulness. Robert Hewison defines heritage as 'bogus history' that uses selective and manipulated representations of the past to mold public opinion and political culture in the present (Hewison 1995, p 143-4). Appeals to heritage as a symbol of historical continuity may help foster a distinctive communal identity or destiny, but meanings attached to heritage ultimately rely upon faith rather than reason and evidence (Lowenthal, 1998). In this way, politicized forms of heritage frequently act as secular shrines for the performance of modern day virtues

associated with the consolidation of a sense of citizenship and community.

Raymond Williams explores the tensions between different conceptions of culture either as transcendent and unifying or as something unique and embedded in lived experience. Culture not only describes particular ways of life and states of belonging, but also acts as an imaginative bridge between separate worlds (Williams 1961). Linking together these different conceptions of culture - one inclusive the other, exclusive - Williams sees the potential to build common ground, while cautioning against particularist uses of culture by state actors for the purposes of self-aggrandizement or excluding others (Williams 1961). Cultural theorist Terry Eagleton draws similar distinctions between embedded forms of culture, which express established ways of living, and the transformative potential of culture as a force capable of 'plucking unity from diversity' (Eagleton 2000, p 1). In highlighting the tension between culture as an expression of the authentic self and as a force that liberates people from their 'sectarian political selves', Eagleton throws light on the dialectic between unity and fragmentation in cultural development in Northern Ireland (Eagleton 2000, pp 7-8).

The research methodologies, introduced and elaborated in the following chapter are used to explore three questions aimed at unpacking the complex interplay between cultural policy and the politics of peacebuilding in post-Agreement Northern Ireland:

- How have cultural development planning, policymaking and management been shaped by Northern Ireland's distinctive historical and political contexts?
- How do actors engaged in cultural development processes frame, rationalise and endow their actions with meaning?
- How do those meanings become embedded in policy and practice?

1.7 Chapters and Structures of Thesis

This chapter has provided an introduction and overview of the research, setting out different ideas about the meaning and role of culture and about cultural development as a policy response to wider economic, social and political dilemmas that have arisen in Northern Ireland during the years leading up to and following the 1998 Agreement. The chapter also established the research questions and elaborated a historical,

political and conceptual framework through which to explore them. Chapter 2 will position the research questions within a theoretical, methodological and ethical framework designed to throw light on the question of how actors engaged in cultural development and planning processes frame, rationalize and endow their actions with meaning and how these meanings become embedded in policy and practice. The chapter begins by exploring different theories and concepts that help explain how policymakers and planners negotiate, influence and are influenced by external political and ideological forces. These theories and concepts include Anthony Giddens' explanation of the relationship between structure and agency elaborated in his theory of structuration (Giddens 1984, 1994). They also include Foucault's ideas of knowledge and discourse as instruments of power and ways of constituting human subjects (Foucault 1977, 1980, 2002). In this way, the chapter establishes cultural policymaking, both as a site of political and social action and as a discursive practice that is responsive to and is shaped by its external political environment over time.

This thesis explores different uses and different rationales for using culture as a tool for driving regional social and economic development, both in the light of Northern Ireland's *distinctiveness* as the site of the longest conflict in Western Europe since 1945 and its *sameness* to the wider UK policy environment. Chapter 3 considers different ways the conflict has given shape to the distinctive structures and discourses of cultural policymaking in Northern Ireland. Approaching this question from a historical perspective, it establishes the competing claims, narratives and explanations for the conflict and the way these are bound up with conflicting allegiances and ideologies, which legitimate (or de-legitimate) the position of one side or the other. Drawing on literature from cultural studies, conflict studies, policy and management studies and Irish political studies, the chapter establishes the principal social, economic and political factors that shaped economic development in Northern Ireland following the imposition of direct rule in 1972 until devolution was restored after 1998. The chapter particularly focuses on the contradictions inherent in Britain's normalization strategy for managing the internal dynamics of the conflict through social reform and economic development, based on the principle of parity with other regions of the United Kingdom. It explores key parallels and distinctions between the structural and discursive factors shaping economic development in Northern Ireland and Britain, including the influence of wider political currents and policy debates associated with the cultural turn. The chapter also explores distinctive

regional power relations and policy interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of communal segregation and conflict. In doing so, it establishes the symbiotic relationship between strategies for normalization and for cultural development and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 4 examines the impact of the 1998 Agreement on cultural development planning, policymaking and management practice in Northern Ireland. Drawing on contemporaneous policy documents, political statements and media debates, interposed with reflective interviews, the chapter establishes patterns of continuity and change that occurred in structures of governance, political discourse and political culture in Northern Ireland during this period. It also interrogates the structural and discursive processes through which pre-existing policy weaknesses came to be reproduced and intensified. Finally, the chapter sets out a textual and discourse analysis toolkit, which it uses to identify the structural and conceptual contradictions that emerged as weaknesses in cultural development planning, policymaking and management in the years following the 1998 Agreement.¹⁸

Chapters 5 and 6 examine two significant culture-led regeneration initiatives from Northern Ireland's post-Agreement. Both case studies use policy documents, plans, reports, minutes, public presentations, press statements, alongside public archives and interviews with key actors and witnesses to explore two propositions, that:

- Weaknesses in the 1998 Agreement and subsequent legislation have opened up cultural development as a terrain for political struggle.
- The assimilation of peacebuilding objectives into planning and policymaking negatively impacts on effective project management and undermines the authority of cultural managers tasked with implementing strategies for cultural development and culture-led regeneration plans in post-Agreement Northern Ireland.

Chapter 5 maps Titanic Belfast's development as a cultural component in the broader Titanic Quarter regeneration plans. The Titanic Quarter is a strategically significant urban regeneration, cultural heritage and peacebuilding project, embodying a complex range of public and private interests. Under the banner of memorializing Belfast as the city that built RMS Titanic, these interests converged over a period of

¹⁸ The Textual and Discourse Analysis Toolkit will be applied in Chapter 6 to an analysis of cultural planning documents related to proposals for a museum at Maze/Long Kesh regeneration.

two decades in pursuit of a variety of objectives, ranging from promoting economic growth to fostering reconciliation and greater social and community cohesion. The case study maps the evolution of the Titanic Belfast heritage centre from its earliest inception as a minor component in plans for regenerating Belfast's former shipyards, looking at the way the plans were shaped within two key discursive frameworks: the direct rule discourse of normalization through economic development and post-Agreement discourses of reconciliation and shared space. It also considers the way different representations of Belfast's industrial history were used at different discursive moments to promote the Titanic Quarter regeneration and Titanic Belfast as part of a process for re-imagining a new Northern Ireland.

Chapter 6 examines the development of the proposed museum to the conflict and later Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Centre at Maze/Long Kesh. This case study takes the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration as a microcosm of wider social, economic and political problems facing post-Agreement Northern Ireland. It considers the way instrumental uses of cultural development and culture-led regeneration as tools for building consensus opened up cultural policymaking and planning as terrains for inter and intra-communal power struggles and claims making. In doing so, it shows, paradoxically, how the determination to build peace and political consensus through shared development processes has established the 'conflicts and hatreds of yesterday' as central themes within social, economic and cultural policymaking. The case study also provides evidence of practical problems arising from the attachment of peacebuilding goals to cultural development projects. In particular, it shows how the focus on mediating between former conflict parties has undermined the authority of cultural development planners, policymakers and project managers as peacebuilding objectives mitigate against the establishment of the clear vision, unambiguous goals and agreed endpoints that are necessary to deliver effective projects.

Chapter 7 summaries key findings and insights and considers the implications for cultural development managers and policymakers attempting to develop and deliver projects in the absence of common meanings and agreed goals. The chapter supports arguments that the post-Agreement settlement, with its mandatory power-sharing coalition, has further institutionalized deep-rooted antagonisms at the heart of political decision-making and thus created an unstable policy environment. It also proposes that the emphasis on cultural recognition has helped drive essentialist

agendas that have created challenging external environments, which disrupt project planning, development and implementation, driving a vicious circle of delay and distrust. It concludes that the incorporation of peacebuilding and power-sharing objectives into project management has placed a significant burden on strategic development and project managers attempting to mobilize political support for their plans. By taking a historical view of policy formation, this thesis was able to identify key patterns of continuity and change that have shaped the regional policy environment and embedded distinctive ways of thinking and working. The final chapter shows how this historically informed perspective is key to understanding the complex and contradictory dynamics that have shaped cultural development and the politics of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland after the 1998 Agreement.

Chapter 2: Research methodology, conceptual and ethical framework

2.1. Introduction to the research methodology

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the challenges facing cultural planners and development managers tasked with developing and implementing cultural policy in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. The previous chapter began with a professional perspective on cultural development as a contested field of policymaking and a microcosm of the wider social, economic and political problems facing post-Agreement Northern Ireland. It also identified cultural development, policymaking, planning and implementation in post-Agreement Northern Ireland as dynamic spaces, in which decision-making is constrained, enabled, formed and informed in the interplay between external economic and social forces, contested meanings and struggles for power between political and non-political actors. As a cultural development manager working in Belfast during the years of the peace process and following the 1998 Agreement (1996-2014), my relationship to the field of study has informed two principal research strategies. Firstly, I propose to draw on my own professional knowledge and experience of strategic planning and management practices and the knowledge and experience of peers, to inform the design of the study and guide the initial fieldwork. Secondly, I propose to test my assumptions and findings through critical analysis of relevant policy and strategic planning documents, political debates, media reports and promotional material, including exhibitions and presentations. These documents will be examined both in the context of key social, economic and political factors that have shaped regional development since 1972 and through the professional experiences and practices of strategic managers and planners recorded in interviews.

This thesis emerged from a desire to develop a more critical approach to strategic planning and cultural management practice. The overall research strategy for the thesis reflects an ambition to measure the ‘micro’ experiences and everyday understandings of managers engaged in cultural development practices against the ‘macro’ world of social systems, social and economic forces and political events and actions (Barbour 2008 pp 11-13). The following section sets out a rationale for a research method that pays attention to two key aspects of management practice: firstly, the recursive and embedded nature of decision-making in societal and organizational practices; and secondly, the need to develop critical understandings of

taken-for-granted assumptions of cause and effect. It does so by drawing upon key thinkers and studies that have contributed to the understanding of cultural policymaking as a field of social and political action and as a space for discursive imagining and re-imagining. The aim is to identify critical theories and tools that will help make sense of the complex interplay between cultural development policy and the social, economic and political environment in which policymakers and strategic planners operate.

2.2. Cultural policymaking as a site of political and social action.

Drawing on Gramscian analyses of the hegemony of state power in shaping ideology, Jim McGuigan is among a group of thinkers who approached the study of cultural policy and production as a critique of the structuralist dynamics of late capitalist society and as a potential site for formulating strategies of resistance (Jameson 1993; McGuigan 1996). In his analysis of the evolution of cultural policy in Britain, McGuigan considers key political events and ideas that have framed and rationalised cultural policymaking at particular ‘discursive moments’, when policy thinking coalesces with ideological currents associated with broader social and political events (McGuigan 1996, p 54). McGuigan observes the way new ideas about artistic value and principles of democratizing or extending public access to the arts began to coalesce in policy debates from the 1960s in the context of wider challenges to structures of authority and power. Similarly, as Britain’s post-war economic boom gave way to industrial decline, slower growth rates and falling productivity, so art and culture came to be valued either in terms of value for money and cost effectiveness or for their potential to generate employment in the creative and knowledge economies. McGuigan’s concept of the ‘discursive moment’ describes the dynamic relationship between policy and politics and the way policy is formed through ‘discourses, ideologies and interests’ that shape, spur and constrain action (McGuigan 1996, p 55).

McGuigan’s insights are relevant because they speak to another important idea at the heart of this study: the way that meanings and assumptions are constructed by political and policy actors ‘in the process of interaction’, rather than simply being imposed by external systems, structures and regimes of power (McGuigan 1996, p 55). In identifying cultural development, planning, policymaking and social and political action as fields of contestation between rival discourses, ideologies and

interests, McGuigan's discursive moment describes the critical relationship between actors engaged in the field of policymaking and actors engaged in the *real world* of political situations, events, opportunities and constraints. However, where McGuigan emphasises the power of economic forces and social structures to shape and determine decision-making, others emphasise the significant role of cultural policy as a vehicle for delivering the political goals of cultural managers (Brighton 2006). Given the significance of culture as an *instrument of* and a *vehicle for* wielding political power, the authority exercised by cultural managers can be seen to carry considerable weight (Bennett 1995).

A key thinker in the field of cultural policy studies, Tony Bennett juxtaposes the historical development of the museum to the prison, asylum and factory as 'institutional articulations of power and knowledge relations' in modern industrial societies (Bennett 1988, p 73; Bennett 1995).¹⁹ From this perspective, the museum functions as part of a state apparatus through which governments discipline, reform and educate those they govern. In contrast to the prison or asylum, which function as closed systems for regulation and confinement, the museum opens up space for representation and public display. Thus, whilst providing the state with an ideological backdrop for exercising authority, the museum holds the potential for a dynamic reordering of the officially sanctioned order of things. Responding to the political events and exigencies of particular moments, cultural workers have frequently reordered and democratized the static displays and closed systems inside the museums and cultural institutions where they work. Bennett argues that advocacy for the democratization of culture frequently flows from the political worldviews and radical, emancipatory politics espoused by many cultural workers, (Bennett 1995 p 405). Through engaging with dominant structures of knowledge and power, cultural policymaking may thus be seen as a terrain of struggle, where cultural workers adopt the role of 'agents of change', committed to 'changing consciousness' about the deployment of culture as an instrument for achieving social justice rather than the exercise of social control (Bennett 1995, p 406).

Other cultural policy studies draw attention to the discursive consciousness of

¹⁹ Bennett applied Michel Foucault's perspectives on institutional power and its relationship to fields of knowledge and governance to 'The Birth of the Museum', his 1995 study of the historical development of the museum. Foucault's perspectives on power and knowledge relations are discussed later in this chapter.

advocates for the arts and culture, who approach cultural policymaking and cultural development as processes for enabling social change. David Bell and Kate Oakley talk about the ‘ecological complexity’ of policymaking as a site of political and social action and an arena for competing ideas (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 46). Different actors and agencies, ranging from think tanks, lobbyists, consultants, academics, politicians, arts managers, producers and policy entrepreneurs, meet together in consultations and decision-making processes (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 46). As ‘actors acting (or not) within specific contexts with particular outcomes in mind’, they advance their interests through discourses that reflect different understandings of the use, value, meaning and purposes of culture in society (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 48). Cultural policymaking involves more complex processes than straightforward bureaucratic responses to external policy dilemmas, or binary decisions enacted in adherence or resistance to external pressures. It is important, therefore, to consider the variety of rationales and motivations, attitudes and beliefs among the different professional, political and community actors engaged in planning, development and management processes (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 53).

In her study of arts and cultural development in East London and Oldham, Munira Mirza explores the formation of cultural through a constantly evolving web of decisions and assumptions, shaped by networks of actors and organizations over time (Mirza, 2007, 2012). Whether reformulating social and economic problems as cultural dilemmas or promoting culture as an instrument for social justice, the political consciousness of activists, arts advocates and policy entrepreneurs plays a key role shaping policy discourse and influencing the allocation of resources. The orientation in cultural policymaking towards delivering political outcomes, such as increasing diversity, does not simply reflect the political priorities set out in funding regimes but represents a discursive re-imagining of society and of the human subjects who are the focus of cultural policies (Mirza 2007). Far from constraining action, instrumentalist policy agendas provide policy actors with opportunities to reframe their intentions within relevant political, social and economic agendas and thus advance their organizational or sectoral interests (Belfiore and Bennett 2006; Mirza 2007). In this way, cultural policymaking can be seen as conscious, socially embedded and responsive to political change. In studying cultural policymaking as a site of social and political action, this thesis explores the complex interaction between policymakers and the social, economic, political and ideological worlds in which they

operate.

The assumption that men and women do not react to external social and economic forces in purely deterministic ways, but actively create meanings and rationalize responses through social and linguistic interaction is the starting point for understanding the discursive relationship between voluntary action and social and political reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, 1969). The men and women in this study include strategic managers, planners, participants in planning processes, politicians and their political gatekeepers, engaged in different practices associated with cultural development, planning and policymaking. Rather than simply responding to immediate threats or seeking to obtain resources and outcomes that serve their immediate interests, these men and women play an active role in processes of strategic policy formation, evolving diachronically through successive historical and political contexts (Carrier 2005, p 32). This idea of cultural policymaking as a dynamic, discursive and diachronic site of political and social action is reflected in the following exploration of research methodologies.

To understand the regional dynamics of cultural policymaking it is helpful to consider two inter-linking questions. Firstly, why have distinctive policy environments emerged in particular historical and political contexts? Secondly, how have different actors engaged in policymaking responded, acted and interacted in these policy environments to produce particular outcomes? In Northern Ireland, the first question requires an understanding of the historical and political events and social and economic structures that have shaped the regional policy environment. The second question focuses attention on the agency of different actors engaged in policymaking, how they endow their thoughts and actions with meaning and how these meanings are embedded in policymaking and policy initiatives. Understanding how strategic planners, stakeholders and decision makers think and act within the institutional, political and regulatory environments in which they work and how their actions are shaped by broader social, economic and political forces is a central problematic in this thesis. The following section considers two influential social theories that help throw light on the dynamic interplay between the inner world of decision-making agents and the external world of economic structures and social systems in which they interact. Rather than intervening in long-standing debates on agency, social

action and discourse, this section seeks to establish a rationale for research methods that bridge structuralist and intentionalist accounts of decision-making.

2.2.1. Structuration theory

Anthony Giddens developed his sociological theory of structuration in response to a central problematic in social theory concerning the relative primacy of ‘the social whole’ as a determining factor shaping the consciousness and actions of the human subjects who constitute individual members and social groups within society (Giddens 1984, p 1). Giddens’ theory proposes that questions about the pre-eminence of structure or agency might be resolved through the study of social activities situated in particular contexts and over time. Instead of explaining thought and action in terms of a dichotomy between external structures and self-determining human agents, Giddens proposes a ‘duality’ between social actors and the rules, regulations, procedures, expectations, values and norms in which they operate (Giddens 1984, p 2). The key lies in the ‘recursive’ nature of social practices. Rather than thinking about structures in terms of static, immutable laws bearing down on social actors, Giddens draws attention to the role of individual and collective agents in forming and rehearsing the ‘recursively organised sets of rules and resources’ that constrain and enable their interests and goals (Giddens 1984, pp 24-25).

In explaining the creation and reproduction of social systems in terms of purposeful human intervention and interaction, Giddens’ theory of structuration appears to support a modernist concept of men and women as active subjects, authors and products of their own choices. Approaching the autonomous subject of liberal modernity with caution, Giddens positions the choice-making subject within the continuous flow of events, interactions and discursive moments that constitute the modern world (Giddens 1994, pp 3-6). Where liberal modernity presupposed an external world open to human exploration, transformation and control, Giddens advances an ‘unknowable world’, in which ‘unintended effects overwhelm the intended ones’. From nuclear fusion to climate change, many of the greatest threats facing humanity are directly linked to human action and advances in human knowledge. This association of knowledge with risk has led to the intrusion of ‘manufactured uncertainty’ into every arena of life that is open to decision-making, in ways that have unsettled political responses to social and economic change (Giddens 1994, pp 3-6). Operating in the midst of a complex, ‘reflexively organised’

social and material world, purposeful action flows from the capacity of social actors to share knowledge and risk and reflect upon, monitor and adapt to circumstances, rather than their capacity to dominate or control the external environment (Giddens 1994, p 79). In this way, individual subjectivity is seen as reflexive and knowledgeable, being ‘grounded in the continuous monitoring’ of the self, in relation to individual capacity and knowledge of the actions and expectations of others (Giddens 1984, p 3).

The concept of structuration is an important element in the development of a methodological framework for this thesis. Firstly, in positing an understanding of political structures and social systems that are created and reproduced as products and by-products of purposeful human thought and action, structuration is one of the cornerstones of the Third Way thinking that informed New Labour policies for tempering the divisive aspects of nationalism in Northern Ireland and shaping new identities through dialogue. Structuration theory also reflects and speaks to the growing consciousness of uncertainty and political disorientation, described in the previous chapter as a feature of Northern Ireland’s post-1998 discursive moment. Mapping the discursive shift in debates about human agency through the 1990s, David Chandler positions Giddens’ reflexive subject in the aftermath of the ‘collapse of left/right framings of liberal modernity’ and:

The decentring of the human subject as a rational agent, capable of securing itself through knowing and shaping its external environment. (Chandler 2013, pp 56-57).

The key point to grasp from this view of subjectivity lies in its relationship to an external world discursively re-imagined as nothing more than a ‘product of our individual choices’ (Chandler 2013, p 59). For example, where the ‘founders of socialism’ had understood men and women as not simply ‘the authors but the masters of their own destiny’, structuration recasts them in the role of facilitators and co-producers, managing the global consequences of their actions across highly complex, social and economic systems.

The 1998 Agreement has been seen as marking, if not the end of Irish history, at least the ‘end of Irish political modernity’, where grand ambitions to construct a politics that might transcend communal division have given way to the management of particular identities and interests through the politics of power-sharing (Ruane 1999;

Coulter and Coleman 2003; Byrne 2015, p 268). Re-imagined through discourses of peacebuilding, power-sharing might be seen not so much as an end point but rather as a reflexive process through which the former combatants have agreed to work together to transform mutually incompatible political goals into shared aspirations. In what many experience as an increasingly dislocated and uncertain political environment, social reflexivity has replaced the grand narratives of Republicanism and Unionism as the organising principle for planning and political decision-making in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. However, in making their autonomous political goals negotiable, the unionist and nationalist leaderships have detached themselves from their separate political constituencies. In this way, the process of power-sharing in government necessitates the continual promotion of the legitimacy of power-sharing to these separated political constituencies on the ground. Cultural development has become a space for building and cohering support for new post-conflict re-imaginings of Northern Ireland among these disaffected constituencies.

Secondly, by focusing attention on the dynamics between the actions and interactions of individual policymakers and the political, economic, social and technological forces that constitute the policy environment, Giddens' concept of the duality of structure identifies management practice, policy discourse and policy documentation as important areas for investigation. In theorizing the relationship between social structure and human agency in terms of processes of action and interaction, Giddens focuses attention on 'the primacy of social practices, ordered through time and space' (Varra and Whittington 2012, p 289). Understood in terms of interfaces or bridges between social structures and human agency, policymaking practices offer valuable sites for studying the dynamic relationship between decision-making, organizational structures and external economic and political forces (Whittington 2015). Just as shared grammatical rules and linguistic practices are used to create and carry meaning, so 'the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise' (Giddens 1984, pp 24-25).

In the field of cultural policymaking, these structural properties take linguistic and discursive forms, being constituted in the rules, procedures and funding regimes, which are negotiated, consulted on, adapted, adopted, integrated, evaluated and benchmarked by cultural development managers, planners, consultants, policymakers, politicians and their networks of gatekeepers and stakeholders. Discourse is language used in social contexts. The discourse of policymaking is a

vehicle for meaning that is also a form of social action; it shapes and is shaped by socio-cultural factors and acts as a medium and expression of agency, authority and power (Ahearn 2001). In social theory, discourse describes the different worldviews and bodies of knowledge that underpin different disciplines, social practices, structures and hierarchies of power. Used as a tool for communicating and managing the business of government, discourse becomes part of the political action and a mechanism for exercising power (Fairclough 2000). Discourse may appear in the form of written and spoken language and sometimes through visual communications and rhetoric, including symbols, signs, spectacle and performance (Barthes 1997). Language and discourse shape the way people understand and order the external world and have a determining effect on individual action and social practices. Where effective decision-making relies on the capacity of social actors to reflect upon, monitor and adapt to circumstances, language and discourse, in the form of policy discourse and documentation, can be seen as both the medium and outcome of the collective 'knowledgeability' of the social actors participating in and facilitating decision-making processes (Giddens 1984).

2.2.2. Knowledge, power and discourse

Giddens identifies knowledgeability as a key component of agency, but defines it separately from knowledge and power. Where knowledge allows social actors to increase their discursive consciousness of the structural properties of the social systems in which they operate, knowledgeability represents an actor's practical consciousness of the social conditions and the implications of their own actions. Knowledgeability derives from day-to-day activities and 'tacit ways of knowing' that help social actors operate in given social contexts (Giddens 1984, p 15). Applying the concept of the duality of structure to the dynamics of power relations, Giddens defines the exercise of power in terms of 'knowledgeable agents' asserting and negotiating access to resources (Giddens 1984, p 15). Rather than being an expression of structural domination, power within social systems presumes 'regularized relations of autonomy and dependence' (Giddens 1984, p 16). In this way, power and knowledge are understood to operate through dialectics of assertion and compliance.

In contrast, Michel Foucault locates power in external social structures, which dominate, regulate and constrain human freedom. Far from understanding power as shared or relational, his conception of power alludes to the panoptical system in

nineteenth century penal regimes, where discipline was maintained across closed structures, in which ‘separated individualities’ remained subject to ‘a state of conscious and permanent visibility’, under an all-seeing, all-knowing authority (Foucault 1977 p 115-116). However, rather than thinking about power simply as an external restraint on autonomy, Foucault studies the operations and effects of regimes of power, not only as mechanisms for disciplining and socialising individuals but as systems for producing and transmitting new knowledge and meaning in ways that bring new kinds of subjectivity and ways of social being into existence (Foucault 1977). From this perspective, power is socially constructed, reproduced and exercised through social systems and practices. Whilst this concept of structural power may appear all encompassing and all-seeing, Foucault regards the rules and categories of knowledge that underwrite authority in modern societies as unstable, dynamic and historically contingent (Foucault 1977, 1980). Far from wielding absolute power, modern governments derive authority from their capacity to secure the safety and provide for the needs of the citizenry. Thus, rather than being exercised through repression, power is frequently called upon to prove itself through the production of ‘effects at the level of desire – and also at the level of knowledge’ (Foucault 1980, pp 58-59). From this perspective, knowledge, desire and meaning are not simply adjuncts of power but fundamental to the exercise of power.

Foucault uses the term ‘discourse’ to denote the production and transmission of fields of knowledge, aspirations and historical worldviews, which act to rationalise and determine specific social actions and practices (Foucault 1977). Rather than simply representing or reflecting social relations and social practices, discourse constructs, constitutes and names them, along with the rules and categories that define new knowledge and new ways of thinking and being in the world (Foucault 2002, p 28). In this way, discourse is not simply an instrument of power but a manifestation of power relations and regimes of power, both historically and in the here and now. The study of discourse is thus inseparable from the study of the material effects of power in the construction and normalization of particular social relations and social practices at any given time (Foucault 2002, p 30). Whilst constructing and imposing new ways of knowing and being in the world, discourse operates within a pre-constituted discursive order, in which social relations and social practices exist in pre-determined categories such as normal or abnormal, acceptable or unacceptable. Clashes between different worldviews and different theories of value disrupt the

discursive unities that constitute our readymade knowledge of the world. In this way, rather in the manner of conflict transformation, inconsistencies and differences open up new 'field(s) of strategic possibilities' that permit 'the activation of incompatible themes' and break open the door to social transformation (Foucault 2002, pp 30-33).

Foucault's concept of the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse is a central idea informing the methodological framework for this thesis, which examines cultural development as a manifestation of institutional and political power relations and struggles in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. Foucault's theorisations of the archive and the panopticon as metaphors for understanding power relations in the organization and regulation of advanced industrial societies have been highly influential in shaping the consciousness of the cultural development managers and producers, whose actions and worldviews are of central interest to this study. With its suggestion of 'a loss, or a contortion, of memory', the archive became a powerful organising principle in Northern Irish photography in the years following the 1998 Agreement (Graham 2013, p 187). Foucault's conceptualisation of power in the figure of the 'all seeing eye' also calls attention to the camera, both as apparatus of surveillance and instrument for exposing the mechanisms of control, in ways that have greatly influenced cultural production in Northern Ireland (Hadaway 2018). Significantly for this study of cultural management practices, new relational forms of state power, which have been evolving since the 1980s, have given a Foucauldian character to the 'managerial state' (Clarke and Newman 1997, p 30). For example, following the logic of Foucault's panopticon schema, contemporary mechanisms for delegating power to non-state actors rely on systems of 'productive subjection', where decision-making is decentralized, dispersed and policed through a complex apparatus of auditing, benchmarking and reporting (Clarke and Newman 1997, p 31).

Foucault approaches the archive both as a repository for the 'multiplicity of statements' produced by particular fields of knowledge and practice and as a system of knowledge, organization and control (Foucault 2002, p 143). In this way, the archive provides historical evidence of the systems and rules through which the statements contained in documents and texts 'survive and ...undergo regular modification' (Foucault 2002 p 146). In taking account of the historical development of discourses of cultural development in Northern Ireland, this thesis uses documents and texts to establish the formation and deployment of regional policymaking within

the discursive order constituted under direct rule. Discursively imagined as an instrument for economic and social transformation, cultural development was used to construct and normalize a social order informed by categories of meaning associated with the cultural economy, power-sharing and peacebuilding. Developed and applied in institutional settings, discourses of cultural development were written into strategic documents, policy frameworks, audits, evaluations and best practice models, which continue to guide and constrain planners, policymakers and managers. Critical analysis of the discursive formations embedded in these texts, informed by an understanding of the history and historical context of cultural policy and practice in Northern Ireland, will throw light on the distinctive forms of regional policymaking that have emerged and helped to shape new ways of thinking.

2.3. Research methods and tools

This thesis began with the problem of implementing a cultural development plan and the desire to develop a more critical management practice. Rather than simply reacting to immediate opportunities and threats, critical approaches to strategic management must be attentive to the flow of events and their consequences over time. In contrast to entrepreneurial or ‘performance-dominated’ notions of strategy-making, critical analyses of strategic planning and policymaking understand decision-makers as ‘social beings’ whose choices are defined, enabled and constrained by the ‘practices in which [they are] immersed’ (Vaara and Whittington 2012 pp 285-289). This understanding of strategy-making as a practice that emerges from ‘a web’ of societal and discursive practices draws attention to the importance of practice-based analyses that pay critical attention to the intentions, perceptions and material circumstances of the actors involved (Vaara and Whittington 2012 p 286). This approach requires research methods and analytical tools that reveal the way strategic planning and policymaking are embedded in the mechanisms, processes, political relationships and discursive practices that give meaning and substance to decision-making (Pettigrew 1998).

This understanding of strategic planning and policymaking as contextual and embedded draws attention to the interdependencies and sequential interconnectedness between internal and external environments that shape processes of development and change (Pettigrew 1979, 1990 1998). The processual nature of strategic development demands critical approaches to research and analytical tools,

in which discrete events and episodes in the life of a development project can be connected to broader patterns of change taking place in external and internal environments (Pettigrew 1990, p 268). Rather than limiting research to the collection and analysis of short-term ‘single snapshot data’, critical analysis of development processes should dwell upon long-term patterns of:

Continuity and change...idiosyncrasies, the actions of individuals and groups, the role of contexts, structures, and process of structuring (Pettigrew 1990 p 269).

This chapter will now set out research methods and tools designed to build an understanding of the way cultural development, cultural planning and decision-making have been enabled and constrained by the distinctive historical and political contexts and prevailing social, political and organizational structures in post-Agreement Northern Ireland; and the different ways that policy actors have framed, rationalised and endowed their actions with meaning; and how those meanings have become embedded in policy and practice.

The thesis examines cultural policymaking, development and planning in the political context of peacebuilding in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, using two significant post-Agreement cultural heritage developments: Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh. The overall research strategy is guided by the following questions:

- How are cultural development planning, policymaking and management shaped by Northern Ireland’s distinctive historical and political contexts?
- How do actors engaged in cultural development processes frame, rationalise and endow their actions with meaning?
- How do those meanings become embedded in policy and practice?

2.3.1. Case Studies

The decision to examine case studies was guided by the nature of the research, which applies critical social theories to understand the way institutions and individual actors are constrained and enabled within real life development and implementation processes. The decision was particularly informed by Giddens’ understanding of the way social actors construct social systems through the medium of discourses and practices developed over time (Giddens 1984). The case studies examine how different actors rationalize and frame arguments for using cultural heritage as a tool

for building a shared future and how these become embedded through practice. A key purpose of the case studies is to interrogate accepted ways of doing, thinking and talking about policy dilemmas and strategic planning that become routinized and embedded in policy and practice during processes of development and change (Pettigrew 1997; Vaara and Whittington 2012).

The attractions of the case study approach are firstly that it opens up the study to a variety of interests and to multiple sources of evidence, thus providing deeper understandings of the decisions and actions of strategic planners and policymakers; and secondly that it allows policy and planning processes to be observed sequentially, over discrete periods of time and across specific social, economic and political contexts. Appraising the design and conduct of case studies for research purposes, Yin argues that they are particularly valuable for identifying complex causal and operational links, in processes, which are unfolding over time (Yin 2003). Rather than focusing on social phenomena in isolation from their context, case studies allow researchers to carry out investigations, which retain the holistic character of real-life events and contexts (Yin 2003). Thus, the case study helps the researcher to more thoroughly explore the boundaries and reflect upon the ‘entangled situations’ between phenomena and their wider social and political context (Yin 2003, p 8). In this way, the case study provides opportunities for exploration and interaction, in which researchers can develop fuller and more nuanced understandings of strategic decision-making. Schramm argues that the essential value of the case study lies in the opportunities it provides to ‘illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result’ (Schramm 1971, p 14).

The case studies allow the thesis to explore and analyze variations, contradictions and tensions between different political, cultural and institutional settings and between the stated goals and underlying interests and assumptions of different actors involved in cultural development processes. With routine processes of planning, consultation and implementation providing a ‘contextual backdrop’, the case studies focus attention on the ‘critical incidents and social dramas’ that episodically disrupt the flow of development plans (Pettigrew 1998, p 175). Each social drama provides an opportunity to observe how actors mobilize aspects of structure and context as they seek desired outcomes.

The 1998 Agreement represents a discursive moment that provides the historical,

political and ideological context for this study. The choice of Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site as case studies reflects their distinctive character as post-Agreement culture-led development projects. Both developments are products of a post-Agreement strategy of economic and social investment aimed at negotiating power-sharing and building peace and future prosperity in Northern Ireland. Whilst both are shaped by policy discourses of social and economic development and urban regeneration through culture and heritage, each represent distinctive responses to regional policy dilemmas arising from Northern Ireland's particular experience of conflict and division.

In many ways, Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh could not appear more different. Titanic Belfast opened its doors to the public in 2012, the centenary year of the sinking of the Titanic, whilst plans for the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh have yet to be realized. Titanic Belfast was a property-led regeneration that followed the private purchase of large plots of post-industrial land in Belfast's Harbour Estate by a Dublin based property developer. Based in East Belfast, a unionist-dominated area of the city, Titanic Belfast lacked an overt community relations dimension. Its primary goals were to create a tourist attraction that would boost the commercial success of Belfast's Harbour estate, put Belfast on the map as a global destination and get Northern Ireland back to business.

Conversely, the proposal to build a peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh was driven by social, economic and peacebuilding objectives agreed by the UK government and the new power-sharing government of Northern Ireland as part of the post-Agreement peace dividend. After the 1998 Agreement, as the unionist and nationalist parties became partners in government, individuals and organizations with links to government in the public, private and voluntary sector were called upon to work together to deliver development projects. In this way, plans for the peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh were integral to the process of reconfiguring power relations and discursively imagining Northern Ireland's shared future. Given the discursive and rhetorical insistence on building shared space in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, it is significant that the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh became a site of political controversy and a focal point for emotional identification with contesting historical interpretations and ideological positions.

Despite many clear differences, Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh are both high-profile, post-Agreement regeneration projects that became sites for collaboration and conflict between different government departments, private business, public sector, voluntary and community organizations. Both projects were constrained and enabled within the overall discursive framework of peacebuilding established by the 1998 Agreement and influenced by discourses associated with urban regeneration, economic growth and social transformation. They thus exemplify the convergence between different policy objectives that occurred under the general rubric of culture-led development. Where some actors supported culture-led development as a way of attracting visitors or boosting local businesses, others prioritized opportunities for local communities to access resources. Some saw these high profile developments as opportunities to advance their political interests or promote a particular narrative of the conflict or image of a future Northern Ireland. The aim of the case studies is to look for evidence of tensions and contradictions between the stated intentions and underlying objectives of the participating actors.

The decision to select Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh as case studies was also influenced by the idea of the monument as a 'historical prism' elaborated in Peter Carrier's study of the 'Origins and Political Function of the Vel d'Hiv in Paris and Holocaust Monument in Berlin'. Carrier argues that the widespread public attention, political debates and controversies that accompanied the inception and development of these two national monuments to the destruction of European Jewry endowed them with a 'discursive formation' at various points prior to their actual material existence (Carrier 2005, p 34). These national monuments do not exist to convey the historical events that took place in France and Germany between 1933 and 1945, so much as to embody the 'perceptions and interpretations of history' pertinent to the current moment (Carrier 2005, p 199). Carrier's study examines different rhetorical and symbolic strategies used during the development process to change existing perceptions, build consensus and construct new narratives and meanings. Approaching key moments in the development process as 'focal points' for unresolved questions, his study focuses on the 'rhetorical speculations' that emerged at various points prior to the material existence of the two monuments.

Given their strategic and political importance, Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh provide rich sources of material for studying the discursive and rhetorical aspects of cultural development and planning in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. Both developments were vividly brought to life during the planning and development process through descriptions, visualizations, presentations, discussions and disputes between people and groups, who advocated and contested their form, content and even their right to exist. Both were cultural components within larger regeneration projects that became objects of political controversy. The Titanic Quarter and Maze/Long Kesh regenerations both became the subjects of masterplanning, a technical process for visualizing and setting constraints on planning processes. Where weaknesses arise in consultation or design processes, masterplans may help corral conflicting positions, smooth over ambiguities and impose a surface coherence on development plans. An analysis of the Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan and Maze/Long Kesh Regeneration Masterplan thus yields evidence of the structural properties and different rationales that shaped both projects alongside the discursive strategies used to promote them.

Both case studies embodied similar discursive strategies that promoted the use of cultural heritage for the purposes of economic regeneration. Both invoked narratives of reconciliation and coming to terms with the past in order to re-imagine the future. Both became the focus of deliberation around contested narratives of the conflict and around the new territorial and political arrangements that framed the 1998 Agreement settlement between ‘all the people, North and South’ on the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). Extending Carrier’s perspective on the way sites of history and memory act as a ‘prism’ reflecting successive historical, political and discursive moments, the sequencing of both case studies will be organised around the ‘historical reference points that converge’ to discursively frame and provide platforms for dialogue about history and contested representations of history (Carrier, 2005 pp 32-33).

The case studies opens up a number of methods for gathering evidence, which can be triangulated to test the reliability of findings. These include: a review of literature from conflict studies, cultural studies and Irish political studies to establish key structural factors, which shaped the development of Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh; a historical analysis of their development as cultural

components in major regeneration initiatives; document and textual analysis of statements, plans and archive material directly associated with the case studies and identified through interviews and literature reviews; qualitative, semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in different aspects of development processes; and observation of spaces, buildings and events associated with the case studies.

2.3.2. Document and textual analysis

This thesis argues that the manipulation of meaning to achieve political goals acts as a determining factor in cultural policymaking and planning in Northern Ireland, as words, ideas and contested narratives have become vehicles for establishing authority, setting and driving political and policy agendas. In emphasising the role of competing discourses as mechanisms for constructing social reality and creating and consolidating ‘regimes of power’, Foucault draws attention to the significance of social and discursive practices that produce and reproduce both discourse and the apparatus through which discourse is formed over time. Giddens’ concept of structuration similarly points to the contradictory and negotiable nature of social systems and practices. These theorizations of social systems and practices emphasize the significant but frequently hidden effects of everyday discursive practices, drawing attention to their importance as areas for investigation (Vaara and Whittington 2012, p 230). Proposing that the manipulation of meanings has become a determining factor in the achievement of political and policy goals in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, this thesis applies a critical lens to taken for granted practices of strategic planning, policy formation, project development, consultation, evaluation and benchmarking that assume a consistent flow between intention, design and implementation.

These critical approaches sit within the post-positivist tradition that challenges over simplistic assumptions of cause and effect based on purely observational and materialist interpretations of social context, insisting instead that researchers adopt a critical stance towards common sense understandings of the world (Burr 2015). From this critical perspective, discourse is understood as a product of dialogue and exchange rather than simply a reflection of the external world. Thus, social action cannot be explained in isolation from explanations of the states of mind of social actors (Gergen 1985, p 266). In its strongest form, social constructionist theory proposes that social reality may be culturally or discursively produced without reference to objective reality (Baudrillard 1983; Derrida, 1991). However, in their

study of the tensions and instabilities embedded in new forms of managerialism, John Clarke and Janet Newman caution against ‘dangerous tendencies towards idealism’, in which ‘discursive strategies’ are taken at face value, as if articulating the desire to achieve a particular outcome was equivalent to its accomplishment (Clarke and Newman 1997 p 31). Clarke and Newman draw particular attention to way abstract concepts associated with transformation, regeneration and cultural change became central themes in managerial discourse after the late 1970s, used to articulate apparent unities of interest and promises of real structural change (Clarke and Newman 1997, pp 34-36).

For earlier theorists influenced by Weber, the inner logic that informs interpretations of social reality is to be found in the processes of thought and frameworks of meaning through which worldviews are shaped and reality is mediated (Gert and Mills 1948). From this perspective, language and culture cannot be seen as neutral systems of words and signs describing fixed realities, but rather as systems of signification through which social actors explain, represent and create new realities and meanings (Barthes 1977). Maarten Hajer argues that ‘discursive constructs’ do not simply ‘float in the world’ but exist within an ‘argumentative context’ that reflects the socio-historical conditions in which meanings are produced and received. (Hajer 2003, p 46). Policy and planning documents provide textual evidence for researchers wishing to track the ‘discursive conditions’ in which shared values and beliefs become rooted in the imaginations of policymakers, politicians and social reformers (Bennett 1996). In this way, policy debates, reports, plans and communications can be understood as both the *tools* and the *bearers* of discursive interactions.

This research investigates the rationales for policymaking and decision-making, not only in terms of what people are actually saying and writing, but also in terms of the social and political context and effect of what they say and write. It is, therefore interested in the socially constructive effects of discourse (Fairclough 2003, p 3). Taking a Foucauldian approach to discourse and textual analysis, socio-linguist Norman Fairclough describes social events and practices as conceptually mediated activities performed by social actors, who actively *use* language to construe and construct meanings in pursuit of policy and political goals (Fairclough 2003). Building upon Foucault’s study of power, knowledge and governance, Fairclough draws attention to the way social actors are constituted by the everyday discursive

practices they use and the new practices they themselves talk into being (Fairclough, 2003; Foucault, 1977). Proposing a dialectical relationship between human activity and the objective world, Fairclough argues that meanings are constructed in the interplay between the production, communication and reception of texts, which he defines broadly in terms of written documents and audio and visual representations. The socially constitutive nature of discourse means that documents and texts not only generate meaning, but also reproduce and validate social reality (Fairclough 2003).

Highlighting the linguistic turn in contemporary politics and policymaking, Fairclough identifies Britain's New Labour government under Prime Minister Tony Blair as one of the first to explicitly assign speeches, policy documents and other political texts an active role in governing, reproducing and validating social reality (Fairclough 2000). In his study of political spin, 'New Labour, New Language?', Fairclough considers the way politicians use political speeches, focus groups, consultations and policy initiatives as vehicles for incorporating public opinion into process of constructing and communicating new policy dilemmas and solutions (Fairclough 2000, p 5). Whilst rhetoric and polemic have always been used in the art of political persuasion, Fairclough argues that New Labour developed the use of political discourse as a tool for governing. However, Fairclough also highlights the stylistic or performative function of discourse in the light of its role communicating and constituting new and different ways of thinking and being (Fairclough 2003, p 26). The communicative style of contemporary political leadership frequently employs rhetorical tactics to enhance its own persuasiveness of its political message or undermine the credibility of its opponents (Fairclough 2001). Political documents and texts should thus be analysed in terms of their function as vehicles for embedding, enforcing and communicating particular discourses.

Fairclough proposes discourse analysis as a critical tool for excavating political language to expose its function, social context and purpose. The method involves drilling beneath the presentation of texts in order to discover how discourses have been put to work to promote political objectives or to mask and blur relationships of causality, determination and agency (Fairclough 2000, 2003). Applying discourse analysis to New Labour politics and policymaking, Fairclough examines the way 'political spin', focus groups and consultations are to put work as 'linguistic strategies' for incorporating public opinion from the start of the policymaking process

(Fairclough 2000, p 5). With their unprecedented attention to the business of shaping and determining public and media opinion, the Labour party and government continuously ‘constituted and reconstituted’ new dilemmas, agendas and regimes of governance as discourses in policy documents, speeches and media statements to enhance their populist appeal and authority to govern (Fairclough 2000, p 9).²⁰

Using material from audits, evaluations, inquiries and reports, this thesis looks for evidence of different interpretations of discourse to throw light on the link between Northern Ireland’s unstable political environment and weaknesses in the field of cultural development planning, policymaking and implementation. This focus on the written and spoken word provides the thesis with a rich source of materials and tools for identifying and mapping the ideas, concepts and categories, explaining how they came to dominate and frame policy debates at key discursive moments and how these ‘discourses’ have been structured and reproduced in policymaking (Hajer 2003). This study identifies the 1998 Agreement as a key document that exerted a powerful structural, ideological and discursive influence over regional policymaking. Chapter 4 uses Fairclough’s interpretative method to describe and deconstruct the 1998 Agreement and provides an analytical toolkit for examining key documents associated with the two case studies.

The case studies examine policy statements, audits, planning documents, consultation reports and reviews, promotional material, legal and constitutional documents, political statements and parliamentary debates accessed from national government, local authority and institutional archives. The thesis approaches these records and documents as sources of empirical information, and as platforms, vehicles and expressions of policy discourse, which, drawing upon Fairclough’s interpretative approach, can be deconstructed to reveal underlying ambiguities, contradictions and weaknesses. For example, the ‘Future of the Maze’ consultation, set out in the previous chapter, was designed to elicit opinions about the future development of the former prison estate, but also functioned as part of a gallery programme designed to attract new audiences and establish Belfast Exposed as a shared cultural space. It can thus be understood in terms of its function as part of a consultation process and as a

²⁰ Chapter 4 sets out an analytical toolkit, which applies Fairclough’s methods to discover the discourses, social practices and political functions that underpin the constructive ambiguities of the 1998 Agreement. The analytical toolkit will be applied to key texts associated with the two case studies that form a central part of this thesis.

vehicle for public engagement. The analysis shows that the participants in the consultation sought to shape the planning process by putting forward different perspectives on the social practices under discussion (Fairclough 2003, p 26). These different perspectives were particularly associated with discourses of reconciliation and power-sharing that had become major political concerns in post-Agreement Northern Ireland and through discourses of representation and relevance that were dominating policy debates in galleries and museums at that time. At an informative level, the documentary record of the 'Future of the Maze' event provides evidence of a number of causal effects that help to explain why problems are defined in particular ways. It also reveals the way actors use discourses to promote and set policy agendas.

Document and textual analysis is a useful method for drilling under the surface of policy statements and planning documents to discover their discursive formation. By focusing attention on the contradictions and ambiguities that disturb the surface appearance of documents and texts, critical approaches to analysis treat the claims made in documents and texts with great caution. By contrasting the rhetoric of strategic documents, policy statements and plans with claims and commitments made in the 1998 Agreement and with the practical experience of development processes on the ground, the study is able to expose the adaptive, self-reflexive and pluralist nature of policy and planning processes.

2.3.3. Interviews

The study uses qualitative interviews as a way of further supplementing and triangulating the insights drawn from document and textual analysis. The purpose of the interviews was to gain further insights into the rationales that shape decision-making at different stages of the planning and development process. Rather than making a judgment about what course of action should have been taken, the aim was to discuss what decisions and actions had been taken and why. Similarly, rather than approaching policymaking in terms of technical or managerial responses to external dilemmas, the aim was to establish an intellectual framework that would throw light on the inner logic that drove policymaking, development and management processes over the course of a regeneration project or even a career. The interviews were therefore designed to identify and reflect on the discourses, debates and ideological tensions that shaped and justified particular decisions and actions over the course of a development project. The interviewees were asked to identify patterns of continuity

and change across different discursive moments and at different points in people's professional careers, by reflecting on:

- The contradictions and tensions they encountered in their work around different concepts of culture, heritage and different visions of a shared future.
- How these played out in cultural development processes and management practices.
- How these contradictions and tensions were managed and manipulated by different actors engaged in cultural development processes.

Rather than achieving a representative sample of the population, the aim was to interview a sufficient number of 'knowledgeable agents', that is, people with relevant knowledge and length of experience, forming, implementing, negotiating and operating within strategic planning and management systems for accessing and allocating resources. The criteria for selection were expert knowledge and/or stakeholder involvement in cultural development policymaking, planning, management and consultation processes. The methods of data management and analysis included transcribing and compiling interview transcripts, field and observation records; identifying emerging themes, keywords and categories to manage data; comparing emerging concepts to existing theories in the literature and data emerging from archival research; and identifying and addressing gaps in the data.

The value of the interviews arose from opportunities to fully and actively engage with key actors involved in different aspects of cultural development policymaking, planning, management and consultation processes. In other words to engage with the men and women whose life-world and meaningful actions are being studied and to consider how they understand their world and how they define policy dilemmas, respond to and set policy agendas (Parsons 1995). The interviews provided myself and the interviewees with an opportunity to step back from familiar routines to reflect upon project development and decision-making processes.

The analysis of policy thinking and professional practice has been drawn from twelve structured interviews conducted with key actors involved in different aspects of planning and policymaking in the field of cultural development and culture-led regeneration in Northern Ireland. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their experience as strategic managers and as participants in policymaking, strategic planning, conceptual planning, consultations and implementation of cultural

development policy in Northern Ireland between 1994 and 2014. Ranging from senior strategic managers and civil servants to architects, planners, academics and community representatives, each brought at least twenty years' experience in the field of cultural development and culture-led regeneration in Northern Ireland. The interviews were analyzed for evidence of the determining factors and discursive strategies underpinning policy initiatives that use culture and cultural heritage as a tool for regeneration and building shared space in Northern Ireland. The interviewees were asked to reflect on the determining factors that shaped their judgment and actions or the judgement and actions of others, whether planners, policymakers, development managers or consultants.

2.4. Ethics

Culture-led regeneration in Northern Ireland has been widely critiqued as a mere vehicle or adjunct to trickle-down theories of economic development or as a mask for social inequalities (Gaffikin and Morrissey 1990; Murtagh 2001). This thesis considers critical responses to the property-led regeneration models that have emerged in post-conflict Northern Ireland, frequently expressed through normalizing narratives of regeneration and reconciliation (Neill 2006; Shirlow, 2006; Shirlow and Murtagh 2006; Jewesbury and Porter 2010; McLaughlin and Baker 2010; Ramsey 2013). The purpose is not to expose political opportunism, hidden agendas or exclusionary tactics but to highlight the agency of cultural policymakers and strategic managers and to discover more reflective, critical and ethical approaches to cultural development and strategic management and planning.

In adherence to University of Manchester's standards for research ethics, I completed an ethics approval form before commencing fieldwork. In the form, I was asked to set out my rationale for conducting the research. From my position as a cultural manager working in Northern Ireland during the years of the peace process and following the signing of the 1998 Agreement, I stated that I wanted to undertake a 'thoughtful examination' of the challenges facing development managers like me, tasked with planning, developing and implementing cultural policy at a strategic level:

In an increasingly politicised and market-driven policy environment, I hope to discover management approaches that will help cultural managers develop a more ethical and critical engagement with strategic planning and decision-making in their professional practice (Hadaway 2014).

This thesis does not seek to judge the success or otherwise of the projects or practices it examines, but rather to ask how aims and objectives were agreed in the strategic development processes and how they were implemented. Neither does the thesis seek to make a judgement on the quality of decision-making. The information I sought from the interviews related entirely to the knowledge and experience of interviewees who had worked or studied in the field of strategic planning and development and could provide me with insights and different perspectives to further enhanced my knowledge and challenged my assumptions. The information provided in the interviews was also used to inform my selection of policy, planning and promotional documents and to guide the choice of methodological tools and the analysis that supports the thesis.

Political sensitivities in Northern Ireland may raise problems for interviewees, particularly in the context of the Long Kesh Maze regeneration site and Conflict Transformation Centre, where hostility towards the project has frequently (though not always) been determined by different individual and communal experiences and views on the nature of the conflict. Having worked as a cultural manager in Northern Ireland for over 15 years, I am aware of sensitivities that can arise during discussions about the past and ways of dealing with the past. Consequently, I provided clear information about the research and research process, including my intentions for possible future publication, so participants could make informed choices when consenting to participate. More generally, I remained responsive to the needs and concerns of participants, particularly in regards to honouring their time commitments; maintaining confidentiality; protecting their personal information; and keeping them informed about the context in which their data was being used and the overall status of the project.

A key ethical issue raised by this research relates to the information given to me through interviews, where public disclosure (in a published thesis) might provoke controversy, be detrimental to professional reputation or raise problems with employers or funding bodies. Before each interview, participants were supplied with

an informed consent form detailing the aims, purpose and methodology of the research study as described above. I personally undertook all the transcriptions and asked participants for approval, giving them the option to make amendments and to remove any information they did not want used or kept as data. In writing up the research, where appropriate, I have used citations from texts or interviews to provide evidence of a claim, or to illustrate the consistency of an argument or set of ideas. I have also provided details of the interviewees including their relationship to the field of cultural policy, planning and strategic management and involvement in development and consultation processes. One participant asked not to be quoted directly and one senior strategic decision-maker asked to remain anonymous.

2.5. Conclusion

This thesis argues that policymakers do not simply react to external policy dilemmas, political pressures or economic forces, but rather formulate policy responses through intellectual and practical engagement with the external policy environment. Seeking to develop a more critical management practice, this chapter set out a research method for examining the structural and discursive formation of cultural policymaking in Northern Ireland and the embedded nature of decision-making in social and institutional practices developed over time. Beginning with Jim McGuigan's proposition that meaning is formed and embedded in practice at particular discursive moments, the chapter explored key theoretical understandings of the dynamic relationship between policy and politics as fields of contestation between rival discourses, ideologies and interests.

The chapter also elaborated key theoretical understandings of the relationship between the inner world of decision-making agents and the external world of economic structures, social systems and structures of power, paying particular attention to the consciousness of cultural managers as agents of social and institutional change. In particular, the chapter explored Anthony Giddens' explanations of the relationship between structure and agency and Michel Foucault's ideas of knowledge and discourse as instruments of power and as ways of constituting decision-making subjects. Both thinkers provide important insights on the role of structure and context as enablers and constraints upon individual choices; and both adopt historical perspectives, which define social practices as contextual, recursive and embedded. Their ideas provide a conceptual link to key management theories, in

particular, Clarke and Newman's theory of the managerial state (1997), which are used in later chapters to throw light on the operation of policy fields associated strategies such as normalization and peacebuilding. The chapter also reviewed a number of critical management theories, which explain how strategic planning becomes routinized and embedded in policy and practice during processes of development and change and links these ideas to the analysis of documents and texts as a research tool.

These concepts and theories will now be applied as tools for building a better understanding of the way strategic planners, stakeholders and decision makers think and act within the distinctive institutional, political and regulatory frameworks that constitute Northern Ireland's policy environment. The following chapters present and examine the data collected by the methodologies set out above, beginning with a description of the social, economic and political factors that shaped the policy environment in Northern Ireland between 1972 and 1998.

Chapter 3: From Conflict Management to Cultural Peacebuilding (1972-1998)

3.1. Introduction to chapter

Drawing on literature from cultural studies, conflict studies, and Irish political studies, this chapter explains the key social, economic and political factors that shaped regional development in Northern Ireland between 1972 and 1998. It begins by elaborating the social, political and ideological conditions of the crisis of the Northern Ireland state in 1972 and examines strategies for resolving the crisis through economic reconstruction and social reform. In particular, the chapter examines the direct rule government's strategy for managing the internal dynamics of the conflict, explaining why and how social and economic development were applied as instruments for normalizing the structural inequalities and cultural tensions that underpinned the crisis. In doing so, the chapter identifies and explains the legislative and governance structures and key assumptions and contradictions that have given regional cultural development and culture-led regeneration initiatives their distinctive qualities. The chapter also sets out a range of critical perspectives on the discursive formation of cultural development and culture-led regeneration as policy responses shaped by their specific social, economic and political context. It then considers the way new discursive formations and ideologies associated with regeneration, peacebuilding and power-sharing, developed over time, and came to be embedded in distinctive culture-led regeneration practices in Northern Ireland. Finally, drawing on interview material, it establishes key impacts of the cultural turn on regional policymaking and the consciousness of regional policymakers.

3.2. The crisis of Unionism and the dynamics of conflict in Northern Ireland

The conditions of the crisis in Northern Ireland in 1972 cannot be properly understood in isolation from the territorial structure and management of the UK as a whole and the political, economic and social relationships between the British government, the government of Northern Ireland and the two communities in Northern Ireland (Ruane and Todd 1996). These relationships produced and reinforced inequalities and imbalances of power that further intensified the crisis of government and hardened ideological and cultural divisions in the region. In this way, the structural, ideological and cultural dynamics of the conflict were mutually reinforcing. The following section explores the nature of these relational dynamics in

the light of three key moments: the partition of Ireland, from which the Northern Irish state emerged in 1921; the political crisis that led to its collapse fifty years later and the beginnings of the peace negotiations that led to the 1998 Agreement.

The Anglo-Irish settlement of 1921, which led to the partition of the island of Ireland and the foundation of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, was the outcome of a pragmatic alliance between economic and political interests in Britain and Ulster. These interests combined to pursue a joint strategy to defeat Irish nationalism and keep the markets of the British Empire open to northern manufacturers (Ruane and Todd 1996, p 116). The decline of Northern Ireland's manufacturing economy throughout the twentieth century changed the dynamics of this alliance, as the unionist government of Northern Ireland grew ever more dependent on fiscal transfers from the UK Treasury. The increasingly loveless marriage between the British state and Ulster Unionism was held together by two contradictory political dynamics: firstly, the British state's inability to coerce Unionists into accepting an all-Ireland settlement and secondly, its determination that the destabilising effects of the conflict between Ulster Unionism and Irish nationalism be contained within Northern Ireland. Whilst able to use its economic and military power as instruments for achieving policy goals, Britain's commitment to uphold Unionism was always tempered by the need to stabilize community relations in Northern Ireland and keep the regional administration at arm's length (Mansergh 2003).

After partition the unionist state sought to mold the different class interests, confessional and cultural groups that formed Protestant Ulster into a coherent and stable demos (Gibbon 1975; Bew, Gibbon and Patterson 1996). South of the border, although nominally committed to uniting Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, the state building project largely constructed a Catholic and Gaelic Nation. In this way, the consolidation of the Protestant State and Protestant Parliament and the Catholic and Gaelic Nation required mutually re-enforcing forms of culture that literally *flagged up* cultural differences as a rallying call against the enemy across and within the border (Walker 2012; Bean 2007). This mutual need to mobilize support under the banner of cultural particularism pervaded the political, cultural and public institutions of both states in ways that challenged attempts to build a common culture of citizenship (Bean 2007, p 35).

Power operated on many levels in pre-1972 Northern Ireland, both as a coercive

assertion of political domination and as a means of defending or advancing communal interests. The government of Northern Ireland maintained its social and political power by infusing the public sphere with British, Protestant and unionist values, historical narratives and national symbols (Ruane and Todd 1996, pp 178-179). In her study of the ceremonials that accompanied Queen Elizabeth's 1953 coronation visit to Northern Ireland, Gillian McIntosh describes the use of pageantry, ritual and tradition as tools for legitimating unionist rule by creating a 'consensual surface image of Northern Ireland' (McIntosh 2002, p 315). A key function of the coronation celebrations was to create 'a performance of consensus' through which *the community* could demonstrate its participation in the political and cultural life of the unionist state and wider UK (McIntosh 2002, p 315). However, whilst providing a surface image of unionist self-confidence, the need to establish legitimacy through extravagant performances of loyalty betrayed the underlying defensiveness and lack of authority of the unionist state (McIntosh 2002). In particular, the need for constant appeals to the cultural traditions of an exclusively Protestant past highlighted anxieties about disloyalty and betrayal that encompassed the state's own 'unionist family' and relationship to the British Crown (McIntosh 2002, p 325).²¹

Whether through hostility, fear or indifference, northern Catholics disengaged from political life, keeping their distance from a state into which they had been unwillingly incorporated. Resigned to their outsider status, Catholics forged solidarities within particularized religious, economic and cultural spheres, effectively forming a society within a society. Catholic institutions, whether religious, educational, welfare, sporting or cultural, tended to operate within their own systems and hierarchies of power, maintaining the barest association with mainstream public and political institutions in Northern Ireland (McIntosh 2001, 2002). As northern Catholics moved further and further away from democratic participation, northern Protestants grew 'more determinately British' and unionist (Ruane and Todd 1996, pp 50-52). In this way Catholic and Protestant communities reached similar understandings about the need to defend their particular traditions and histories, not only as a way of consolidating power and advancing socio-economic interests, but as a pre-condition for self-esteem and respect for their identity. Thus, whilst reproduced through cultural differences, communal conflict in Northern Ireland was rooted in and

²¹ The importance of symbolic representations of Protestant Ulster in the policy and planning debates that accompanied the Titanic Quarter regeneration will be examined in Chapter 5.

continually reinforced by structural inequalities that had grown from the need to mobilize and consolidate support for the unionist state among Northern Ireland's Protestant majority.

Some debate remains about the extent of unionist coercion against the Catholic minority, although most agree that Northern Ireland effectively operated as a one party Protestant state for a Protestant people, with an electoral system explicitly designed to increase and maintain unionist majority control against the feared Catholic tide (Ruane and Todd 1996; Coogan 1995). Closer to a colonial administration than a modern democratic state, the government of Northern Ireland granted itself coercive powers under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers Act), including emergency powers of internment without trial. In this way, the ethos of the state, with its armed police force backed up by the paramilitary B Specials, and dominated by powerful institutions like the Orange Order, remained unambiguously sectarian and disproportionately Protestant (Ruane and Todd 1996).

However, as a region of the UK, Northern Ireland had been included in the social and economic settlement that followed the Second World War. Expressing a commitment to abolish poverty and reduce social and economic inequality, Britain's post-1945 settlement relied on high levels of political consensus in a mixed economy, guided by government intervention. The commitment to the principle of universal provision of public goods and services similarly rested on common understandings of shared citizenship, high levels of political participation and public trust in an impartial state machinery (Clarke and Newman 1997, pp 3-7). With its promise to end outdated forms of social welfare based on patronage and partiality, Britain's Welfare State necessitated a significant restructuring of established institutional practices and administrative regimes (Williams 1992; Clarke and Newman 1997). Whilst the 1945 General Election provided a strong democratic impetus for overcoming elite resistance, the universal ideals of the Welfare State also invoked an 'often unspoken inscription of a singular set of patterns of life, values and needs' that reflected the normative basis for post-war society in Britain (Clarke and Newman 1997, p 3). In a divided society like Northern Ireland, however, demands for social and economic change could not be framed in terms of an appeal to a unified political *demos* or national community. Thus, whilst formally modeled on the British Welfare State, Northern Ireland's post-war social and economic settlement rested unstably upon an oppressive and divisive system of governance, in which patronage and partiality had

become both endemic and impervious to change.

The operation of the post-war welfare system in Northern Ireland exposed and frequently intensified fractures in the social, economic and organizational forms that constituted the unionist state. In the field of public policymaking, the disaffection between Northern Ireland's Protestant majority and Catholic minority made it impossible to articulate any claim to serve a universal public good. Similarly, in a society organized around political and economic inequality, extended opportunities in education, employment and housing were inevitably identified as benefits 'for one side against another' (Bean 2005, p 11). The ideal of the state and its agents as neutral arbiters overseeing equitable distribution of public goods and services was compromised by discriminatory practices, where resources were routinely allocated for the purpose of consolidating networks of power (McCann 1993; Elliot 2000). As Muir observes, decision-making about resources for housing, health, universities and industrial development was dominated by 'clientelist approaches' that frequently favoured the majority community at the expense of the minority community (Muir 2014, p 22). In this way, a key impact of the post-war settlement in Northern Ireland had been to expose and intensify pre-existing weaknesses and divisions in the state and society.

3.3 The collapse of the Northern Ireland state

Beginning in the 1960s, the struggle for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland articulated the anger of large sections of the population, excluded from political power and public life by discriminatory state practices.²² The Civil Rights movement largely framed its demands as an appeal for fair and equal distribution of economic resources, measured against the universal standards promised in Britain's post-war settlement. Reflecting the ideological assumptions of its own political tradition, Britain's Labour government proposed its post-war welfare settlement as the basis for remedying the abuses of the unionist state (Neumann 2003, pp 35-38). Making an explicit connection between economic deprivation, inequality and political conflict, this strategy for pressurizing Unionists to implement reforms helped establish social

²² For a general history of the civil rights movement see: 'We Shall Overcome': The History of the Struggle for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland 1968 -1978 by NICRA (1978) on the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) website. Available at: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/crights/nicra/nicra781.htm> (Accessed 3 June 2018).

reform and economic development as key instruments in the policy repertoire of all future British governments (Bean and Hadaway 2020). Appealing to ‘all citizens of Northern Ireland to use their influence to restore harmony between all sections of the community’, the British government re-iterated the pledge that formed the basis of its authority to govern:

Northern Ireland should not cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland...the border is not an issue (Northern Ireland Act 1969).

In August 1969, in the face of rising Catholic anger and having lost control of large areas of Belfast and Derry, the unionist government appealed to Britain to assume its role as upholder of the Union. Whilst the decision to deploy troops alleviated the crisis in the short term, it also marked a turning point in Britain’s relationship with Northern Ireland.

As the unionist state disintegrated, Northern Ireland was overwhelmed in the chaos of a conflict, which ultimately grew to encompass every area of social, economic and cultural life (Ruane and Todd 1977, p 185). The re-introduction of internment without trial followed the launch of an offensive bombing campaign by the Provisional IRA.²³ On Sunday 30 January 1972, British paratroopers fired into a crowd taking part in an anti-internment march in Derry. Bloody Sunday shocked national and international public opinion, further polarized the two communities and provoked a surge of support for the Provisional IRA, forcing Britain to impose direct rule from Westminster. Having devolved political authority to the Unionists for over fifty years, Britain was now forced to accept responsibility for political decision-making in its most troubled and troublesome region. Imposed in 1972 as a temporary suspension of devolved power to allow the regional parties to negotiate a political solution, government by direct rule was formalized in 1976 and remained in place for another twenty years (Birrell 2009, p 6).

²³ This thesis uses the term Provisional IRA and IRA interchangeably. The Provisional IRA was formed at two meetings in December 1969 and January 1970 following a split within the Republican movement. ‘Those who remained with the original organization became the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) while the new group was called the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Following the OIRA ceasefire of 1972 the Provisionals became known as the IRA’. For more information on key terms and acronyms related to the conflict in Northern Ireland, see ‘Glossary of Terms Related to the Conflict’ on the CAIN website. Available at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/glossary.htm#I> (Accessed 19 March 2019).

Britain's Conservative government confronted the complexities of the crisis in Northern Ireland during a series of Cabinet meetings held during the weeks preceding the experiment in direct rule. The intensity of Catholic alienation, the deterioration of Northern Ireland's social and economic structures and the growing communal conflict demanded an urgent response. However, the question about the nature of that response reflected the inherent contradictions in the 'artificially constructed constitution' that had permitted 50 years of unionist rule in Northern Ireland (Cabinet Office 1972). The question turned on Northern Ireland's contested status in the UK. From an understanding of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the UK, the crisis represented a temporary breakdown in law and order that had disrupted the normal structures of liberal democracy and the market economy. From this perspective, the government's primary objective was to restore social order by defeating the criminal elements that were threatening life, property and the rule of law. On the other hand, Northern Ireland's exceptional history of civil conflict, arising from its 'artificially constructed constitution', set the region apart from the rest of the UK. From this perspective, Britain needed to adopt a facilitating role, standing back as an 'honest broker', working with 'the community' to democratize and rebuild the state (Cabinet Office 1972). The question of how to build a stable relationship between the state and 'the community' in the midst of a violent civil conflict remained open.

Direct rule strategies for normalization inevitably reflected these contradictory conceptions of Northern Ireland, either as a problem that could be resolved through the restoration of a pre-existing social order or as a crisis that necessitated the restructuring of the state itself. It seemed, however, that the most likely strategy for building a 'united community' lay in the twin objectives of neutralizing the IRA threat and reducing 'the dominance of the unionist faction' (Cabinet Office 1972). With this in mind, Britain announced its decision to take over direct responsibility for the administration of government in Northern Ireland on 24 March 1972. Understanding the limitations of applying military force alone, Britain identified economic development as a vital strategic tool. It did so, however, in the knowledge the application of social and economic instruments to achieve a 'united community' threatened to further destabilize community relations, as any initiative that appealed to one side 'was liable, for that very reason', to be rejected by the other (Cabinet Office 1972).

3.4. The policy implications of direct rule: reform, reinvestment and normalization

Direct rule saw the transfer of all legislative and executive powers from the existing parliament and government of Northern Ireland to the central government of the UK. The transfer of powers included a number of highly exceptional emergency powers, such as the power to intern citizens without trial (Neumann 2003). However, Britain's primary objective was not to impose its authority to govern in Northern Ireland in the long term, but rather to facilitate a cross-community power-sharing government that would act as a successor to the Unionists' failed one party system. The contradictory assurances given to the two communities in 1972 express the ambiguous nature of British rule in Northern Ireland. On the one hand, Britain promised the minority Catholic population 'an equal share in the exercise of executive power', in recognition of Northern Ireland's special status as 'part of the geographical entity of Ireland' (HMSO 1972, paragraph 76). On the other hand, the majority unionist population was reassured that 'the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom will not be changed' except through their consent democratically given (HMSO 1972, paragraph 79f).²⁴ The ambiguous nature of Northern Ireland's constitutional status meant that guarantees of political equality given to the minority community were inevitably experienced as a threat to majority rule. Similarly, the reassurance that Northern Ireland's status in the UK was contingent on majority consent unsettled Unionists by drawing attention to the provisional nature of the Union. Unionists might justifiably be accused of harbouring discriminatory attitudes towards Catholics, however their hostility to power-sharing could also be attributed to the existential threat it posed to Northern Ireland's territorial and constitutional status within the Union.

Under direct rule, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) was responsible for regional policymaking, acting under the direction of a Secretary of State, appointed by Westminster. Legislation was introduced, amended, or repealed through administrative Orders in Council, with day-to-day implementation delegated to regional government departments. The policy implications of Britain's more

²⁴ For a full explanation of the rationale for British policy on the exercise of territorial and juridical sovereignty in Northern Ireland, see 'Sovereignty and Citizenship', 1972 Green Paper, paragraphs 39-42

interventionist stance towards governing Northern Ireland were first publicly enunciated in a consultative Green Paper, 'The Future of Northern Ireland' published in October 1972 (HMSO 1972). The Green Paper set out three overarching policy goals for the new direct rule government. Firstly, it stated that Northern Ireland should be 'internally at peace'; secondly, that its economy should contribute to or at least not detract from the economic prosperity of the whole of the UK; and thirdly that it should not remain a source of instability, which threatened the security of the UK (HMSO 1972, paragraphs 74 and 75). The deployment of troops would contain the immediate security threat posed by the Provisional IRA, whilst lasting peace would be achieved by incorporating moderate sections of the nationalist population into a reformed, stable and economically viable Northern Ireland. The overall goal was to:

Take all possible steps to restore normality to the Northern Ireland community so that economic development can proceed at the faster rate, which is vital for social stability (HMSO 1972, Annex 3, note 7).

Having identified Catholic exclusion as one of the primary obstacles to normalizing socio-economic relations in Northern Ireland, the Green Paper identified tackling inequality and promoting mutual tolerance between the two traditions as key priorities. In this way, peacebuilding and power-sharing objectives became integral elements within the strategic framework for regional resource allocation, social and economic planning and development in Northern Ireland from 1972 (Neill and Gordon, 2001).

Britain's direct rule strategy effectively rested on a determination that Northern Ireland could and should be returned to a reformed *status quo ante*. The nature and extent of these reforms remained a central point of contention between all the parties to the conflict throughout the whole period of direct rule (Bean and Hadaway 2020). The attachment of peacebuilding goals to social and economic development objectives thus implanted the inherent contradictions and weaknesses of Northern Ireland's political arrangements within key aspects of policymaking. Firstly, it helped foster centralized responses that further destabilized regional development and weakened local planning and decision-making processes. Secondly, the focus on peacebuilding drew further attention to the internal contradictions in Britain's policy for *restoring normality* to a region that was historically defined by an extraordinarily complex and contested set of constitutional, territorial and cultural arrangements.

Thirdly, it highlighted the limitations of Britain's authority to govern in Northern Ireland, as successive British governments used social and economic policy as an instrument for exercising authority over their unionist partners and for bringing the nationalist community into the power-sharing fold. At the beginning of direct rule, the British government identified the potential for overcoming these contradictions in the parallel social and economic structures and systems that bound Northern Ireland to the UK (HMSO 1972 Annex 3, note 7).

The 'policy of parity' is based on the principle that all UK citizens, whether living in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, should receive the same social benefits, irrespective of the individual home nation's ability to generate sufficient revenues to fund those benefits (Birrell, 1994).²⁵ In practical terms, this means that the UK Exchequer is responsible for underwriting the universal provision of public goods, whether through central government expenditure on pensions and social security, or, since devolution, through direct transfers or subventions to support devolved spending on health, education, housing and transport. The parity principle guarantees public services and social security benefits to all citizens of Northern Ireland in parallel with UK wide standards (Trench 2007).²⁶ Drawing attention to the voluntary nature of this 'common regulatory framework', through which Northern Ireland had 'bound itself of its own choice' the 1972 Green Paper identified economic and social policy as important instruments for legitimating British rule (HMSO 1972). Through the principle of parity, the people of Northern Ireland acted as members of a unified community, which measured its living standards and expectations against the norms, values and standards of Britain's Welfare State. Within this common regulatory framework, nationalist claims for equal access to public goods and services could be framed in terms of equal citizenship rather than

²⁵ The parity principle in social security, one of the few forms of parity to be given an explicit statutory basis, is guaranteed in sections 87 and 88 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. However, from well before the 1998 Act, the DSD (and its predecessors) has interpreted the principle of parity as: 'the long standing principle...that dictates that an individual in Northern Ireland will receive the same benefits, under the same conditions, as an individual elsewhere in the United Kingdom' (Trench 2007)

²⁶ For a history of the parity principle, exploring why it was established, how it is maintained and the implications of breaking parity, see *Parity and Social Security in Northern Ireland*, published by Research and Information Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, May 2011. Available at: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2011/Social-Development/9911.pdf> (Accessed 15 March 2018).

as a repudiation of the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state.²⁷

The adverse effects of anti-Catholic discrimination had always been most acute in policy areas associated with health, social services, housing and planning for roads, railways and universities. In a regional economy still heavily dominated by unionist interests, the direct rule government used the promise of economic investment as a spur for overcoming unionist resistance to reform. Seeking to address the grievances of the minority community, direct rule ministers oversaw ambitious programmes of housebuilding and public infrastructure investment attached to strategies for central government regulation and reform (Cebulla 1996, p 468). Given the centrality of resource allocation and social and economic development in direct rule strategy, these policy fields inevitably became a focal point for inter-communal conflict.

Under direct rule, responsibility for resource allocation and regional development was transferred to the Department of the Environment (DoE) under the central authority of the NIO, where it remained until devolved government was restored in 1999 (Hodgett and Johnson 2001). Having harnessed regional development to its equalization agenda, the NIO directed resources towards non-governmental development initiatives as a way of spearheading its reform agenda. Policy implementation was similarly delegated to appointed Boards and Quangos as a way of insulating ministers from the inter-communal conflict on the ground (Birrell 1994). Discrimination against Catholics in housing allocation, for example, was ended through the transfer of local authority power to a politically neutral body overseen by a government appointed cross-community Board of Trustees (Plöger 2007, p 22).²⁸ Although unaccountable to democratically elected local politicians, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) enjoyed widespread public support as it presided

²⁷ During the 1960s, Northern Ireland Civil Rights campaigners had marched under the slogan 'British rights for British citizens'. Two decades later, the Campaign for Equal Citizenship (CEC), formed from an unusual alliance of 'staunch Unionists ...erstwhile Republicans, Stalinists... Thatcherites, Gay Rights activists ...with the more genteel elements of the unionist middle classes' canvassed for full political and electoral integration between Northern Ireland and Britain. For an analysis of the CEC and its goal of electoral integration and equal citizenship see Colin Coulter (2015) 'British Rights for British Citizens: The Campaign for 'Equal Citizenship' for Northern Ireland'.

²⁸ The unionist government had attempted to implement a points system for housing allocation in 1968 as part of a reform programme, including a strategy for establishing Regional Development Commissions to replace local government planning authorities (HMSO 1972, Annex 3, paragraph 1(i) and (ii)). The 1972 Green Paper recommended that the direct rule government implement the 1968 reforms plus additional reforms to the administration of local and central government; employment practices and allocation of health and social services (HMSO 1972, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6).

over one of the largest publicly funded house building programmes ever delivered in the UK (Plöger 2007).

However, by mobilizing the distribution of economic resources as a mechanism for restoring stability, the direct rule government destabilized planning and decision-making processes in ways that frequently mitigated against the long-term goals of normalization. For example, policymakers frequently advanced interpretations of parity, which allowed for *equivalent* rather than *duplicate* legislative and policy frameworks, in recognition of variations between national and regional standards. Framed as appeals for special treatment based on exceptional circumstances and needs, these novel re-interpretations of the parity principle highlighted the peculiar relationship of co-dependency between policymakers in Northern Ireland and the government in Westminster. Frequently rooted in contentious and recurring community grievances, special pleading created friction between central and regional policymakers and competitive claims making between the two communities, with politicians demanding resources for their communities as a tactic for asserting their limited autonomy (Birrell 2009, pp 42-43). The need to manage the recurring crises that emerged from the internal contradictions of mobilizing the distribution of economic resources for political goals fostered a political culture in which localised policy dilemmas were routinely experienced as emergencies that threatened the stability of the state. In this way, the management of conflict and crisis became a key structural determinant for regional policymaking.

Whilst helping to smooth over contradictions in Britain's normalization strategy, the need to maintain social and economic parity increased Northern Ireland's dependency on the UK Treasury and further undermined regional capacity for effective decision-making (Birrell, 2009). By centralizing power in the NIO and its sponsored government departments and agencies, direct rule policymaking intensified existing weaknesses in democratic accountability (Knox and Carmichael 2005). With decision-making concentrated in the hands of direct rule politicians and their appointees, policy formation and the coordination of public services was removed from *normal* government business (Birrell 1994). Furthermore, by masking the underlying problems of sectarianism, centralized policymaking worked against the organic development of *normal* cross-community co-operation in regional planning and policymaking. In addition, by promising economic investment as an incentive for

cooperation, regional policymakers were drawn into the zero sum game of resource competition and special pleading, with direct rule ministers frequently exposed to pressure from powerful civil society actors, including paramilitary groups, seeking to promote their sectional interests at the expense of their rivals (Cebulla 1996, p 468).

Beyond the need to mitigate the impact of violence and overcome local antagonisms, Britain's normalization strategy was aimed at fostering Northern Ireland's 'potential sameness', whilst managing its actual differences (Coulter 2015, p 502). Whilst the NIO and its sponsored departments facilitated cross-community contact as a way of challenging fear and prejudice (Nash 2005, p 288), regional development policymakers and planners were attempting to implement policy on the basis of a 'culture blind rationale', in which the presence of fear and prejudice could be set aside (Muir 2014, p 9). However firmly stated, the commitment to social and economic parity as a unifying principle for binding the citizens of Northern Ireland to 'their fellow citizens in Great Britain' was dependent on the UK Treasury's willingness to underwrite public spending. Unfortunately, the strategy of aligning social and economic policy and planning in Northern Ireland to the model of the British Welfare State was occurring at the very moment when many of the assumptions and alliances that supported that social and economic model were dissolving, as British governments began cutting back on public spending and limiting state intervention in the economy after 1977.²⁹

3.5. The cultural turn and the discursive formation of culture-led regeneration.

Social and economic structures and political culture in the advanced capitalist world have undergone a slow and yet profound transformation over the past five decades, during which governments, citizens and political actors have radically changed the way they think, act and define themselves in relation to each other and to the social production and distribution of wealth. Frequently ascribed to the decline of older patterns of industrial production and emergence of new globalized modes of

²⁹ For an illuminating study of the impact of the parity principles on welfare and social policymaking in the Northern Ireland, Scottish and Welsh, in the context of the UK government's austerity programme, see NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (2002). <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14929/1/Parity%20report%20FINAL.pdf> (Accessed 16 March 2017).

production, the closing decades of the twentieth century saw the dismantling of social and organizational settlements made in the post-war period and the fragmentation of established hierarchies and solidarities based on class (Hall 1988; Clarke and Newman 1997; Jameson 1998). In Britain, these wider economic and fiscal pressures forced a series of political responses that undermined the ‘uneasy but stable’ post-war settlement that had created and sustained the social democratic, Keynesian model of the Welfare State (Clarke and Newman 1997, p 13). John Clarke and Janet Newman identify 1977, when Britain’s Labour government cut back public spending ‘at the behest of the International Monetary Fund’ as the moment that marked the ‘exhaustion of bi-partisan consensus on the desirability of the welfare state’ in Britain (1977, p 9). From this moment, under increasing fiscal pressure, the British state signalled its retreat from its central role in national economic planning and its commitment to universal welfare provision (Clarke and Newman 1997; Harvey 2005).

The cultural turn in social and economic policymaking in Britain emerged within the distinctive moral framework of the post-war social democratic settlement, with its commitment to full employment, rising living standards and universal social security. In Britain’s Welfare State, poverty had come to be seen either as a remnant from the bad old days or an outcome of aberrant or pathological behavior associated with the condition of worklessness. The persistence of pockets of social inequality, child poverty, poor housing and crime into the 1960s bolstered assumptions about the ‘localized and cultural transmission of poverty’ that challenged the explicitly modernizing agenda of Britain’s post-war social engineering and economic development strategy (Crisp, Gore, Pearson et al 2014, p 7). From the mid-1970s, as governments imposed public spending cuts, ambitions to overcome regional deprivation by investing in houses and jobs to rebuild the productive capacity of the ‘peripheral areas’ of the UK were increasingly regarded as utopian. In the absence of credible political alternatives or sufficient economic investment in industry or public services, ideas of moral improvement and cultural transformation opened up an imaginative space for politicians seeking to shift responsibility for welfare provision from the central authority of the state to citizens.

The retreat from the modernizing assumptions associated with Britain’s post-war settlement fostered new understandings among politicians and policymakers on the

intractable nature of social and economic problems and the need to build the capacity of individuals and communities to rise to, or at least learn to cope with, the challenges of risk (Chandler 2013). In the decade immediately following the crisis of Britain's Welfare State, responsibility for societal security began to shift onto the individuals and communities that constituted society. Framing their policies in the rhetoric of transformation and modernization, governments promised to roll back the state and free citizens from the supposedly demoralizing effects of dependency culture (Hall 1988; Harvey 2005). After 1979, Margaret Thatcher's government played a key role articulating new policy discourses, in which existing organizational regimes for managing social security, welfare and public services were identified as outdated and inefficient drains on national resources, constraints on individual enterprise and destructive of self-sufficiency and human dignity (Dennis and Erdos 1993; Langan and Clarke 1993; Pollitt 1993). By fostering a new culture of enterprise and self-sufficiency, government would enable citizens to break free from the ossified structures, associated with the old Welfare State. The changed relationship between the state and its citizens necessitated new forms of government bureaucracy, designed to overcome the perceived deficits of the old centralised Welfare models.

The construction of the managerial state involved a dispersal of power through processes of privatisation, marketization and externalisation (Clarke and Newman 1997, p 29). This simultaneous shrinking of the state accompanied by an enlargement of its reach into civil society created new discourses of cultural change, which came to be embedded in policy pronouncements and political rhetoric. In the new managerial order, citizens were transformed into clients and customers, consuming life-style experiences and empowered to press demands for more consumer options and better service standards. Whilst articulated through discourses of cultural transformation, regeneration and consumer choice, the empowerment of the citizen was exercised within the constraints of market and fiscal disciplines (Reed 1999). In the decade that followed the 1979 Conservative election victory, the dismantling of public services as monopoly providers seemed to signal the triumph of neo-liberal economics, with its identification of the market as the central mechanism for social distribution of goods.

Francis Fukuyama's influential essay 'The End of History?' responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union by proclaiming the triumph of liberal democracy and the market

as the end of ideological conflict over different forms of society. The cultural critic Frederic Jameson responded with a radical inversion of Fukuyama's claim that threw light on the contradictory dynamics of the cultural turn of late capitalist society (Jameson 1998). Coinciding with general anxieties about planetary ecological disaster and the collapse of political alternatives, capitalism's moment of triumph was accompanied by a turn away from forms of materialism defined by 'older heroic forms of productivity and extraction' (Jameson 1998, p 91). Thus, rather than signalling the supremacy of the market, the 'end of history' moment reflected a general consciousness of the 'fundamental spatial limits' on intensive industrial development and 'the impossibility' of imagining any further advance or enlargement of the system (Jameson 1998, p 90). Far from sounding a triumphant note, the famous dictum *there is no alternative to the market* expressed a sense of terminus, ideological exhaustion and a closing of the historical imagination.

The cultural turn in political and policy discourse has been described in terms of a 'silent revolution' occurring across the western world that bolstered 'an intergenerational shift' towards values and goals that reflect 'post-materialist' as opposed to 'materialist' priorities' (Inglehart 2008, pp 130-131). Where the political culture of industrial societies had previously been dominated by class conflict and battles for economic resources, those coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s increasingly prioritised 'post-material values' such as 'quality of life and expressive issues' (Inglehart 2008, p 130). Thus, whilst the collapse of old political assumptions and class alliances might have appeared to signal a victory for the economic right, the 'cultural mutation' away from a status quo based on *economic* progress towards new values of *cultural* development and the realization of 'possibilities for happiness', held out the promise of future social transformation. (Gorz 1987, pp 81-87). However, rather than heralding the dawn of a new post-material social order, de-industrialisation left the structures of the market intact and heralded an intensification of multinational capital's domination over society (Jameson 1998, p 111). With old certainties in retreat, it seemed that any future social transformation would be shaped more by the decay of the old than the force of the new. From this perspective, the cultural turn represented the triumph of commodification and the saturation of society 'with the image of culture', which would become 'coterminous with market society' (Jameson 1998, p 111). As the sphere of culture has expanded, so:

everything, including commodity production and high and speculative finance, has become cultural; and culture has equally become profoundly economic or commodity oriented (Jameson 1998, p 42).

This expansion of the sphere of culture and acculturation of the economic sphere is reflected in a discursive shift, particularly evident in areas of social and economic policymaking, where long-standing structural dilemmas have been reformulated as cultural problems. The cultural turn in policymaking has thus been marked both by a tendency to attach cultural priorities to social and economic development and by the rise of instrumentalist and politicized approaches to culture.

In Britain, as successive governments incorporated support for the arts and culture into manifesto commitments for developing the economy or building a more equal society, top down regulation and bottom up promotion of arts and culture in social and economic policy became more and more ‘intertwined’ (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 46). Whilst direct spending on the arts, culture and heritage sectors remained relatively insignificant, these sectors moved to the fore of public policy debates and become much more visible and accountable to government (Belfiore, 2006, 2010; Selwood, 2001, 2005). The seemingly intractable problems arising from Britain’s de-industrialization created fertile ground for the formation of culture-led policies aimed at recovering and regenerating post-industrial spaces and managing the social impacts of economic decline. However flimsy the supporting evidence, belief in the power of arts and culture to deliver a range of normalizing and therapeutic benefits became embedded in the common sense of political, educational and institutional systems of thought during the 1990s and 2000s (Belfiore and Bennett 2007; Mirza 2012).

At the international level, UNESCO identifies a role for culture as a catalyst for economic growth and social stability. As a ‘source of creativity, imagination and innovation’, culture opens up ‘ways of being, knowing and relating to others’ and fosters a sense of ‘belonging, citizenship, equity and participation’ (UNESCO 2009, p 9). The idealization of culture as ‘a source of permanent regeneration...a driving force in facilitating social cohesion [and] an asset for economic development’ (UNESCO 2009, pp 5-6) reflects the displacement of social and economic instruments in policy discourse. The UNESCO policy framework expands the boundaries of cultural policymaking by identifying culture as an ‘integral part of *all* public policies and action [my emphasis] (UNESCO 2009, p 17). The policy

framework, however, Setting out key fields and strategic orientations for cultural development, the policy framework provides an extensive list, including education, arts, heritage, the promotion of intercultural and human rights, economic and urban development, social cohesion, diversity and citizenship (UNESCO 2009, pp 17-18).

Just as diverse fields of policymaking converged around culture, so culture-led regeneration became the source of new policy discourses and practices based on partnership between political, social and cultural actors and across professional and geographical boundaries. Having previously denoted the technical process of reclaiming industrial land, regeneration emerged as a central theme in urban policy discourse from the 1970s, where it came to be associated with cultural processes of ‘transformation through the redesign, reconstruction and often re-allocation of urban land’ (Vickery 2007, p 13). Drawing a conceptual link between economic development and socio-cultural transformation across a range of policy contexts associated with culture, heritage and community development, Vickery defines culture-led regeneration as a ‘regulative policy concept providing a strategic articulation of planned socio-cultural transformation *in its largest sense*’ [my emphasis] (Vickery 2007, p 14).

Different culture-led regeneration practices reflect different conceptions of culture, the economy and society relevant to this study. Firstly, they may reflect the ideal of the ‘creative city’, in which cultural development is integrated across all aspects of urban planning, as a way of providing citizens with access to shared cultural activities and opportunities for work in the cultural economy (Landry 2000). This form of culture-led regeneration promotes cultural flagships, hubs and quarters as vehicles for socio-economic transformation and projecting upbeat representations of declining towns and cities (Bell and Oakley 2015, p 90). Another model of culture-led regeneration sees contemporary cities as ‘cauldrons of diversity and difference and as fonts for creativity and innovation’ (Florida 2005, p 3). Richard Florida’s ‘Floridian template’ elaborates a relatively straightforward cause and effect between investing in creative hubs, projecting an attractive image of a city or region, and attracting a mobile creative class that brings connections to global economies of creativity, knowledge and innovation. Proposing cultural infrastructure as a way of building civic pride, boosting regional economies and re-branding cities on the global stage, these regeneration models are closely related to politicized forms of cultural

spectacle, display and commemoration, designed to engineer and perform a sense of national, regional or community pride and belonging (McGuigan 2004; Bell and Oakley 2015).

One of the keys to understanding the consensus among policymakers around the positive social and economic benefits of culture lies in the recursive nature of policymaking as a social practice, where discourses are articulated and rehearsed through funding regimes that provide frameworks for decision-making (Giddens 1984, pp 24-25). Articulated through discourses of regeneration and renewal across different fields of social and economic policymaking, practical applications of the arts, culture and heritage as catalysts for reclaiming and re-imagining post-industrial urban spaces have contributed to a consensus on the transformative power of culture. The following section explores the discursive formation of culture-led regeneration and its practical application as a vehicle for economic development and cultural peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

3.6. From culture-led regeneration to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

Following a limited revival of its industrial fortunes during the post-war economic boom, Northern Ireland's economy entered a period of steep decline during the late 1960s and 1970s, at a time when most advanced global economies were undergoing dramatic restructuring and de-industrialization. As tens of thousands of jobs were lost in manufacturing, shipbuilding and engineering, Northern Ireland confronted many of the same problems of poverty, long-term unemployment, poor health and social dislocation that were blighting post-industrial regions across the western world (Gaffikin and Morrissey 1991). At the same time that de-industrialization was transforming Britain's social and economic landscape, Belfast and Derry were experiencing some of the 'highest rates of unemployment, underemployment and poverty' of all the cities of the UK (Hodgett and Johnson 2001, p 325).

By 1977, although the British Labour government's White Paper, 'Policy for the Inner Cities' still linked regional imbalances to structural weaknesses in the national economy, new strategies for targeting localised pockets of decline and deprivation signalled the beginnings of the shift away from national to neighbourhood development strategies (Hansard 1977). Whilst government was retreating from key sectors of the British economy, however, Northern Ireland's economy largely

continued within the parameters the Keynesian and post-war Welfare State model (Bean 2007). The imperative of achieving political stability and power-sharing demanded continued government intervention to shield Northern Ireland's fragile manufacturing base and service economy (Gaffikin, Mooney and Morrissey 1991, p 416). As this chapter has argued, however, weaknesses in economic planning and decision-making frequently occurred as unforeseen consequences of the strategy for mobilizing economic development in the service of normalization.

Set up in response to proposals in the 1977 White Paper, the Belfast Urban Areas of Need (BAN) prioritized the need for government to 'encourage private sector investment' as a way of addressing chronic unemployment in working class areas of the city. The BAN strategy targeted £12 million towards local housing and environmental improvements in the most deprived wards of Belfast between 1977 and 1984 (Muir 2014, p 9). The Labour government's investment in the De Lorean car factory, following recommendations in the 1976 'Economic and Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland', became notorious as one of the most spectacular failures of the normalization strategy.³⁰ Designed to create over 1,000 jobs in an unemployment blackspot in nationalist West Belfast, the project swallowed up over £85 million in government subsidy at no risk to its private investors and without creating a single permanent job (Cunningham 1991, pp 125-127). Partly motivated as a corrective to structural patterns of discrimination against the minority community and partly as an incentive for nationalist cooperation, the De Lorean factory became little more than 'a Potemkin village vainly trying to project an image of stability and peaceful normality' (Bean and Hadaway 2020). Sitting uncomfortably with the solid objectives of job creation and social development outlined in the Labour government's 1977 White Paper, the De Lorean debacle was a precursor of future business collaborations between entrepreneurial politicians and inward investors.

The 1979 Conservative government went much further in abandoning state-led national development strategies in favour of area-based and market-led approaches. Influenced by shifts in British policy, the DoE in Northern Ireland channeled resources towards 'pro-growth' initiatives that sought 'area-based and enterprise solutions to the problem of urban unemployment' in Belfast (Plöger, 2007, p 18).

³⁰ The 1976 'Economic and Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland', known as the Quigley report, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, between 1979 and 1981, when the Conservative government was imposing public spending cuts in Britain, the NIO was overseeing a dramatic increase in central government expenditure, including the nationalization of key industries and public spending on house building in Belfast (Singleton 1986, p 6).

By the early 1990s, after twenty years of direct rule, the social and economic condition and cultural outlooks of Northern Ireland's two communities remained as divided as ever. Male unemployment stood at over 50% among Catholics in large parts of Derry and Belfast, a contributory factor to intractable patterns of sectarian disadvantage in both cities (Bloomfield 1994, p 262). While unemployment was rising across the whole population, data from the 1991 census and 1993 Fair Employment Commission suggests that twice as many Catholics faced long term unemployment than Protestants, compared to 2.6 times as many in 1971 (Ruane and Todd 1996, p 167). As Northern Ireland's manufacturing sector weakened, the service and cultural sectors assumed a much greater significance, both as alternative sources of employment and possible avenues for 'arresting and maybe even reversing the trend of urban employment decline' (Gaffikin, Mooney and Morrissey 1999, p 420).

In addition to the policy dilemmas associated with social and economic decline, policymakers and planners in Northern Ireland faced specific problems arising from the violent conflict (Birrell 1994). In the twenty-five years leading to the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, the conflict had claimed over 3,400 lives, with many thousands more injured or displaced from their homes. During the mid-1970s, at the height of the IRA bombing campaign, an estimated 25% of all commercial property in Belfast had been partially or completely destroyed (Cebulla 1996, p 468). Similar estimates for Derry suggest that the IRA car bomb campaign of the 1970s left up to 40% of the city in ruins (Cebulla 1996). Unemployment rose dramatically in Derry (from 14 % in 1971 to 24 % in 1981) and in Belfast (from just under 10% to just over 18 %) throughout the same period (Cebulla 1996, p 467). Similarly, the physical separation between the two communities intensified during the Troubles, with almost 80% of the population of Belfast estimated to be living in segregated housing by the mid-1980s (Boal 2006).

Beyond the destruction of human life and property, the violence inflicted serious damage on the fabric of society. The abrogation of democratic rights became

normalized as words and phrases like shoot to kill, sectarian killing, semtex and car bomb became part of everyday language (Ruane and Todd, 1996). The militarization of society meant that citizens grew accustomed to negotiating communal barriers and submitting to military searches at the checkpoints, which encircled towns and cities in a ring of steel. As the conflict intensified, negative images of the other side became fixed in the minds of a whole generation. Over three decades, normal life was suspended and emergency responses so frequently employed that they came to be experienced as routine (Birrell 1994). In this way, Northern Ireland's policy environment reflected the social, economic and cultural complexity and the violent and seemingly intractable nature of the conflict.

Across the UK, politicians and policymakers were increasingly focused on the need to discover long-term solutions to what many saw as the serious and widespread malaise affecting British culture following the breakdown of traditional patterns of work during the economic crises of the late 1970s and 1980s. Amidst fears of social disorder, policymakers attached social and economic policy to wider objectives, ranging from neighbourhood renewal to 'more complex attempts to socially engineer change' and transform cultural attitudes among targeted social groups (Regeneration Wales, 2008, p 2). By the late 1980s, the Conservative government faced serious political instability in British cities and began to soften its market-led regeneration strategies by introducing themes of cultural and community development, partnership and collaboration. It also initiated a range of highly interventionist regional development programmes, which identified partnership with voluntary and non-profit organizations as a strategy for driving 'social change and progress' across wide geographical networks (Knox, 2001). In this way, the language of public and private partnerships entered mainstream policy discourse a decade before the 1997 New Labour administration.

Influenced by British regeneration models, such as Enterprise Zones, Business in the Community, Urban Task Forces and Training and Enterprise Councils, policy makers and planners in Northern Ireland focused on the physical work of clearing and revitalizing post-industrial sites. Michael Heseltine's Urban Development Corporations (UDC) provided the model for government intervention through agencies tasked to undertake physical works, using culture as a tool for building shared space and making the city 'more investment ready' (Plöger 2004). Established

in 1989 as a regional UDC, the Laganside Corporation was tasked with reclaiming and marketing a designated zone of derelict and polluted land on both banks of Belfast's River Lagan. While the NIO was applying the Heseltine regeneration model in Belfast city centre, the Urban Task Force directed resources towards disadvantaged neighbourhoods at the peripheries. The government endorsed the Social Needs (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which granted the DoE authority to drive 'broad social and economic improvements' in targeted neighbourhoods (Hodgett and Johnson 2001, p 326). This twin-track development strategy was designed to 'radiate prosperity' and a sense of 'shared citizenship' outward from the centre (Bean 2007, p 25). However, the approach placed considerable emphasis on city centre investment in retail and leisure in ways that frequently reinforced the economic and social exclusion and isolation of the surrounding neighbourhoods (Neill and Gordon 2001).

Under direct rule, a key goal of cultural development planning and policymaking had been to secure neutral zones for normal economic activity and social interaction to take place. Following the IRA ceasefires, as security was relaxed and with peace negotiations underway, regional planners and policymakers promoted the city's flagship Waterfront Hall and Cathedral Quarter as neutral spaces, where the city's divided communities could come together as cultural consumers, visitors, audiences and participants (McCarthy 2006). However, even as Belfast sought to re-imagine itself as a cultural capital, divisive forms of culture remained starkly visible in the territorial divisions and separate patterns of living that continued to mark out Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods, villages, towns and cities. Whilst constitutional disputes and socio-economic inequality had been key dynamics driving the conflict between nationalists and Unionists, cultural differences played a significant role in perpetuating the region's deep communal divisions (Lyons 1979; Ruane and Todd 1996). The reproduction of segregated patterns of living, working, learning and socializing over many decades had led to a situation where inequality and division had become rooted in local cultures in ways that fueled and solidified structural divisions (Cebulla 1996, p 466; Hodgett and Johnson 2001, p 325).

Sectarian conflict takes on a cultural form when one community accuses the other of triumphalism or takes defensive action to protect its distinctive culture and heritage against physical threats or denigration by the other. The symbiotic relationship between culture and struggles for political power thus created an unstable situation, where violent confrontations frequently erupted 'from beneath the surface of

everyday life', particularly at moments of political crisis (Ruane and Todd 1995, p 466). Political parties frequently pursued power and political advantage through the tactical deployment of cultural claims making. Meanwhile, nationalist and unionist communities asserted the right to display their cultural differences as a matter of self-respect. In this way, the contested histories, cultures and traditions became intimately entwined with battles for recognition, resources and political power. The regularity and vehemence of conflict around traditional marching routes, displays of national flags, murals and other sectarian paraphernalia lent weight to arguments that cultural politics remained central to the conflict between nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland (Shirlow 2006).

Over almost three decades of direct rule, the NIO and its regional appointees had sought to neutralize the threat of militant Republicanism, through military intervention and the use of emergency powers. However, the exceptional nature of the security measures necessary to contain the threat of political violence were at odds with the political goals of promoting good community relations and projecting an image of Northern Ireland as a normal part of the UK (Dixon 1997; Guelke 2003). As culture-led regeneration converged with strategies for peacebuilding and power-sharing, it provided politicians and policymakers with a discursive framework and practical opportunities for transforming the tensions and contradictions thrown up by direct rule strategies for normalization into creative opportunities for imagining a shared future.

Contemporary peacebuilding theories and practice rest on an assumption that conflict is inherent in all social, economic, political and inter-personal relations. John Paul Lederach identifies conflict as a 'natural, common experience' present in all situations and cultures and as a 'socially constructed event' created through 'interactive processes' based on the search for and creation of 'shared meaning' (Lederach 1995, pp 8-9). Far from being exceptional or even unwelcome, conflict is an everyday consequence of different ways of living and different ways of looking at the world. Conflict is a cultural phenomenon, constructed, normalized and institutionalized through everyday social and economic interaction. The aim of conflict transformation is not simply to end or prevent destructive conflict but to transform it into constructive conflict that can be harnessed to achieve social transformation (Deutsch 1949, 1973). In this way, conflict opens up creative opportunities for 'relational, structural and cultural growth' (Lederach 2005, p 18).

Lederach describes conflict transformation as an approach that addresses conflict by transforming societies from a culture of violence into a culture of dialogue (Lederach 1995). Often discursively linked to ideas of reimagining and risk-taking, conflict transformation demands a radical cognitive shift in participants' understanding of themselves in relation to others. Applied to Northern Ireland, where different meanings and representations of culture and cultural heritage form some of the most contested and conceptually ambiguous areas of regional policy discourse, conflict transformation sees cultural exchanges between different traditions and identities as opportunities for achieving 'relational empathy' between potential political enemies (Ramsbotham et al. 2011, p 61). From this perspective, conflict transformation articulates the imperative of change in terms of participation in a dynamic process of reimagining and reinventing a new order.

3.7. Gravitating towards peacebuilding: cultural development as a discursive practice.

The management of cultural difference remained a key public policy dilemma throughout the period of direct rule. Earlier strategies for stabilizing community relations had prioritised investment in neighbourhood renewal, whilst building neutral, non-sectarian spaces for social and economic exchange in city centres. However, in the years following the 1994 IRA ceasefire, policymakers sought opportunities to build bridges between Northern Ireland's divided communities. Whilst still prioritising economic development as a tool for restoring normality, new policy responses began to emerge that invoked culture-led regeneration as a vehicle for transforming contested spaces into shared community space. Led by the NIO, these high profile regeneration initiatives were also designed to broadcast a sense that Northern Ireland was moving forward towards peace and prosperity.

Promising to deliver 'thousands of jobs to both communities' in the historic heartlands of the Troubles, the Springvale regeneration in West Belfast (1994-1997) was designed to show the world that 'two of Europe's most bitterly divided communities' had learnt to work together for the prosperity of all (Needham 1998, p 10). President Bill Clinton's 1995 visit to the Springvale development came at the end of many months' intense diplomacy between the British and Irish governments, following the first IRA ceasefire in August 1994. With up to 350-acres of land for manufacturing and commercial use, the Springvale development was regarded as a

vital part of the government's normalization strategy, which had explicitly linked economic and security objectives together as a 'third arm' in the war against the IRA (Needham 1998, p 204). Reflecting the link between economic and political priorities, President Clinton's visit to the Springvale site was promoted as an important step towards 'finding a political settlement for the differences that divided the community in Northern Ireland' (Melaugh 2006).

An imagery of change as a necessary, natural and almost common sense process of reconstruction emerged as a central theme in Clinton's representation of the Springvale development. In an emotional speech to 'the people of Northern Ireland', Clinton called for political leadership to move unionist and nationalist communities away from violence towards dialogue. The timing was significant. Tensions between the two communities were running high around the controversial issues of prisoner release and weapons decommissioning, which were being discussed as a prelude to Sinn Féin's entry to all-party peace talks. Linking the frustrations fuelling inter-communal conflict to shared problems of unemployment and economic disadvantage, the presidential speech rehearsed familiar direct rule tropes of economic normalization. Consciously linking the 'the violence of the past' to backwardness and bigotry, Clinton urged people to 'break with the past'. Appealing for communal differences to be put aside for 'the welfare of the common enterprise', Clinton looked forward to the day 'when even the normal (begins) to seem normal' (Clinton 1995).³¹ The landmark speech signalled a significant conceptual shift, by invoking a romantic ideal of culture rooted in the affirmation of a common heritage that transcended prosaic, day-to-day differences. Disregarding the harsh reality of Belfast's communal divisions, Clinton promoted Northern Ireland as a visitor attraction. In his idealized tomorrow, Northern Ireland's heritage of 'castles and coasts...lush green hills and...high white cliffs' would act as a 'magical backdrop', radiating 'warmth and good feeling' and a shared sense of belonging.

The location, the shop floor of a Belfast textile machinery plant, known locally as Mackie's, was highly significant. Five years earlier, the NIO had helped secure an American buy-out for Mackie's after it had gone into receivership. As part of the rescue deal, the NIO insisted the factory relocate to nearby Springvale, a newly

³¹ For full text see 'Remarks by the President to Employees and Community of the Mackie Metal Plant', November 30 1995, The White House, published by CAIN web services. Available at: [http://cain.ulst.ac.uk /events/peace/docs/pres1.htm](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/pres1.htm) (Accessed on 8 August 2015)

named industrial and commercial zone, running north to south along the dividing line between the Catholic and Protestant communities of west Belfast (Needham 1998 p 5). Now located in a predominantly nationalist area, James Mackie and Sons had historically employed an exclusively Protestant workforce and was regarded by many Catholics as a symbol of their exclusion and second-class status in the city. Mackie's decline as a major economic force in the city had mirrored Belfast's decline as an industrial powerhouse, once the leading centre of linen production in the world. It had also mirrored the weakening of Northern Ireland's Unionist/ Protestant hegemony. The last manufacturing employer of any consequence in west Belfast, now employing a 'cross-community' workforce in line with Fair Employment legislation, Mackie's stood on the 'wall of steel and stone' that had divided west Belfast's Catholic and Protestant communities during twenty five years of violent conflict (Needham 1998). Where policies for normalization had previously sought to minimise or even iron out regional particularisms, Clinton's speech made great play on Northern Ireland's cultural distinctiveness. Alluding to Northern Ireland as the 'land of the harp and the fiddle, the fife and the lambeg drum', Clinton spoke of two proud traditions coming together to sing 'the harmonies of peace'. Invoking Northern Ireland's history as a centre of the linen industry, the speech claimed that Mackie's rebirth would herald a new culturally diverse manufacturing economy where former enemies would operate machinery side-by-side 'to weave disparate threads into remarkable fabrics' (Clinton 1995).

This thesis contends that policymakers do not simply react to external policy dilemmas, but rather formulate policy responses through engagement with their external policy environment. Discursively formed at particular discursive moments, policy responses are incorporated into the everyday common sense of policymakers as they engage with the external world. Beyond the rhetoric of high politics and policymaking, the belief that culture-led regeneration could act as a mechanism for peacebuilding became deeply embedded in the consciousness of cultural policymakers in Northern Ireland during the peace process, as closer engagement with communities encouraged them to 'gravitate away' from economic-led development towards more inclusive and culture-led practices.³² The property-led regeneration model adopted by the Laganside Corporation in the mid-1990s had initially prioritised economic investment as the primary driver for attracting

³² Interview with Kyle Alexander

investment and bringing people back into the city. As shown in the original map (Fig.2) attached to the 1989 Laganside Development Designation Order, the focus was entirely on the city centre, with the surrounding residential areas left blank (DoE 1989b).

(This note is not part of the Order.)

This order designates an area of about 350 acres lying within the City of Belfast for the purpose of its regeneration by the Laganside Corporation which is established under Article 4(1) of the Laganside Development (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

The area is shown hatched black on the map forming part of this note.

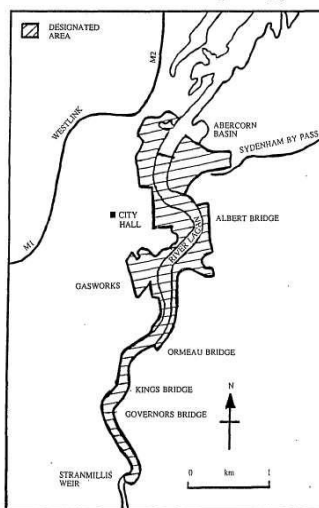


Fig. 2. Map attached to the ‘Designation Order 1989 (Northern Ireland)’.
(DoE 1989)

The gravitation towards culture and community-led approaches was gradual, beginning with an awareness of new ideas emerging, particularly among European architects and urbanists, which ‘valued people over space and property’.³³ In its day-to-day practice, the Laganside regeneration had developed according to the old logic of ‘starting with the physical, working towards the economic and then to the social’. Following an NIO directive to improve physical linkages between the city centre, the riverside and neighbouring residential areas, the Laganside Corporation extended the physical boundaries of its work, opened itself up to different parts of the city and new communities and thus gravitated towards more people-centered approaches. This shift in priorities marked the beginning of a change in consciousness from a focus on material outcomes to a focus on cultural peacebuilding. The nature of the shift is visible in the 1999 Laganside Regeneration Masterplan, where the neighbourhoods adjoining the regeneration site had been greyed out, evidence of the original

³³ Interview with Kyle Alexander

‘conscious decision’ to avoid direct responsibility for community development (Fig. 3).

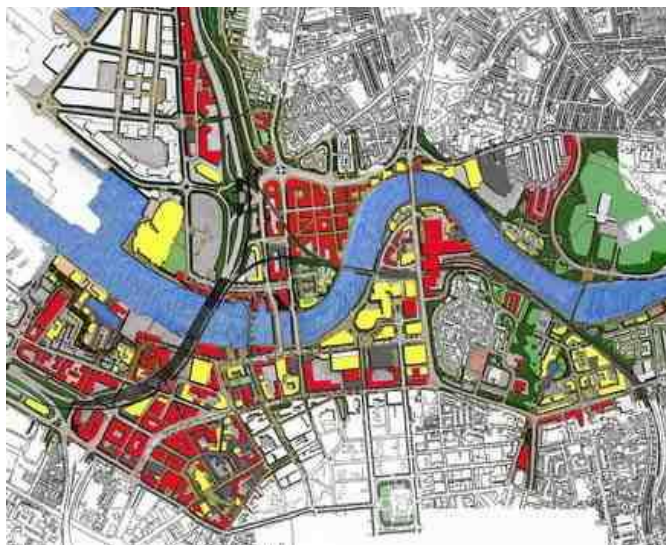


Fig. 3. ‘Laganside Corporation Masterplan 1999’. (Paul Hogan Company Limited 1999)

The development of the Gasworks site, located between the city centre, the river and three adjoining inner city neighbourhoods, made sense in the light of political, social and economic changes that created opportunities to develop the retail and cultural economy after the 1994 ceasefires. However, at a more subjective level, the ‘gravitation’ towards a more community-centred consciousness emerged from a series of encounters between policymakers and local communities framed by two significant political events. The first encounter occurred days before the 1994 IRA ceasefire during a visit by a community group from the nearby Markets estate to a construction site on the Belfast Gasworks. In spite of the imminent ceasefire, the Gasworks regeneration was still very much part of a conflict zone, sandwiched between the segregated neighbourhoods of [Protestant] Donegall Pass and [Catholic] Lower Ormeau and the Markets. Whilst the senior policymakers were ‘in full stream’ promising investment in infrastructure and job creation, a young woman interrupted with a question: what is in it for me? ³⁴

The question was recalled three years later during a return visit to the regeneration site to update local communities about the construction work. Whilst the CEO of Laganside was answering questions about promised new jobs and investment, word came through of the IRA bomb at Canary Wharf that broke the ceasefire:

³⁴ Interview with Kyle Alexander

I thought the meeting was just going to fall apart...but I recall we went round the room and all the folks from all three communities said, we must do more to work together on sites like the Gasworks and elsewhere to show to those in our communities that there is another way to the way of the paramilitaries.³⁵

The 3,000lb bomb, packed into a lorry, parked outside the Midland Bank Headquarters on London's Docklands, damaged £150 million pounds of property, took two lives and devastated many more. Demonstrating the dynamic relationship between policy, politics and social action, the Docklands bomb simultaneously triggered a response among people meeting on another riverside regeneration site hundreds of miles away across the Irish Sea. In that moment, the CEO of Belfast's largest strategic development agency and a group of people from some of the city's most divided communities felt bound together in a common enterprise. More than economic investment or reaching out to marginalized communities, the regeneration became part of a wider process aimed at building a shared and sustainable peace:

A lot of people said our work at the Laganside was ultimately due to the success of the political process...But I think groups working together at that time began to build up the political process.³⁶

The Chief Executive of the Laganside Corporation, responsible for strategic policy and planning on a multi-million pound regeneration, had become an active participant in Northern Ireland's peacebuilding process.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter established the structural and discursive properties of the policy environment that emerged in Northern Ireland after 1972. It also explained the regional dynamics of cultural policymaking, in particular the contradictions that were inherent in the direct rule model of economic development as an instrument for restoring normality. The chapter provided evidence to explain the rationale for direct rule economic and social policy and to demonstrate an awareness of its inherent contradictions in the consciousness of policymakers and planners. Rather than seeking to resolve these contradictions, however, the strategy of normalization sought to regulate and manage existing structures and imbalances of power and frequently reproduced the very problems it sought to resolve. In this way, patterns of inter-

³⁵ Interview with Kyle Alexander

³⁶ Interview with Kyle Alexander

communal conflict, competition and relationships of power came to be reflected, reproduced and embedded in the field of social and economic policymaking.

Drawing on key parallels and distinctions between the structural and cultural factors shaping policy debates and policy responses in Britain and Northern Ireland during this period, the chapter established key policy shifts and their impact on Northern Ireland policymaking during the period of direct rule. It elaborated on the underlying causes of the cultural turn in policymaking and explained how changes in the political and economic fields were shaping a new cultural and managerial consciousness among politicians and policymakers grappling with seemingly intractable problems of economic decline, falling living standards and social fragmentation.

The chapter described how this ever-expanding field of cultural policymaking found fertile ground in Northern Ireland, where it resonated with attempts to address two seemingly intractable problems at the heart of Britain's direct rule strategy for normalization: the need to halt economic decline and the need to sustain a political process to resolve the conflict between Northern Ireland's nationalist and unionist parties and deliver a power-sharing solution. In doing so, it demonstrated an emerging consciousness of the significance of economic and urban development initiatives that focussed on cultural renewal and regeneration and promoted management efficiency and adaptation to the imperatives of peacebuilding and power-sharing as key to bringing about social, economic, cultural transformation. The chapter finally linked this growing managerial and cultural consciousness to the work of strategic planners and development managers seeking practical solutions to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Having linked issues of power, politics, conflict and the imperative of change to cultural policy formation and cultural management during the period of direct rule, the following chapter examines the 1998 Agreement as a key discursive moment, in which new discursive formations and ideologies expressing a commitment to transformative change came to be embedded in cultural development practices.

Chapter 4: Post-Agreement cultural development and planning

4.1. Introduction to the chapter

Foucault's concept of the historical contingency of discourse is a key idea informing the methodological framework of this thesis; in particular, his understanding of the way meaning is formed and embedded through discourses that emerge at particular historical moments to form part of our everyday sense of living and working in the world. The 1998 Agreement represents such a moment in Northern Ireland, as political discourses associated with power-sharing, peacebuilding and future social transformation became central themes in all fields of regional politics and policymaking. Having elaborated a growing consciousness of uncertainty and political disorientation as a property of Northern Ireland's post-Agreement discursive moment, this thesis posits an understanding of cultural management as a practice in which 'knowledgeable agents' seek to mediate between political interests, manage risk and negotiate access to resources within highly complex social structures and systems (Giddens 1984, p 15).

This chapter establishes the structural and discursive properties that gave post-Agreement policymaking and culture-led regeneration practices their distinctive forms and features. In doing so, it identifies key patterns of continuity and change that occurred in structures of governance, political discourse and political culture in Northern Ireland during the years following 1998. Drawing on contemporaneous constitutional and policy documents and political and media debates, interposed with reflective interviews with significant policy actors, this chapter elaborates important concepts that shaped post-Agreement policy thinking. It also sets out an analytical toolkit, which will be applied to the case studies to identify structural and conceptual contradictions in the settlement that were reflected and embedded as weaknesses in cultural development planning and policymaking.³⁷

³⁷ The Textual Analysis Toolkit will be applied in Chapter 6 to an analysis of cultural planning documents related to proposals for a museum at Maze/Long Kesh regeneration.

4.2. Conflict management or transformation: the structural properties of the 1998 Agreement.

Socio-linguist Norman Fairclough defines political documents as instruments for government and as tools for building and communicating a coherent and distinctive representation of a political position or discourse (Fairclough 1995; 2001). Applying Fairclough's analytical perspective, the 1998 Agreement functions as an inter-governmental treaty and peace settlement, as a template for building consensus and as a vehicle for communicating a coherent representation of the regional settlement. As an intergovernmental treaty, the 1998 Agreement defined the constitutional status of Northern Ireland by setting out the territorial boundaries, citizenship rights and political institutions agreed by the governments of Britain and Ireland in the 1998 British-Irish Agreement. As a peace settlement, Sections 1 and 2 delivered a negotiated agreement between most of Northern Ireland's political parties, described as 'participants in the multi-party negotiations'. Finally, in Strands 1, 2 and 3, it elaborated institutional structures and political frameworks through which Northern Ireland would be governed and through which it would achieve lasting peace (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). The 1998 Agreement was ratified in two separate referenda held on the same day, 22 May 1998, on both sides of the Border. It was adopted as an amendment to the Irish constitution and enacted in the Westminster parliament, which voted the Northern Ireland Act into UK law on 31 July 1998.³⁸ In this way, the 1998 Agreement could claim to communicate a coherent representation of power-sharing as an expression of the will of all the people living on the island of Ireland.

The 1998 Northern Ireland Act established a legislative framework for devolved government in Northern Ireland and established the political and legislative structures, in which regional planning and policymaking would be formed. (Northern Ireland Office 1998b). The 1998 Agreement established a devolved Assembly with elected members (MLAs) and an Executive led by a First Minister and a Deputy First Minister. The balance of power between nationalist and unionist parties in the

³⁸ In Northern Ireland, 72% of voters (based on an electoral turnout of 81%) supported the Agreement. Meanwhile, 91% of voters in the Republic of Ireland (based on a turnout of 56%) gave their support, including support for Ireland's decision to withdraw its constitutional claim to sovereignty in the North.

Executive would be determined by operational procedures that guaranteed cross-community decision-making (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). These procedures included a provision for non-aligned Assembly members to designate themselves as nationalist or Unionist in order to maintain parallel consent. Since the procedure for electing the First Minister and Deputy First Minister required a majority of ‘registered nationalists and Unionists’ to be physically present and voting in the Assembly, the top two posts in the government and on the Executive Committee of Ministers would inevitably be shared between the unionist and nationalist parties with the largest electoral mandates (O’Leary, 1999, p 3). In this way, responsibility for regional policymaking and political decision-making came to be negotiated between the two political blocs, unionist and nationalist, that defined themselves, and were historically defined, in terms of their relationship to the conflict.

The multiple functions of the 1998 Agreement, as an inter-governmental treaty, a negotiated settlement and a template for power-sharing, weakened its effectiveness as an instrument for government. As an international treaty, the British-Irish Agreement bound the two governments into far reaching legislative and constitutional obligations for managing their dual claims to sovereignty. For Britain, this meant allowing for the eventuality of Irish reunification based on the ‘consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland’ (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).³⁹ For Ireland, the Agreement required a formal renunciation of its territorial claim to ‘the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial sea’. Future Irish reunification would be contingent on ‘the consent of a majority of people, democratically expressed, in both jurisdictions in the island’ (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). However, whilst giving up its territorial claim, Ireland agreed to recognise the ‘entitlement and birth right of every person born on the island of Ireland...to be

³⁹ Whilst the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland remains intact and continues to exercise sovereignty within the six north eastern counties of Ireland, Britain agreed to repeal the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which had divided Ireland into two territories, defined as ‘Southern Ireland’ and ‘Northern Ireland’. The 1920 Act had defined the territory of Southern Ireland as the whole of the island of Ireland minus the six ‘parliamentary counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone’ that constituted Northern Ireland. While devolving limited authority to two separate parliaments in Dublin and Belfast, the 1920 Act had envisaged ‘the eventual establishment of a parliament for the whole of Ireland’, under British rule and only by agreement between ‘an absolute majority’ in both parliaments (HMSO, 1920) http://www.legislation.gov.uk/Ukpga/1920/67/pdfs/uk_pga_19200067_en.pdf (Accessed 17 March 2019)

part of the Irish nation' (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). Similarly, in Section 2, both governments agreed to:

Recognize the birth right of all the people of Northern Ireland to *identify themselves and be accepted* as Irish or British or both, as they may choose and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland [my emphasis] (Northern Ireland Office 1998a)

Thus, whilst the Declaration of Support in the 1998 Agreement appeared to settle Ireland's constitutional dispute by allowing 'all the people of Northern Ireland' to pursue their separate aspirations for national belonging, the identity of the political community or demos with the political authority to realise these aspirations through 'peaceful democratic means' was far from clear (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). The 1998 Agreement stated that any future changes to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would be determined by the will of 'the people of the island of Ireland', mandated by the votes of 'the people, North and South' (acting in separate jurisdictions) and subject to the consent of 'the majority of the people of Northern Ireland' (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).

These complicated formulations affirmed Unionists' desire for continued identification with the UK, whilst acknowledging the rights of northern nationalists to identify as Irish and enjoy equality with the unionist identity. However, the Agreement also signaled a novel and far reaching redefinition of the political category of citizenship, from state citizens occupying a defined political territory and shared jurisdiction to an amorphous conception of cultural nationality assumed 'as a matter of personal identity' on the basis of shared heritage or 'cultural membership' (Ó Caoindealbháin, 2006: 15).⁴⁰ Whilst appearing to liberate citizens from the juridical and territorial constraints of state citizenship, the Agreement actually set out a rigid institutional framework for mandatory power-sharing, in which the choice of identity was limited to variations of British Unionist and Irish nationalist. The following section considers the effects of these contradictions and explains how a political settlement aimed at resolving and potentially transforming conflict between Unionists and nationalists, itself became a focus of conflict.

The 1998 Agreement and subsequent political settlement have been variously described as a blue print for containing and regulating the conflict between unionist and nationalist political leaders and their respective communities and as a pathway towards conflict resolution and wider social transformation (Aughey 1999; O’Leary 1999; Dixon 2005; Taylor 2008). In this way, the 1998 settlement can be understood in terms of two different discourses of peacebuilding, one informed by conflict management and the other aspiring to transformative change. Predicated on an analysis that the conflict was rooted in ethno-national differences rather than structural inequalities, the 1998 Agreement and the settlements that followed proposed consociational solutions based on maintaining the balance of power between the two communities, managing cultural differences and safeguarding minority rights (O’Leary 1999; McGarry and O’Leary 2009).⁴¹ Paul Dixon challenges the consociational analysis, arguing that the Agreement is far more ‘democratic, integrationist and ambitious’ than the ‘separatist vision’ prescribed by consociationalist theory would allow (Dixon 1997). From Dixon’s perspective, the Agreement created a template through which new consensual patterns of behaviour might be rehearsed and embedded.

Stefan Wolff defines the Agreement in terms of a process, providing the necessary structural and discursive frameworks through which the conflict ‘could be de-escalated below the threshold of violence and in the long term, be fundamentally transformed’ (Wolff 2003). From this perspective, the Agreement does not represent a final settlement or even a transition towards a pre-determined endpoint, but rather a commitment to enter into a process of dialogue aimed at facilitating reconciliation and acceptance of change. Reconciliation can only be achieved when conflict parties abandon their fixed and binary positions, embrace their inter-dependency and learn how to ‘live with apparent contradictions and paradoxes’ (Lederach 2005, p 53). However, in relinquishing the political goals that gave their projects meaning,

⁴¹ Arend Lijphart, widely identified as the founder of consociational theory, sought to understand how democratic stability could be maintained in societies marked by high levels of social heterogeneity and cultural or religious difference. Where integrationists aspired to construct a single public identity or *demos* and discouraged the mobilization of parties around ethnic, cultural or community difference, consociationalist power-sharing advocates government through collaboration between political elites, where cultural expression, minority rights and rights to mutual veto are guaranteed. Post-Agreement Northern Ireland (with re-enforcement of the 2006 St. Andrew’s Agreement) is regarded as one of the most successful examples of consociational government (Taylor 2009, p. 2-5).

Unionists and nationalists found themselves sharing power in a process where the primary objective was to sustain and promote power-sharing (Gilligan 2003). From this perspective, the evangelical rhetoric of transformation, reconciliation and commitment to making a fresh start gave moral coherence to a strategy aimed at demobilising dissent, maintaining unity and building a sense of commitment to keeping the process moving forward.

The 1998 Agreement had emerged from protracted negotiations between Britain, Ireland and the Northern Irish parties that took place in the context of the political and ideological exhaustion of Irish nationalism and Unionism (Bean 2007).⁴² Using the rhetoric of transformative change to project a sense of historical momentum and inexorable progress, the 1998 Agreement channelled the popular yearning for peace that had emerged across the island of Ireland. Although rhetorically transformative, the settlement represented a continuation of pre-existing conflicts and divisions, many of which were reproduced in key areas of post-Agreement political decision-making, policymaking and planning. The following section establishes the discursive properties of the 1998 Agreement and examines their impact on regional policymaking and planning.

4.3. Dealing with the past: the discursive properties of the 1998 Agreement.

Agreeing to exercise power ‘on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions’, the signatories to the Agreement promised to deliver laws and policies grounded in:

Full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).

Reflecting a view of the national conflict as a clash between politicized forms of culture, identities, narratives and traditions, the 1998 Agreement provided a discursive framework based on cultural rights and recognition, through which Northern Ireland’s unionist and nationalist parties could engage in dialogue as

⁴² The 1993 Downing Street Agreement is widely seen as the first step towards the peace talks that would deliver the 1994 IRA ceasefire and the 1998 Agreement. See Ryan’s account of the regional, national and international context, in which the 1993 Declaration was agreed between the British and Irish governments (1994).

partners in the mandatory power-sharing government. However, the hope that sectarian divisions might be reconciled so that politicians and policymakers could focus on ‘bread and butter’ economic issues was not borne out in practice. For, in locating cultural rights and recognition at the centre of the political settlement, the 1998 Agreement helped create an unstable policy environment in which different conceptions of national belonging and different narratives of culture and history competed for dominance. In the years following the 1998 Agreement, some of the most contentious areas of cultural competition arose around the history and legacy of the conflict, often focused on unresolved controversies around the validity of cultural memory and recognition of culpability for past wrongs.

The political moment on both sides of the Irish border was characterized by the architects of the 1998 Agreement as one of modernisation and youthful dynamism, a period in which old certainties were being challenged and rejected by the people of Ireland as a whole. Thus for Tony Blair, the majority in the ‘new Northern Ireland’ rejected narrow and exclusive traditions and saw ‘engagement, dialogue, and working together as the basis of a new future that offers hope in place of war’ (Blair, 2000). Similarly, Bertie Ahern, addressing an Easter Rising commemoration at the height of Ireland’s ‘Celtic Tiger’ economic boom, linked the peace process and economic progress in a virtuous circle of success:

Independent Ireland is now in full stride and beginning to fulfil the hopes and expectations that all the patriots of the past knew we possessed...we will continue to work for peace, for justice, for prosperity and for reconciliation between all who share...this special island (Irish Times 17 April 2006).

Where the 1998 Agreement established a brisk, managerial, future orientated narrative for the necessary adaption to change, the Omagh bomb, which exploded on 15 August 1998, awakened fears of a return to the dark days of the conflict. Omagh presented the Republican movement with the profound problem of how to represent their place in Ireland’s national story and how to legitimate their history of armed struggle. Understanding the way Omagh changed the narrative of the conflict is central to understanding the controversies surrounding republican proposals for a museum to the conflict at Maze/Long Kesh (the subject of the case study in Chapter 6). The car bomb blast, which killed 27 people and left many more injured and maimed, occurred on a summer’s afternoon in the busy County Tyrone market town.

Whilst a telephone warning from the Real IRA had been received 40 minutes before the explosion, the location of the bomb remained unclear. In the confusion, as the wrong area was evacuated, many people were mistakenly directed towards the danger zone. Survivors described scenes of carnage with the dead and dying strewn across the street.⁴³ The images of death and destruction, framed in the everyday normality of a busy high street scene, epitomized the political bankruptcy of those still hopelessly committed to fighting the old battles. Amplified by media reports, the shock and outrage that followed was shared not only by the wider public but also by many republican activists and their supporters. The profound psychological impact of Omagh was intensified as the political implications of the ‘unjustifiable slaughter’ became apparent in the days that followed (Ó Brádaigh 1998).

Two coordinated speeches by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern delivered within days of the bombing, elaborated key tropes in the emerging consensus against a return to the bad old days. Seizing the moment, the two national leaders set out a discursive framework that would shape and give meaning to post-Agreement politics and policymaking. Taking the specific circumstances and particular horror of the bombing as their starting point, Blair and Ahern swept aside all the old claims to political legitimacy for continuing armed struggle to end British rule in Ireland. The Real IRA was, in Blair’s words, a small group of extremists without ‘moral or political support’ who had indiscriminately attacked a whole community (Blair 1998). Whereas the British and Irish governments were ‘implementing the will of the people’ as expressed in the referenda on both sides of the border, these ‘renegades’ had ‘no mandate from any part of any community in the whole of Ireland’. Blair played up the political isolation of ‘these extremists’ within the nationalist population by pointedly referring to Provisional Sinn Féin’s strong condemnation of the bombing and its declared commitment to moving on from the past and achieving its political goals through peaceful means (Blair 1998).

Bertie Ahern’s statement developed this challenge to the legitimacy of the old Republican cause still further. Attacking the Real IRA as a ‘self-appointed elite’, Ahern claimed the republican tradition in the name of the present government of Ireland (Ahern 1998). By identifying dissident Republicanism not simply as a return

⁴³ For an overview and selection from the BBC’s reporting of the Omagh bomb see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01cg77f> (Accessed 15 March 2018)

to conflict but as a threat to future peace and progress, Blair and Ahern established *fear of a return to the past* as one of the central themes in post-Agreement politics and policymaking. Although this frame was primarily symbolic, a return to the past was posed as a significant and concrete threat, far in excess of any actual political or military challenge opponents of the Agreement could ever have mounted in this period. Much more than the inevitable group of peace process spoilers, the men of violence were portrayed as an antithetical other in fundamental opposition to the new dispensation. In this way the past in general, and the story of militant Republicanism in particular, came to express a dialectical opposite that gave definition and meaning to the future of the peace process itself. In associating a return to the bad old days to more generalized perceptions of risk and uncertainty around the future, the past came to perform an indispensable role as the threatening presence for the politics of peacebuilding after 1998.⁴⁴

However, whilst broadcasting transformative narratives of a bright new future that would draw a line ‘under the bloody past’ (BBC News, 1998) the architects of the Agreement privately described the deal as ‘an agreement to disagree’ and a trade-off between ‘two sides, who couldn’t even agree on its title’ (Powell 2008). The political instability that dogged power-sharing in the years that followed was largely a consequence of the ‘constructive ambiguity’ that had been deployed as a tactic for getting all the negotiating parties to agree. Constructive ambiguity has a long history in peacebuilding practice. The ‘constructive’ element refers to the tactical use of evasive and ambiguous language in order to advance a political goal (Berridge and James, 2003).⁴⁵ Political scientist David Mitchell sets out two ways of employing constructive ambiguity in peacebuilding strategies. Firstly, by allowing conflict parties to fudge sensitive issues, constructive ambiguity allows consensus to be built around points of agreement; secondly, it provides political leaders with plausible scripts that may help de-escalate conflict, while keeping supporters and electorates on board (Mitchell 2017). Whilst expedient as a negotiating tactic, constructive

⁴⁴ For a discussion of the ways that the politics of fear have been used by political elites to re-engage and re-mobilize citizens in Western democracies see Furedi 2005.

⁴⁵ The term is widely attributed to Henry Kissinger, referring to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in the aftermath of the Six-Day War (1967 Arab/Israeli War). The wording of the Resolution called for Israel to withdraw from ‘territories occupied in the recent conflict’ as opposed to ‘the occupied territories’, thereby allowing the conflict parties to agree a settlement, while leaving the territorial dispute open (Berridge and James, 2003).

ambiguity risks undermining trust in the political process and may open up further points of conflict. As sensitive issues are ‘fudged to keep the process moving’, alliances are held together through political spin, backroom deals and an agreement between all the parties to keep to the agreed script in front of the electorate (Dixon 2002). When cooperation breaks down, compliance must be enforced under threat of sanction or by promises of reward, frequently involving a more powerful, third party implementer (Stedman 2002, pp 10-11).

The constructive ambiguity of the 1998 Agreement permitted nationalist and unionist politicians to exploit its contradictions to advance their sectional political agendas under the cloak of a rhetoric of peacebuilding. Within a week of publicly embracing the 1998 Agreement as a template for building a shared future, Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams recommended it to his party conference on the basis that it represented a transitional stage in the on-going struggle for Irish re-unification (Adams 1998). Meanwhile, Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, confidently reassured his constituents that the Agreement ‘copper fastened partition’ (Trimble 1998). Whilst Adams advised his constituents to focus on the long-term goals and ignore the minutiae of the text, Trimble advised his party members to read the qualifying clauses and rights of veto embedded in its small print. Thus, Adams was able to claim that the 1998 Agreement represented a vehicle for completing Sinn Féin’s unfinished revolution, whilst Trimble reassured Unionists that it made Irish reunification subject to the will of the majority – i.e. themselves.

4.4. Beyond constructive ambiguity: de-coding the 1998 Agreement

This thesis approaches policymaking and planning as social practices, which occur and recur in the interchange between decision-makers, institutional structures and external economic and political forces (Giddens 1984). Applying socio-linguist Norman Fairclough’s conception of the dialectical relationship between human activity and the social world, it argues that social actors pursue their different goals and construct meaning through the medium of language and discourses, which reproduce, validate and communicate competing views of social reality (Fairclough 2003). Political texts and policy documents can thus be seen as ‘part of the political action’, instruments for ‘talking and writing’ political assumptions and worldviews ‘into being’ (Fairclough 2000, p 9). The following section applies some of the tools from Fairclough’s analytical toolkit to extracts from the 1998 Agreement. The

purpose is to discover the ambiguities that disturb the surface coherence of the text and provide glimpses of the cognitive processes behind its construction. The textual analysis seeks to identify contradictions between the political goals and stated intentions of the signatories and the discursive strategies employed to manage these contradictions. However, as well as providing a discursive framework through which to pursue competing political and policy agendas, the 1998 Agreement also provides a structural framework for mandatory power-sharing. Applying Giddens' idea of the duality of structure, this thesis identifies power-sharing as a reflexive process through which Unionists and nationalists pursue their competing political goals in dialogue with each other. In this way, the 1998 Agreement provides a discursive framework for constructing different narratives of Unionism and nationalism that hold the power-sharing structures together. This analysis therefore seeks to establish a deeper understanding of the dialectal properties of constructive ambiguity as a tactic for promoting *and* managing competing political and policy agendas in government.

The 1998 Agreement elaborated a structural and discursive framework through which the unionist and nationalist parties agreed to work together to put the past behind them and build sustainable peace. The participants in the multi-party negotiations agreed that Northern Ireland's future would be built on:

principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).

In his study of New Labour's political discourse, Norman Fairclough identifies 'overwording' as evidence of conceptual weaknesses, frequently associated with areas of 'intense ideological preoccupation' (Fairclough 2000). Applying this analytical insight to the above extract from Paragraph 5 of the 'Constitutional Issues' section of the Agreement, the juxtaposition of 'civil, political, social and cultural rights' suggests a high degree of ideological uncertainty around the nature of rights and political identities. These differences appear to turn on the question of whether the 1998 Agreement is founded on a universal conception of equal rights 'for *all citizens*' or whether on a recognition of cultural rights 'for the identity, ethos and aspirations of *both communities*' [my emphasis]. This uncertainty about the nature of citizenship might suggest the absence of a unified conception of citizenship or, alternatively, a positive recognition of more fluid conceptions of political agency constituted from

multiple and even contradictory and unresolved identities. However, the positioning of this over-worded formulation in the ‘Constitutional Issues’ section of the Agreement implies that political agreement on the nature of citizenship, which had been a fundamental focus of the conflict, was to be left open as an *issue* for the conflict parties to negotiate as they embarked on the project of building a shared future.

Philosopher Charles Taylor identifies two discourses that throw light on the tension between civil, political, social and cultural rights. Firstly, the discourse of ‘equalization’, which emphasizes principles of equal dignity and equal citizenship and secondly ‘the politics of difference’, which values ‘the unique identity’ or culture of individuals or groups based on their distinctness from others (Taylor 1992, p 38). Whilst the politics of equalization and difference both recognize that people are equally worthy of respect, the ultimate goal of equalization is to create or restore ‘difference-blind’ social space. The politics of difference, however, seeks to ‘maintain and cherish distinctness, not just now, but forever’. Explaining the concept of identity upon which cultural rights are grounded, Taylor articulates an ideal of authenticity, in which there is:

A certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me* (Taylor 1992, pp 39-40).

In other words, in valuing particular modes of expression and customary differences as essential elements of human dignity, cultural rights are designed to privilege and protect that which differentiates individuals and groups over and above claims to universal rights within a shared civic space (Mulhern 2009, p 39).

For critics of cultural rights, the assertion that human cultures take on pristine forms that are rooted in history does not simply act as a limitation on individual autonomy but actually denies the capacity for social transformation (Malik, 2013). From this perspective, the authorization of authentic cultures or fixed ways of life limits the potential for citizens to act and interact individually or collectively as history-making subjects. Through juxtaposing these contradictory categories of cultural and universal rights in the text, the 1998 Agreement authorizes and institutionalizes the communal and cultural identities that exist as a legacy of the conflict within the structures and

frameworks of policymaking and political decision-making. In this way, the 1998 Agreement appears not only to mystify, but also to act as a constraint on the expression of a universal conception of citizenship that could bring about a radical social transformation. However, in agreeing to ‘strive in every practical way towards reconciliation and rapprochement within the framework of...all of the institutional and constitutional arrangements... [which] are interlocking and interdependent’ (Northern Ireland Office 1998a), the different parties pledge to rise above their parochial identities and limit their communal rights in the name reconciliation and rapprochement. From this perspective, the fluid conceptions of rights and citizenship in the Agreement might be understood as a first step towards a discursive re-imagining of post-conflict Northern Ireland as a shared political community.

The second extract considers the different formulations through which the Agreement refers to the collective subject: *we*. The construction of a collective identity is fundamental to the definition and self-definition of political communities and the legitimacy of government. The ‘inclusive we’ represents the ‘ultimate or highest authority’ transcending all other allegiances (Byrne, 2016, p 257). In modern democracies, the *inclusive we* – the demos – votes as an electorate under conditions of universal suffrage. The naming of the collective identity that legitimates government is thus fundamental to constitutional and governing documents. The first paragraph of the Declaration of Support for the 1998 Agreement opens with the following unified statement that:

We, the participants in the multi-party negotiations, believe that the agreement we have negotiated offers a truly historic opportunity for a new beginning (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).

Stylistically reminiscent of the preamble to the US or the Irish constitutions, this opening paragraph communicates a key discursive and rhetorical form associated with the naming of the inclusive identity in national constitutions: *we, the people*. Northern Ireland is a region where collective identity remains bitterly contested. Thus, whilst discursively appealing to the conception of a unified demos, the text also reveals its function as a settlement between two communities who define themselves in terms of exclusive political identities with conflicting national allegiances. Thus, a critical reading of the Declaration of Support might suggest that its function – or *genre* - as a governing document is contradicted by its function as a template for

power-sharing and peacebuilding. The attempt to mask the contradiction by making a rhetorical identification with the inclusive *we* of national constitutions suggests that this ambiguity is a conscious construction. However, in pronouncing itself as ‘a truly historic opportunity for a new beginning’, the 1998 Agreement articulates an idea of reconciliation in a language that echoes the narrative of ‘necessary adaptation’ to changing political and economic conditions, which had emerged as a central theme in management discourse and in New Labour’s political and policymaking discourse after 1997 (Newman and Clarke, 1997 pp 39-40). Thus, rather than appealing to a unified political community, the inclusive *we* of the 1998 Agreement might be read as an appeal to a progressive, visionary and dynamic management team acting as the principal agent of change.

The first paragraph, which follows the opening statement of the Joint Declaration, elaborates on the theme of reconciliation, described in terms of a commitment to challenge established understandings of the conflict and adapt to a radically different future:

The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh start, in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).

The text opens with an act of reconciliation, in which the parties jointly affirm that ‘the tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering’. Viewed as an appeal for reconciliation, the over-wording and the use of metaphor draws attention to the gap between the stated commitment to ‘never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families’ and the evasion of individual or collective responsibility. For, in re-conceptualising Northern Ireland’s troubled history as *the tragedies of the past*, the statement obscures the identity of those culpable for the actual injustices, discriminatory and violent behaviours that created and sustained the conflict.

The commitment to make ‘a fresh start’ as a way of honouring the victims of injustice, discrimination and violence, appears to further absolve the conflict parties from direct culpability, by suggesting that the political and moral dilemmas posed in the aftermath of the conflict can be resolved through the activity of building a better future. In paragraph 4 of the Declaration of Support, the conflict parties agree to

renounce ‘any use of threat or force by others for any political purpose’.⁴⁶ Once again, the commitment to reconciliation appears rhetorical. For, in using a passive construction, the participants’ opposition to ‘any use of threat or force, *by others*’ (1998a) [my emphasis] masks their own identity as former or potential future sources of threat or force. The commitment to resolve political differences through ‘exclusively democratic and peaceful means’ might thus be read as further evidence of a determination to evade moral responsibility.

However, the purpose of the 1998 Agreement was to create political structures that would allow the leaders of the former conflict parties to put aside their autonomous goals in the interests of sharing power. Whilst the constructive ambiguity of the 1998 Agreement might provide tactical cover for party leaderships to evade culpability for past wrongs and mask conflicting political goals, the commitment to make a fresh start expressed an aspiration to work together towards some kind of political resolution. With its appeal to a correspondence between rights, responsibilities and a range of obligations to uphold just and equal treatment for ‘both communities’, the Agreement proposed a consociational settlement, which operated through interlocking institutions underpinned by a commitment to imagine or re-imagine new post-conflict ways of living. The participants’ amnesia about their historical determination to pursue or defend conflicting political goals can thus be seen as a positive step towards establishing more consensual ways of working through constitutional issues and policy dilemmas. From this perspective, the agreement to make a fresh start represented a commitment to foster a more self-aware, reflective and reflexive political *modus operandi*.

However, in prioritising power-sharing over the pursuit of their long established political goals, unionist and republican politicians opened themselves up to accusations of betrayal and a potential widening of the gap between themselves and their traditional constituencies. The political leaderships engaged in brokering the future were forced to come up with strategies for bridging this gap. These often took the form of different re-imaginings of post-conflict Northern Ireland that ostensibly

⁴⁶ ‘We reaffirm our total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues, and our opposition to any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose, whether in regard to this agreement or otherwise’ Paragraph 4.

began with an idea of shared space, but were inevitably defined by mutually contradictory conceptions of cultural and communal belonging.

The future social and political space imagined in the rhetoric of this *truly historic opportunity for a new beginning* was radically different from what had gone before. After 1998, the ‘old (universalist) certainties’ of nation, demos, and state would be replaced by more fluid, particularist readings of identity, community, and tradition (Bean 2015). Embodied in the flexible architecture of the Agreement, with its explicit commitments to equality, inclusion and consent, the new political settlement offered the potential for peaceful constitutional change. However, in drawing attention to Northern Ireland’s exceptional history of conflict and division, the post-Agreement rhetoric of reconciliation and transformation disturbed earlier discourses of normality, based on Northern Ireland’s potential sameness to other UK regions. Seen from this perspective, the decision to transfer decommissioned military sites to the new devolved government or to reclaim the old industrial heartlands of East Belfast for the entire city held out a promise to rebrand and re-imagine the conflicts of the past and to build and rehearse a shared future. However, it also focused attention on the significant challenge of managing and ultimately transforming conflicting conceptions of national, community and cultural belonging in the current moment.

4.5. Cultural development and the politics of peacebuilding in post-Agreement Northern Ireland

The political structures and discourses elaborated in the 1998 Agreement were incorporated within legal instruments, strategic frameworks, policy and funding regimes and mediated through public consultations, political manifestos and media reports. Of particular relevance to this study, the Agreement informed key strategic policy documents and debates, including ‘The Joint Declaration of the British and Irish Governments (Irish Times 2 May 2003) and ‘A Shared Future: public consultation, policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland’ (OFMDFM 2005a). Following elections in June 1998, the Assembly appointed a UUP and SDLP First and Deputy First Minister and set up ten government departments, including departments to oversee Regional Development (DRD), Social Development (DSD); Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) and Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) led by ministers from the four main nationalist and unionist parties. The British Government also published its economic development strategy and the

European Union Council and International Fund for Ireland agreed new peace programmes. The regional development strategy for rebuilding Northern Ireland's shattered public infrastructure formed a central plank of the new Assembly's first programme for government published in 2002 (OFMDFM 2002). In all these ways, the 1998 Agreement exerted a powerful structural and ideological influence over regional policymaking, particularly in policy fields associated with social and economic development, heritage and culture, where the newly devolved Northern Ireland Assembly enjoyed full legislative powers (Komarova 2011).

The IRA ceasefires of 1994 and 1996 had already secured a significant de-escalation of violence in Northern Ireland, which had in turn helped stimulate investment in the regional economy, much of it aimed at fostering more integrated living and life styles. In the midst of a credit-fuelled property boom that saw land values and house prices rise from the lowest in the UK to the highest outside of London and the South East of England, it seemed plausible that economic growth might act as a catalyst for social and political transformation. British and Irish political leaders were able to promote a new conception of a transformed and dynamic Northern Ireland. Turning its back on the 'narrow and exclusive traditions' of the past, this 'new Northern Ireland' had embraced 'engagement, dialogue, and working together as the basis of a new future that offers hope in place of war' (Blair, 2000).

This thesis has established that the strategy of investing in the regional economy as a vehicle for stabilizing community relations, instituting political reform and rewarding cooperation was embedded in policymaking after almost thirty years of direct rule. Whilst economic development remained the principal policy instrument for building political stability, the 1998 Agreement changed the regional policy environment in a number of important ways. Firstly, it signaled the formal end of a long-standing conflict based on competing territorial claims and different conceptions of national belonging on the island of Ireland. Secondly, by laying the ground for a devolved government designed to represent and protect the interests of all the parties to the conflict, the Agreement heralded a shift in both the locus and the quality of political decision-making and policymaking. Since 1972, the UK government had been responsible for directing the Northern Ireland civil service on matters of public policy. Under the new power-sharing arrangements, political authority devolved from the Northern Ireland Office and UK parliament at Westminster to the Executive and

Assembly at Stormont, with regional government departments, responsible for decision-making.

The prominence given in the 1998 Agreement to Britain's duty to invest in regional and urban development endowed the normalization strategy with a 'quasi-constitutional status' (Neil and Gordon 2001, p 35). Investment in the regional economy was not only aimed at 'tackling the problems of a divided society...and developing...rural areas and rejuvenating major urban centres', but a key part of the process of instituting power-sharing and fostering reconciliation between the two communities (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). The Westminster government played its part by opening up a substantial borrowing facility, with the promise of further investment in public infrastructure including transfers of military and security sites as public assets for the region.

The package of measures agreed by Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown made good on Britain's promise to make rapid progress in support of a the new economic development strategy. Announcing a multi-million pound devolution package in a speech accompanying the 2002 launch of the Reform and Reinvestment Initiative, Blair drew attention to the symbolic importance of handing over security installations that had belonged to 'the bad old days':

Resources that were once tied up in guns and barbed wire can now help create social and economic wealth (Carlton Baxter, 2007).

Chancellor Gordon Brown re-iterated the Prime Minister's message:

We want these sites to symbolize peace and prosperity and become the engine of economic and social regeneration in local areas. In place of the symbols of the old conflict and despair, there will be symbols of the new progress and hope – barracks and prisons of the past replaced by business and prosperity for the future (Carlton Baxter, 2007).

Promising a turn away from the old confrontational politics of Irish nationalism and Unionism towards new, more inclusive, consensual approaches, Northern Ireland's 2002 programme for government reflected the realignment of regional policy towards the priorities of the 1998 settlement. Widely regarded as representatives of the more moderate sections of their respective communities, the authors of Northern Ireland's first programme for government, Ulster Unionist party (UU) leader, David Trimble and Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) leader, Seamus Mallon, consciously shifted policy discourse away from the zero-sum politics of inter-communal

competition towards cross-party cooperation. With its focus on investment in hospitals, public utilities, transport and other bread and butter services, the 2002 Reform and Reinvestment Initiative (RRI) promised a fresh start, including a major overhaul of public administration that would secure greater expertise, efficiency and effectiveness (OFMDFM 2002). Promising ‘win win’ outcomes, First Minister Trimble urged ‘the people of Northern Ireland’ to come together around the shared objective of rebuilding the region’s public infrastructure and modernising public services (OFMDFM 2002). This emphasis on economic development ensured that instrumental uses of culture to drive economic growth became a central theme in policy debates in the years following the 1998 Agreement.

The first decade of power-sharing was marked by a series of political crises mainly revolving around highly contentious judicial and constitutional issues associated with the early release of paramilitary prisoners, the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and the devolution of powers for policing and justice. These political crises frequently spilled out of the Assembly giving rise to episodes of inter-communal violence on the streets. In a region where political contestation is frequently enacted through the symbolic and cultural material through which communities imagine themselves, political power struggles were frequently experienced in terms of an attack on cultural identity. The continuing divisions within Northern Irish society suggested that the ‘enmities of Irish history’ still retained significant ‘power to hurt and destroy’ (Bew 2007).

The first post-Agreement power-sharing government collapsed in October 2002 as electoral support declined for the SDLP and UUP, the political parties with the most positive relationship to the Agreement’s ethos of reconciliation and dialogue. The electoral success of the DUP and Sinn Féin, the two parties that held the most polarised views about Northern Ireland’s future, derived from their ability to present themselves as the most determined champions of their respective communities. Where the UUP and SDLP had promoted an inclusive power-sharing agenda, the DUP and Sinn Féin were more explicit in advancing their sectional interests as a strategy for allaying fears among party activists that the leadership might be ‘selling them out’ (Bean 2007, p 118). In order to advance their electoral strategy both parties frequently invoked their commitment to promote or defend their culture and traditions. In this way, culture became a central theme in political debates during the

months leading up to the collapse of power-sharing and in the years leading up to its restoration in 2006.

In their comprehensive review of literature related to the study and practice of peacebuilding, Brandon Hamber and Grainne Kelly define reconciliation as a voluntary act and necessary pre-condition for a '*process* of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships' [their emphasis] (Hamber and Kelly 2004, p 3). From this perspective, the voluntary agreement of the conflict parties to put aside the sufferings and losses of the past and work together to create a shared future based on interdependence and justice represented an aspiration towards reconciliation. To continue in the process of reconciliation, however, conflict parties must confront and agree strategies for redressing past and existing structural inequalities and discriminatory behaviors. This is a complex and challenging process, reliant on an ability overcome the psychological defences that emerge through the experience of war. One strategy for peacebuilding is to engage conflict parties in future orientated processes of social and economic reconstruction (Hayner, 2002). Thus, where economic development and planning might previously have been used primarily as instruments for managing conflict, they came to be seen as vehicles for building shared space and fostering reconciliation.

Belief in cultural development and culture-led regeneration as forces for social and economic transformation encouraged politicians and policymakers to develop joint initiatives that would allow cooperation across sectarian divides. In 2002, the Northern Ireland Assembly set up an inquiry to examine the 'unique nature' of Northern Ireland's diverse cultural tourism offer (Northern Ireland Assembly 2002). Led by the cross-party Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (the CAL committee), the Cultural Tourism Inquiry explored two propositions: firstly, that Northern Ireland's cultural heritage could be developed as part of a cross-community cultural tourism product for Northern Ireland. Secondly, that Northern Ireland's negative image had contributed to lost opportunities for developing a cultural tourism economy in comparison to the Republic of Ireland and the other devolved nations of the UK (Northern Ireland Assembly 2002).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL committee) is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the 1998 Agreement and Section 29 of the NI Act 1998. The CAL committee was given a policy development, scrutiny and consultation role with respect to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure and also has a role in the initiation, consideration and development of legislation. The Committee for Culture Arts and Leisure: Cultural

Whilst the Assembly debates demonstrated strong cross-party agreement on the ‘rich diversity’ of Northern Ireland’s cultural tourism offer, they also exposed a clear divergence in the way different political groups conceptualised Northern Ireland’s identity and cultural heritage. Republicans and nationalists promoted the benefits of cultural diversity on the grounds that ‘the distinctive cultures and historical identities’ sharing ‘this island’ were of equal worth and should be accorded equal respect. For example, Sinn Féin Local Assembly Member (MLA), Mary Nelis challenged a decision to exclude the Free Derry wall mural from an official list of tourist attractions compiled for the Inquiry, on the basis that the mural represented a distinctive aspect of local, nationalist identity that was worthy of respect. Unionists, similarly, called for recognition of local cultural forms and expressions on the basis that they fostered pride and allowed people to proclaim their distinctive history and heritage. However, whilst Sinn Féin promoted Gaeltacht (Irish language speaking) regions as part as an ‘authentic living culture’, unionist politicians promoted Ulster Scots language, culture and crafts. Unionist Assembly members also raised concerns about the neglect of Northern Ireland’s industrial heritage and the threat posed by encroaching developers. They also cited the failure to capitalize on Northern Ireland’s historical connection to RMS Titanic as a particular concern (Northern Ireland Assembly 2002). Whilst both parties saw local culture and heritage as unique and threatened, nationalists prioritised inclusion and parity of esteem, whilst Unionists invoked a sense of nostalgia for a lost Golden Age of industrial power and community pride.

4.6. Policy weaknesses emerging in post-Agreement cultural development

In the years following the Agreement, the viability of power-sharing and the inclusive nature of cross-community decision-making became more and more dependent on the willingness of the two parties to ‘negotiate the realities and compromises of a new, shared socio-political reality’ (Bloomfield 2006, p 12). The checks and balances required to maintain cross-community consensus and manage cultural difference tended to increase levels of political and bureaucratic intervention in the development and management of projects. By instituting formal procedures for mainstreaming and

Tourism and the Arts read 82 written submissions and listened to 39 oral evidence sessions from individuals and organizations associated with or working in the cultural sector. <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2002-06-11.6.0> (accessed 15 May 2017).

monitoring diversity and equality between legally designated political and cultural categories, the 1998 Northern Ireland Act necessitated significantly higher levels of target-setting, auditing and reporting (Barnett 2003). Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act placed legal obligations on public authorities (devolved to their clients through funding and service level agreements) to be ‘actively seen to promote’ equality of opportunity, good relations and parity of esteem between and within categories of community defined by religious belief and political opinion (Northern Ireland Office 1998b). New legal requirements to promote diversity and measure equality impacts required significantly higher levels of auditing and reporting. Development strategies aimed at building shared space were required to demonstrate a commitment to fostering good relations between the two communities. In this way, the work of strategic planners and cultural development managers became subject to greater political oversight and regulation, with practices shifting towards a more explicit promotion of the positive benefits of ‘diverse cultural expressions’ (OFMDFM, 2005).

In spite of the centralization of power under direct rule, strategic development managers and planners felt they had enjoyed much greater levels of autonomy in operational matters, as the NIO set out clear strategic goals and policy guidelines then left them to get on with their jobs.⁴⁸ Under the new power-sharing settlement, however, strategic managers and planners frequently found themselves locked into circular processes of consensus building and negotiation between nationalist and unionist politicians and local community representatives and gatekeepers.⁴⁹ Attributed to the ‘conditionality and the transactional nature’ of the peace settlement, conflict around structural issues, including weapons decommissioning, now increasingly conducted in the cultural sphere, threatened to ‘suck the lifeblood out of much of the potential of the Agreement’ in the years leading up to the 2002 collapse of power-sharing.⁵⁰

Oppressive levels of political interference, alongside problems negotiating and reconciling partisan agendas emerged as recurring themes among the strategic managers and planners who contributed to this research. Attempting to harness creativity and culture to their own political ends, politicians from both sides

⁴⁸ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

⁴⁹ Interview with Kyle Alexander

⁵⁰ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

frequently used their authority to disrupt planning and development processes and veto decision-making, driven, it seemed, by an inherent need to say:

No, no, no, I am paying for this, so I need to have my place at the table to ensure that our local agenda - whether it be place or tradition – is maintained.⁵¹

Whilst promoting an ethos of cooperation, cultural developments frequently became battlegrounds between competing political visions, with strategic managers and planners acting as peacebuilders, mediating multiple sources of power. Reflecting on the recurring nature of delays and disputes, one senior planner talked about the vicious circle of mistrust that disrupted development processes. Out of step with wider public and sectoral demands to move developments forward, political intervention in project development and planning processes had led to a situation where important decisions were being made or deferred ‘on the basis of which side can shout the loudest’.⁵² The sense of being physically restrained or even under attack appears as a striking and recurrent theme. Reflecting on his experience as an arts and heritage development officer at Belfast City Council in the years leading up to and immediately following the 1998 Agreement, one senior policymaker talked about politicians ‘hi-jacking culture’ and using culture as a ‘battleground’:

That word was actually used to me in 1994... I had said to [an elected politician on the arts committee], the war’s over – it was the time of the first ceasefire - and he said, not at all, the battleground just changed to culture.⁵³

Seeking to harness creativity and culture to their own divisive agendas, the more partisan politicians exerted considerable power to hold back imaginative solutions, veto developments that appeared to favour ‘the other side’ and force cultural managers and artists to take their ‘foot off the creative accelerator’.⁵⁴

In granting a consultative role to cultural and civic institutions and voluntary organizations, Strand 1 of the Democratic Institutions in Northern Ireland had encouraged cultural development planners, policymakers and community stakeholders to engage with regional government on social and economic development issues that might help secure peacebuilding goals (Northern Ireland

⁵¹ Interview with Chris Bailey.

⁵² Interview with Julie Harrison.

⁵³ Interview with Chris Bailey.

⁵⁴ Interview with Chris Bailey.

Office 1998a). However, in the increasingly politicised and prescriptive environment that followed the 2002 collapse of power-sharing and its 2007 restoration, high levels of political interference and in-fighting fuelled a sense of being disenfranchised within decision-making processes, among senior strategic managers and policymakers working in close proximity to government departments and their politically appointed standing committees and working groups. The relationship between strategic development managers and government ministers often felt ‘not so much arm’s length, but rather that they’d got you by the throat’.⁵⁵ The experience of being marginalized in planning processes fueled a sense of disillusion in consultative processes, which were frequently regarded as talking shops designed to keep non-political interests in the background, whilst ‘the serious business of decision-making was going on somewhere else’.⁵⁶ Others felt exhausted and overwhelmed by the ‘political dog fights’ that ran in parallel with cultural heritage consultation processes.⁵⁷

After decades of developing projects with very little political support, grassroots cultural managers and community development workers were often keen to exploit opportunities for political partnership. However, far from providing a clear and stable framework for engaging common interests, the field of cultural development remained a focus for the old communal rivalries of *us and them*, now obscured by the ‘constructive ambiguity’ of the claims in the 1998 settlement:

You have the veneer of *our* people...and you can fudge it so you can sell it to both sides, but in the end it comes back to the same problem: if it looks good and they are happy about it, then we have suspicions about why they are so happy.⁵⁸

Attempts to resist politically divisive forms of cultural expression often led to artists and community organizations being excluded from mainstream political support. The exclusion of alternative, politically non-aligned and marginalized voices engendered a deep sense of frustration among cultural and community activists, strongly committed to the belief that the arts could deliver ‘conceptually imaginative solutions’ to political conflict and social and economic exclusion.⁵⁹ Begun in the

⁵⁵ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

⁵⁶ Interview with Brendan Murtagh.

⁵⁷ Interview with Cahal McLaughlin

⁵⁸ Interview with Paul Gallagher.

⁵⁹ Interview with Cahal McLaughlin.

early 1990s, Beat Initiative offered street carnival as an alternative to East Belfast's politically divisive tradition of flute bands and Orange parades. Looking beyond the networks of unionist politicians and political gatekeepers that formed its community base, Beat Initiative developed a 'citywide carnival arts practice' that linked protestant East Belfast with communities in other parts of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Europe. Although recognised internationally as a model of peacebuilding through cultural participation, Beat Initiative suffered from its weak 'political tie-in' in a region where political identification 'is still what makes things happen' and where decision-making is determined by politicians, who frequently 'play to their own constituency':

A lot of things in Belfast get stuck because so much of Belfast politics is about us and them... West Belfast gets balanced off against East Belfast, in terms of financial support, while initiatives that are for everybody are left out... it is hard to avoid that sort of politics.⁶⁰

The rhetorically induced ambiguity of the 1998 Agreement's commitment to grant 'full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights... and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities' gave considerable scope for politicians to 'play to their own constituencies' after 1998 (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). In a 2011 presentation to the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure's committee of inquiry into the value and impact of museums, the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, DUP member Nelson McCausland, argued for recognition of cultural rights in education and collection guidelines for Northern Ireland museums.⁶¹ Invoking the 1998 Agreement, McCausland argued that:

Culture and identity are important facets of life in Northern Ireland... and vital issues as we build a shared and better future (Hansard 2011).

The Minister's claim to have consulted 'various groups and individuals' raised concerns among museum professionals, given his public support for Ulster Scots, the Orange Order and creationist views of the origins of the Universe. Explaining why this 'range of perspectives' should be given prominence in the Ulster Museum,

⁶⁰ Interview with David Boyd.

⁶¹ I am grateful to Chris Bailey for drawing my attention to the significance of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's committee of inquiry into the value and impact of museums (2009-2011).

the Minister once again invoked the multiple meanings of rights elaborated in the 1998 Agreement to argue that museum policy should reflect:

The diversity of views in Northern Ireland. It is also a human rights issue and an equality issue, because cultural rights, the rights of all the people of Northern Ireland, should be implemented (BBC News Northern Ireland, 26 May 2010).

In conflating cultural rights with ‘the rights of all the people of Northern Ireland’, the Minister was advancing a set of particularist claims in the language of diversity and equality. In this way, he was articulating a Foucauldian conception of the discursive nature of authority exercised through systems for producing and transmitting ‘fields of knowledge, aspirations and historical worldviews’ (Foucault 1977).

Political power-brokering was frequently conducted through rhetorical appeals to represent the aspirations or uphold the rights of excluded and marginalized voices, including the voices of women and victims. In this way, the rhetoric of cultural rights and inclusion obscured the reality that ‘all the decision-making tends to go through a political leadership...who very much control everything that happens within their community’.⁶² Similarly, appeals to represent or defend the rights and feelings of victims and survivors of the conflict were frequently advanced as claims or objections by one side to the allocation of resources to the other. In this way, the interests of victims and survivors became embroiled in old patterns of inter and intra-communal competition:

reframed in the language of respect for victims...[but]...with each trying to show the other in a bad light’.⁶³

The politicisation of victimhood was particularly corrosive, drawing as it did upon ‘deep levels of mistrust and emotions’ borne out of authentic experiences of trauma.⁶⁴

Conversely, frustrations with political gamesmanship also helped strengthen the determination of many cultural development managers to ‘get behind’ strategies for promoting ‘parity of esteem, mutual respect and cultural diversity’ through their work.⁶⁵ Where the Troubles had represented ‘a catastrophic failure of relationships at a human level’, developing new cultural initiatives offered opportunities ‘to

⁶² Interview with Deidre Robb.

⁶³ Interview with Paul Gallagher.

⁶⁴ Interview with Paul Gallagher.

⁶⁵ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

engineer our way through...without reverting to violence’:

I would dearly love there to be a museum or interpretative centre in which we could look back objectively about this period...for future generations to go through and just experience that moral and political collapse and say: never again in our name.⁶⁶

Cultural planners and policymakers identified a central role for their work building shared space and engineering peace and prosperity.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter established the significance of the 1998 Agreement as a discursive moment that radically transformed the structural and discursive properties of Northern Ireland’s policy environment. The chapter described the Agreement’s function to bind the former conflict parties together in a peacebuilding process aimed at redirecting their energies away from the pursuit of conflicting political goals towards the negotiation of power-sharing. The post-Agreement dispensation defined power-sharing in terms of a mandatory coalition between two political communities whose national allegiances and cultural orientation had historically defined the conflict. Having abandoned their primary political objectives, the party leaderships increasingly derived authority from their capacity to prove themselves as the most determined champions of their former national and cultural allegiances. In this way, the historic antagonisms between Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism were reconstituted within an unstable power-sharing arrangement, held together by the stated intention of both parties to put ‘the tragedies of the past’ behind them and make a ‘fresh start’ (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). The structures and discourses of peacebuilding thus provided the former parties to the conflict with a *modus operandi* for negotiating power-sharing and managing the growing separation between themselves and their political constituents. The Agreement also established political structures and systems through which the conflict parties and their communities could work together to imagine and construct a post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Whilst the British and Irish governments and their local partners were able to agree substantial changes to judicial and constitutional arrangements, ten years on from the

⁶⁶ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

formal end of armed hostilities, disputes around cultural displays and contested interpretations of history continued to provoke tensions and fuel division on the ground. Some of the most contentious areas of cultural competition arose around the historical legacy of the conflict, often focused on unresolved controversies around the validity of cultural memory, acceptance of culpability and demands for recognition and respect for identity. Although structurally, discursively and rhetorically transformative, the post-1998 settlement continued to employ economic development as an instrument for managing conflict and forging consensus. However, where direct rule strategies had sought to restore political stability and economic normality, the post-1998 settlement sought to elaborate a new conception of post-conflict Northern Ireland.

This chapter established that the constructive ambiguity written into the Agreement allowed party leaderships to mask their conflicting political interests. However, it also argued that the commitment to reconciliation should not simply be understood as an expression of bad faith, but also as a determination to reconcile the contradictions inherent in the power sharing settlement itself. The chapter identified culture-led developments aimed at social and economic reconstruction as practical projects that were used for rehearsing and embedding the power-sharing and peacebuilding ambitions of the 1998 Agreement *and* as vehicles for projecting images of a new post-conflict NI through the medium of culture and heritage. Drawing on interviews with strategic development managers, planners and policymakers, the chapter established key policy themes and weaknesses that emerged during the years following the 1998 Agreement, as the field of cultural development was used to build consensus and cooperation between and within unionist and nationalist communities. The following chapters will look at the way these policy weaknesses played out in the practical development of two major post-Agreement culture-led regenerations: Titanic Belfast and the proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh.

Chapter 5: Titanic Belfast: managing conflict and performing reconciliation

5.1. Introduction to the Titanic Belfast case study

This case study examines the planning, development and reception of Titanic Belfast, the cultural flagship of Belfast's Titanic Quarter regeneration and one of five 'signature projects' aimed at establishing 'a positive and distinctive identity for Northern Ireland as a unique visitor attraction on the island of Ireland' (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011a, p 2). It begins by reviewing some key critical perspectives, which identify Titanic Belfast and the Titanic Quarter regeneration as products of their specific social, economic and political contexts. Whether defining them as attempts to grow the regional economy or project an image of stability and economic normality, these accounts frequently characterize Titanic Belfast and the Titanic Quarter regeneration as products of capital speculation in the post-ceasefire period, shaped by Belfast's distinctive experience of conflict and its yearning to reinvent itself as a post-conflict city.

This thesis has established the distinctive policy environments that emerged in Northern Ireland at key moments after 1972 and after 1998 and looked at the way regional policymaking evolved in those environments. Building on these understandings this study takes a deeper historical perspective of Titanic Belfast and the Titanic Quarter regeneration in the light of an overarching political strategy from 1972 to 'restore normality' to Northern Ireland. Assuming that policymaking and planning are not simply enacted in compliance with external constraints but through active engagement, the case study uses documents, records of debates and interviews with practitioners and participants involved in decision-making and development processes to explore the symbiotic relationship between culture-led regeneration and strategies for normalization and conflict transformation. By bringing in the voices of planners, policymakers and stakeholders, the study draws attention to the agency of the individuals and groups who engaged in planning, development and consultation processes during the years following direct rule and following the 1998 Agreement. In this way, the case study shows how the Titanic Quarter regeneration and Titanic Belfast came to be formed and embedded as distinctive models of cultural development practice in Northern Ireland.

5.2. Critical responses to the Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast as post-conflict regeneration models.



Fig. 4. Promotional image Titanic Belfast, March 2012.

In his study of urban regeneration in post-conflict Northern Ireland, Phil Ramsey identifies the Titanic Quarter as a ‘concrete case study’ of the way the built environment has been shaped by a coalition between public institutions and private interests, primarily motivated by the economic interests of private capital (Ramsey 2014, p 27). Ramsey’s study highlights two effects of the market and property-led regeneration models that were particularly prevalent in post-conflict Belfast. The first relates to their inability to generate economic and social benefits for the city as a whole and for the wider citizenry. The second relates to their tendency to exploit and simultaneously negate the ‘historical conditions’ of the city, in this case Belfast’s experience of conflict (Ramsey 2013, p 11-12). Ramsey’s study also demonstrates the ease with which neo-liberal economic interests came to be folded into discursive frameworks associated with normalization and sentimental narratives associated with building peace and moving on from the past.

Ramsey’s critique is informed by David Harvey’s studies into the distinctive urban geographies produced by late capitalist development after the 1980s (Harvey 1989b). Driven by financial speculation and using public money to make the regional economy attractive to inward investment, market and property-led forms of regeneration promised to effect a transformation from post-industrial decline to future economies based on leisure, shopping and boutique lifestyles and the exploitation of intellectual property and culture. The political appeal of these market-

led regeneration models lay in their capacity to fold consumerist goals into ‘moralising narratives’ of social inclusion and radical discourses of transformation and consumer choice. In this way, Northern Ireland’s post-ceasefire regeneration initiatives were able to promote themselves as vehicles for economic growth, reconciliation and social transformation. However, these commercially driven forms of development not only failed to deliver social and economic benefits to disadvantaged communities but adopted a predatory relationship to the host city (Ramsey 2013, pp 8-12).

The use of Belfast’s culture and heritage in city branding draws attention to the moral incongruity between the proclaimed pursuit of reconciliation and the commercial exploitation of sites of social exclusion and trauma. By invoking culture as a force for building shared space, property and market-led initiatives were able to mask the commercial interests in their plans for recovering economically declining areas of the city. Referring to a promotional document produced in 2007 by Titanic Quarter developers, Harcourt Developments, Ramsey identifies a particularly ‘revealing’ section, in which Belfast is promoted to potential investors as ‘a pleasingly blank canvas for regeneration’ (Harcourt Developments, 2007, p 44 cited in Ramsey 2013, p 25). The logic of post-conflict economic regeneration is thus made explicit: after three decades of violent conflict, Belfast was ‘completely underdeveloped and under-regenerated’ in comparison to other Western European cities and so presented a unique opportunity for capitalist exploitation (Ramsey 2013, p 25).

Ramsey’s study also builds on regional challenges to the supposed socio-economic benefits and ethical claims of market and property-led regeneration models in Northern Ireland (Neill 2006; Shirlow, 2006; Shirlow and Murtagh 2006; Jewesbury and Porter 2010; McLaughlin and Baker 2010). This thesis began by considering aesthetic representations of Belfast’s post-conflict political economy, where artists were focusing attention on the gap between political promises of peace and prosperity and a more widespread mood of uncertainty. Looking for evidence of the ‘strange normality of aftermath’, artists and photographers were documenting contradictions between prosperity and poverty and exclusion and inclusion in everyday urban and suburban settings across the post-conflict city (Long 2017, pp 33-34).

Promoted as emblematic of Belfast’s economic recovery, the Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast came to represent a narrowly focused neo-liberal ideal of the post-

conflict city, which identified participation in the new consumer economy as a unifying, elevating and potentially transcendent experience. At the same time, however, academic studies were reporting uneven patterns of development, including rising levels of poverty, segregation and exclusion (Shirlow 2006; Shirlow and Murtagh 2006; Jewesbury and Porter 2010; McLaughlin and Baker 2010). From these perspectives, attempts at developing Northern Ireland's post-conflict economy through market and property-led regeneration not only intensified existing inequalities, but also helped to distract public attention from the political failures of the peace process. Fears that the post-conflict city had been thrown open to the interests of property developers and speculators spoke to the city's unsettling experience of change. Confounding the promises of a 'peace dividend', the economic and social contradictions of the post-conflict settlement pointed to wider failings in 'Thatcherite' models of regeneration, orientated towards private profit rather than public good. (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006).

The 2008 global financial crash and banking crisis limited the ambitions of the Titanic Quarter development and brought much of the previous ten years of commercial development to a halt. Disillusioned by the poor quality of planning decisions and building design, some more critical architects and planners saw the slowdown in investment as a necessary corrective to a speculative boom that had been almost entirely driven by the interests of property developers.⁶⁷ Setting out an alternative vision for the regeneration of post-conflict Belfast, the Forum for Alternative Belfast (FAB), founded in 2009, expressed widely held concerns that the commercial development of Belfast city centre was exacerbating problems of social division and economic exclusion. Rather than allowing property developers to reduce the city centre to a 'utility space' for business and commerce, FAB proposed an alternative vision of a post-conflict city for citizens to 'live in, own or celebrate [their] civic identity' (Forum for Alternative Belfast 2009). FAB also became a focal point for activists trying to mobilize wider community engagement with consultation and planning decisions in inner city neighbourhoods like the Lower Shankill and Falls.⁶⁸

The survival of Titanic Belfast after the 2008 financial crash showed the resilience of the cultural economy and its usefulness in serving the demands of private capital. The

⁶⁷ Interview with Mark Hackett.

⁶⁸ Interview with Mark Hackett.

discourse of shared cultural space provided property development with a moralizing veneer, while public-private partnerships acted as a conduit for channeling public funds towards private investors (Ramsey 2103, p 20). Ramsey notes, however, that the much-vaunted partnership between public and private interests not only failed to make good its rhetorical promises of peace through prosperity, but also fuelled a public mood of cynicism as the burden of speculative risk was shifted onto the public finances. Concluding that the Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast were primarily driven by the interests of neo-liberal economics, Ramsey argues for a more critical appraisal of the promised benefits of this kind of market-led regeneration model alongside more effective regulation and oversight of the Northern Ireland economy, recommending that the:

UK government needs to consider NI a special economic case for decades to come, with the subvention continuing for a long time yet (Ramsey 2013, p 27).

The assumption that Northern Ireland is a ‘special economic case’ has dominated social and economic policymaking since the beginning of direct rule in 1972. Whilst taking many different forms, economic development played a key role as a political instrument for legitimating Britain’s authority to act as ‘honest broker’ in Northern Ireland. The goal of normalization was never to fully establish or withdraw British rule in the long-term, but rather to impose a degree of order sufficient to de-escalate the internal conflict below the threshold of violence and bring about power-sharing. This thesis has shown, however, that the application of economic instruments to manage the contradictions arising from Northern Ireland’s distinctive constitutional arrangements has reproduced and frequently intensified problems of exclusion, inequality and division.

Furthermore, this thesis has shown that the overarching strategy of normalizing Northern Ireland has not simply existed as a theoretical goal written into strategic development documents, but has persisted as a recurring theme for policymakers and planners grappling with practical social and economic policy dilemmas for over three decades. In spite of spectacular failures like the De Lorean debacle (pp 83-84), the belief that investment in the Northern Ireland economy is key to restoring political stability has become deeply entrenched, expressed in ideological assumptions of a direct connection between economic growth, political cooperation and fairer distribution of public goods. After the 1998 Agreement, economic planning and

development have increasingly been used as vehicles for building a political *modus operandi* for sharing power and attempting to resolve some of the most contentious areas of cultural competition associated with the historical legacy of the conflict. This permanent interlinking of political and economic strategies has placed policymakers and planners under constant pressure to seek political support and financial investment for new initiatives that can, at the very least, project an image of stability and peaceful normality.

To understand the rationale that gave rise to post-Agreement regeneration models like Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast, it is necessary to examine their historical development as political responses, not only to the decline of Northern Ireland's shipbuilding industry but also to repeated failures to manage and find a political solution to the internal conflict in Northern Ireland. In the light of this history, the case study considers the way Titanic Belfast emerged as a vehicle for promoting reconciliation and an image of economic normality in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. In doing so, it proposes that the folding of economic development and peacebuilding into plans for building a new post-conflict Northern Ireland reflects the political importance of economic development and resource allocation as tools for managing the contradictions in the structural and discursive frameworks of normalization. Finally, taking the 1998 Agreement as a key discursive moment, the case study will show how the myth of Titanic Belfast was used to forge a new conception or discursive reimagining of post-Agreement Northern Ireland.

5.3. Titanic Belfast and the Titanic Quarter

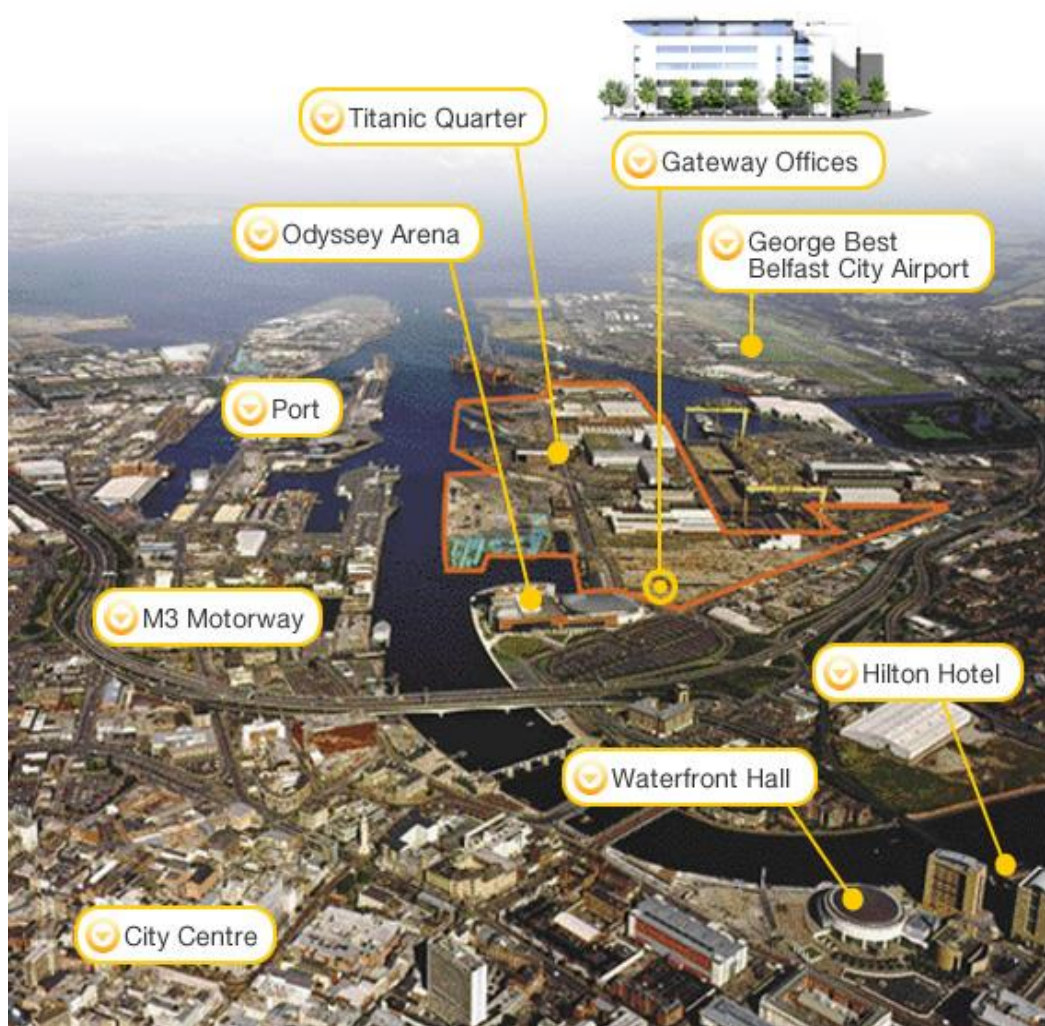


Fig 5. Port of Belfast: Titanic Belfast and Titanic Quarter regeneration (Urban Initiatives 2004)

Titanic Belfast stands on the 200-acre Titanic Quarter regeneration site, which covers the former Harland and Wolff shipyards on Queen's Island (fig 5), lying 1.5 miles from Belfast City centre, travelling eastwards across the River Lagan (Urban Initiatives 2004).⁶⁹ The site is bounded by the Victoria Channel and Musgrave Channel (to the east and west) and by the Sydenham by-pass, Belfast's main southern arterial road, which crosses the Lagan and circles around the Titanic Quarter,

⁶⁹ The Titanic Quarter is located on Queen's Island, the peninsular of reclaimed land formed in the nineteenth century and named in honour of Queen Victoria's visit in 1849. Founded in 1862 the Harland and Wolff company continues to operate with a much smaller workforce housed in modern facilities on Queen's Island, while its famous Samson and Goliath gantries still dominate the city's skyline.

connecting city centre traffic to Belfast City Airport and the city's southern and eastern suburbs. Developed amidst the wave of Titanic mania that swept the world in the run up to the centenary year of the liner's sinking, Titanic Belfast opened to the public on 31 March 2012, almost a hundred years to the day after Titanic set sail from Belfast to Southampton on the first leg of her fateful maiden voyage.

Costing over £75 million and claiming to be the world's largest Titanic visitor attraction, Titanic Belfast promised to deliver a 'world class visitor experience' to 400,000 annual visitors, from home and abroad (Titanic Foundation Ltd 2014). With its central atrium circled by four aluminum-clad hulls, the glittering six-story building evoked the monumental scale of the great ocean liner and the iceberg that played such a fatal role in her story. One of the most ambitious re-imaginings of the Titanic story internationally, Titanic Belfast claimed to represent the definitive Titanic story, deriving its authenticity from its location on the former Harland and Wolff shipyards, slipways and dry docks where the famous liner had been built. By re-connecting Belfast with its industrial past, Titanic Belfast claimed to speak to the city's ambition to build prosperity. As a commercially based 'Signature project', growing out of the speculative purchase of large plots of land by Harcourt Developments, a Dublin based property company, Titanic Belfast was primarily designed to boost the wider economic development of Belfast's Harbour estate.⁷⁰ As a high-profile visitor attraction, its value was to open up space for people to come together, not because 'they might meet with Catholics or Protestants or they are contributing to the peace process', but to enjoy a high quality experience.⁷¹

Whether attributed to a commercial 'land grab' or the recovery of former industrial land for public use, the simplicity of its economic logic appeared clear to critics and supporters alike. Whilst some raised concerns about the management of public and private interests within its governance structures or question the unashamed exploitation of the Titanic myth, no one could accuse Titanic Belfast of concealing its economic and commercial purpose (Neill 2013; Ramsey 2017). In fact, in a reversal of the arguments made by many of its critics, Titanic Belfast's strength might be said to have lain in the clarity of its economic goals, which made it less susceptible to the 'tides and whims' of Northern Ireland politics.⁷²

⁷⁰ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

⁷¹ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

⁷² Interview with Chris Bailey.

At the heart of a major riverside reclamation and invoking the majesty of the region's industrial heritage, the Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast clearly correspond to Evans and Shaw's definition of a high-profile culture-led regeneration, in which a cultural flagship is seen as a catalyst for economic and social regeneration (Evans and Shaw 2004, pp 4-5). However, the Titanic Quarter regeneration project did not sit entirely independent from the discontents of Northern Ireland politics. Combining property-based regeneration, with new housing, a new knowledge based industrial quarter and a world class visitor attraction, all linked to a powerful heritage brand, the Titanic Quarter regeneration embodied three important, inter-linking and recurring themes that had informed strategies for recovering and stabilising Northern Ireland's political economy since 1972. Firstly, the Titanic Quarter, with its iconic visitor centre, expressed a belief in the progressive potential of the cultural economy, in which heritage assets are valued in terms of their capacity to generate visitor spend, create new jobs, influence employers' relocation decisions and attract inward investment (Evans and Shaw 2004, p 20). Secondly, the Titanic Quarter regeneration sat within a discursive framework associated with direct rule strategies for normalization, where the heritage asset is valued in terms of its capacity to alter negative perceptions of place or community and create shared spaces, where normal economic activity and social and political interaction can take place. Thirdly, Titanic Belfast sits within a post-Agreement discursive framework, in which the act of coming together to build and share cultural space is valued as an essential element in a historic process of reconciliation. Focusing on different stages in their development, the following section considers how the Titanic Quarter regeneration and Titanic Belfast were shaped and given meaning within these different discursive frameworks.

5.4. The contradictions of economic development under direct rule

Titanic Belfast evolved as a cultural component in early economic development plans, designed to stem the tide of Northern Ireland's industrial decline. These early plans reflected the recommendations of the 1976 'Economic and Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland' (Hansard, 1976). Written by a team of regional civil servants, the Quigley Report, as it came to be known, forecast a steep decline in the Northern Ireland economy and recommended that the government intervene to 'hold onto what we have' and foster future recovery through building political stability and increasing

efficiency and competitiveness. Following established UK models, early shipyard recovery plans focused on the need to safeguard Britain's manufacturing base and halt the rise of unemployment. The government bought a controlling share of Harland and Wolff in 1976 as part of a strategy for recovering Northern Ireland's economy and ultimately reducing its dependence on the UK Treasury (Bloomfield 1994, pp 238). The Harland and Wolff recovery plan was aimed at keeping the Company solvent so it could restructure its business model, increase efficiency and develop new products, processes and markets (Bloomfield 1994, pp 238-239).

By the mid-1980s, however, Harland and Wolff's failure to achieve profitability suggested the need for further restructuring, including a fundamental change in governance structures and corporate culture. Although willing to accept bailouts the shipyard owners and senior management's resistance to change was widely regarded as emblematic of the inability of the old unionist business oligarchy to act as a dynamic, modernising force. In the words of one senior civil servant, Harland and Wolff remained stuck in the past, with its owners and managers harking back to the glory days of the White Star line 'amidst the solid mahogany furniture and elaborate lavatories' of their Edwardian offices (Bloomfield, 1994 p 238). As economic policymaking and planning took a cultural turn, the possibility of exploiting the decaying Edwardian splendour of the shipyards was beginning to take shape in the minds of regional planners. However, in terms of the need to manage Northern Ireland's internal conflict, the history of Harland and Wolff presented policymakers with significant political challenges.

As a major manufacturer of global importance, Harland and Wolff had played a central role building unionist economic power and political hegemony in Ireland. The historian Peter Gibbons locates the origins and formation of Ulster Unionism in the historical development of industrial production in the northeastern counties of Ireland. The flowing together of Scottish and English capital and expertise with existing social networks of Ulster Protestants created the conditions for a domestic linen industry linked to British markets. Gibbon traces the political development of these urban and rural economies to the beginning of the twentieth century, showing the gradual integration of all the social classes identified as Protestant into a system of patronage and economic dependency dominated by Belfast's shipbuilding bourgeoisie (Gibbon 1975, pp 14-20). In this way, modernization and

industrialization during the 19th century re-enforced Protestant domination, strengthened Ulster Protestant ties to Britain and encouraged the formation of a singular Ulster unionist identity in the six northeastern counties of Ireland.

As Belfast expanded its manufacturing and trading capacity, so Harland and Wolff grew in scale. The Company experienced significant growth after 1907 as it prepared to build new Olympic-class liners for the White Star shipping line's transatlantic routes. On 31 March 1909, the day the keel of RMS Titanic was laid on Slipway no. 3, Harland and Wolff employed 14,000 workers (Blair 2011). As Ulster became a global centre for manufacturing, so Ulster Unionism and popular urban Protestantism grew stronger as distinctive cultural and political identities, which defined themselves against the Catholic *other*. This 'quasi-nationalist' unionist identity was especially strong among the labour aristocracy of 'industrial pioneers' that formed the skilled workforce in what would become the world's largest shipyard, Harland and Wolff (Gibbon 1975, pp 12-20). With their high degree of skill and material independence, Belfast shipyard workers became more and more active and attuned to questions of national politics, making historic interventions at two decisive moments, during the years leading up to the 1922 Partition of Ireland and in May 1974 when loyalist workers brought Northern Ireland's first experiment in power-sharing to an end.

Since the late nineteenth century, opposition to Irish Home Rule had been rooted in the determination of British and Ulster Conservatives to keep shipbuilding, engineering, linen and other industries open to the markets of the Empire. By 1912, hostility to Home Rule had led to the formation of a local militia, the Ulster Volunteers, and the mobilisation of 237,368 men and 234,046 women, signatories to the Ulster Covenant, a solemn and binding oath to defend the Union by any means, including insurrection against the British rule of law (Gibbon 1975, p 72). Although pursuing economic and political objectives, anti-Home Rule sentiment frequently took cultural forms, rehearsed through the symbols and rituals of the Orange Order and other areas of shared communal life. In this respect, the distinctive industrial character of the East Belfast shipyards became emblematic of a particular form of Northern Protestantism, which prided itself on loyalty to the Union and celebrated progress and modernity in opposition to the rural and economically backward Catholic South. In this way, pride in Northern Ireland's economic power and prestige

was ‘intimately entangled’ with Ulster Protestant’s territorial, cultural and political attachment to what would become the unionist state (Foster 2013).

Sixty years later, this intimate entangling between culture, politics and the economy posed a significant challenge to hopes of establishing a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland. The problem arose in March 1973, when the British government proposed an elected Assembly as a replacement for the suspended parliament at Stormont. In the face of strong unionist opposition, the Sunningdale Agreement also proposed a ‘Council of Ireland’, composed of members of the Executive government of the Republic of Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive and the new Northern Ireland Assembly (Sunningdale Agreement 1973). With its predominantly Protestant and unionist workforce, Harland and Wolff became a prominent site for mobilizing the Ulster Workers’ Council (UWC) General Strike, which brought down the Sunningdale Agreement in May 1974. The Sunningdale Agreement was Britain’s first attempt to put its power-sharing strategy into political effect. Its failure in the face of unionist intransigence exposed the limitations of Britain’s authority and capacity to institute reforms and establish power-sharing in Northern Ireland. In discouraging further attempts at achieving a constitutional settlement, the failure of Sunningdale forced greater reliance on economic development as an instrument for political change (Neumann 2003, p 117). As a central pillar of the Northern Ireland economy, the decline of Belfast’s Harland and Wolff shipyards presented Northern Ireland’s direct rule government with significant opportunities to put its economic strategy into action. However, as discussed, there were major flaws in the apparently simple nexus between building prosperity and peace. In the case of Harland and Wolff, the contradictions arose from the destructive dynamics of the historic alliance between Ulster Unionism and the British state and from the apparently intractable nature of Northern Ireland’s economic decline.

Having enjoyed a limited revival during and immediately following the Second World War, British shipbuilding had begun a steep decline from the 1970s, at a time when most of the economies of the advanced industrial world were undergoing dramatic restructuring and de-industrialization (Hart and White, 1998; Plöger, 2008). Whilst Harland and Wolff continued to build ships on Queen’s Island into the 21st century, the company shrank in size as it struggled to maintain competitiveness with developing economies around the world. The British government’s 1971 decision to

approve a £3 million bailout had largely been motivated by fear of the ‘inflammatory effect’ of the Company’s insolvency on the still powerful loyalist workforce during the ‘present disturbed state of Northern Ireland’ (CAB/129/151). However, by 1975, when Harland and Wolff was taken into full public ownership, it had become clear that the UWC strike of the previous year represented the high water mark of unionist resistance as industrial decline continued to weaken workers’ power to mobilize political strikes (National Archives Ireland, 2015/89/74). It was at this moment that politicians and policymakers were invited to put forward plans for re-claiming and developing post-industrial land on Queen’s Island in response to what many were finally coming to accept as irreversible patterns of industrial decline (CAB/128/55).

The turn away from national industrial strategies towards area-based, cultural and market-led economic development strategies started gathering pace from the 1980s. These changes in the national and regional policy environment encouraged the direct rule government to delegate greater responsibility for the future of the shipyards to regional stakeholders, including non-governmental and private interests. As described in Chapter 3, the strategy of aligning social and economic policy and planning to state intervention in Northern Ireland had coincided with cuts in public spending and limitations on state intervention in the British economy. Political responses to the failure of Harland and Wolff’s recovery articulated two dominant discourses associated with a growing managerial and cultural consciousness: firstly, the imperative to effect fundamental transformation and reconstruction; secondly, the identification of old assumptions, old political alliances and traditional ways of working as barriers to change. The 1976 Quigley Report expressed these new discourses in the language of management efficiency as a solution for economic decline and rising global competition. Whilst recommending government incentives for stemming the rise of unemployment, Quigley drew attention to the problem of Northern Ireland’s over expanded public sector and the need for greater efficiency, political stability and more competitive approaches for business, including an ‘entrepreneurial role for the State’ (Hansard 1976).

This thesis has shown how conflict management became a key structural determinant for regional policymaking as politicians, policymakers and planners developed emergency responses to recurring political crises. In contemporaneous speeches and in later memoirs, politicians, senior civil servants, policymakers and planners frequently describe the experience of working in Northern Ireland during the first two

decades of direct rule, in terms of a struggle to impose social and economic normality in an unstable and increasingly chaotic situation. The failure of Sunningdale had been experienced as a particularly devastating setback for the political project of power-sharing and had led to a long period of muddle and drift in policymaking, which had fuelled a powerful belief that the primary goal of policymaking should be the restoration of social order.⁷³ This sense of social and economic breakdown was vividly recalled in interviews with two senior managers working in strategic roles during the period of direct rule. One described the early decades of the Troubles as ‘a moral and political catastrophe’, in which ‘all the players involved were overwhelmed, and in many ways they all lost control of what was happening’.⁷⁴ The other recalled the sense of confronting permanent social, economic and political crisis, which drove a determination to ‘get economic development done’ in the hope that ‘investment and jobs would filter down’.⁷⁵

One of the appeals of economic development strategies lay in their apparent clarity of purpose. Plans for recovering Northern Ireland’s former industrial sites relied on ‘clear, direct intervention’ by government with the purpose of ‘investing in major capital works to create jobs and bring in investment’.⁷⁶ However, whilst recognising the importance of restoring economic normality, senior policymakers were aware of the need to find a constitutional solution that would end the violent conflict. Culture-led regeneration and cultural development had been identified as policy arenas for developing more socially responsive and ‘people-centred’ responses.⁷⁷ From the late 1980s, cultural planners and policymakers felt they had a key role to play developing more effective policy responses which incorporated economic and political objectives aimed at fostering ‘political involvement and political engagement’, including ‘reaching out to paramilitaries and gaining political engagement’.⁷⁸ In this way, socially responsive policies developed during the 1980s and 1990s were seen to

⁷³ For more insights into fears of growing disorder and a loss of control among senior civil servants and policymakers see Roy Mason’s 1977 Review of the political situation in 1976, in which he explains the exceptional nature of the problems facing Northern Ireland as ‘a cauldron of serious difficulties...a unique Irish Stew’ (1976). Also Richard Needham’s memoir *Battling for Peace* (1994) and Ken Bloomfield’s *Stormont in Crisis* (1994).

⁷⁴ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

⁷⁵ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

⁷⁶ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

⁷⁷ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

⁷⁸ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

provide the groundwork for ‘a much more well-informed approach and serious engagement’ with wider societal problems that culminated in the 1998 Agreement.⁷⁹

In the early 1990s, during a period of deep economic recession, the collapse of Northern Ireland’s shipbuilding industry posed a major threat to the prosperity of the city and the region. Assuming a direct link between political conflict and economic factors such as unemployment, poor housing and poverty, policymakers continued to see economic investment as integral to the wider normalization strategy. Recovering Belfast’s former industrial heartlands in East Belfast thus remained a key priority. However, the early plans for redeveloping Queen’s Island reveal the severity of the economic challenges and the limited options available for saving Northern Ireland’s industrial economy of manufacturing and engineering. The addition of a cultural component to the economic regeneration plans opened up opportunities for developing new economic activities and encouraged community engagement in the recovery plans. Worn down by years of economic decline and conflict, many local people visualised a return to prosperity in terms of a thriving High Street of shops and cafes and gentrified streets and houses.⁸⁰ Cultural activities were valued in terms of fostering pride in local heritage and ‘creative opportunities for young people... to do something on the streets that wasn’t about confrontation and trouble’.⁸¹

Fifteen years after Harland and Wolff had been taken into public ownership, the British government sold the company to a management and employee consortium backed by Norwegian shipping magnate Fred Olsen (Hansard Debates, 22/03/1989). Harland and Wolff Heavy Industries Ltd relocated to a smaller Headquarters at the eastern edges of Queen’s Island in 1990. Having reduced its workforce and physical footprint and reconstituted itself as a holding company, Harland and Wolff set up a number of subsidiaries responsible for manufacturing oilrigs and tankers, design and civil engineering projects and ship repair. It also set up a subsidiary for managing the commercial redevelopment of properties on the vacated site and opened up negotiations for development rights with the landowners, Belfast Harbour Commission. At this stage, however, land uses on the vacant site remained subject to restrictive covenants that limited economic activity to heavy industries linked to shipbuilding, ship repair and engineering. Challenges to these restrictive covenants,

⁷⁹ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

⁸⁰ Interview with Deidre Robb.

⁸¹ Interview with David Boyd.

which lessened the residential and commercial value of the land, were increasingly expressed in terms of realising the cultural and heritage values attached to the site.

Ideas for developing the former shipyards as a heritage asset first emerged as a component in the 1990 economic regeneration strategy proposed by the DoE. Published in 1990, the Belfast Harbour Local Plan set out a 'land use strategy' as a guide to future development in Belfast's harbour area, proposing investment in new, more compact manufacturing and commercial activities on the former shipyards and the release of sections of the redundant land for 'wider community use' (DoE, 1990, pp 3-4). Whilst prioritising investment in new manufacturing and commercial activities that would maintain a regional skills base and secure Belfast's status as a working port, the Plan earmarked 20-acres of Brownfield land for potential 'new uses' (DoE 1990, p 42). Signaling the new cultural consciousness in urban planning, the Plan defined these uses in terms of 'improving the environment' and promoting 'a better image of the city' (DoE 1990, pp 38-42). In one of the earliest references to RMS Titanic, the 1990 Plan highlighted the value of the site as an 'industrial heritage asset', which invoked the legacy of '170 years of shipbuilding and technological achievement' and identified a number of historically significant buildings that would be identified as key heritage assets in later development plans, including:

The Thompson Pump House and Harland and Wolff's administrative building at Queen's Road...also the site of the historically important Queen's Shipyard where many ships were built, including the SS Titanic [sic] (DoE 1990, p 42).

The Belfast Harbour Local Plan recommended a preservation strategy that would give 'favourable consideration' to regeneration plans that put forward imaginative uses for the development of listed structures on the site (DoE 1990 p 40). In this way, proposals for conserving industrial heritage became a determining factor in planning decisions relating to the future development of the former shipyard site.

This formal recognition of the heritage value of the former shipyard site occurred within a wider policy environment that had undergone a decade of radical change. By the late 1980s, financial deregulation, including the abolition of exchange controls and credit controls had destroyed large sections of Britain's manufacturing base. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the rise of property values, 'artificially induced' by easy credit, laid the foundations for a new knowledge driven economy of creative

industries, retail and services (Elliot and Atkinson, 2007. p 31). The direct rule government's decision to withhold further state subsidy and force the privatisation of Harland and Wolff had shown a determination to bring Northern Ireland in line with this new economic order. As Northern Ireland opened up to the global economy, the idea that investment in the cultural economy might deliver employment and economic benefits captured the imagination of politicians, policymakers and planners seeking ways to profitably dispose of the remaining shipyard land.

The redevelopment of Belfast's former shipyards reveals the speed and depth of the 'discursive change' that took place during the 1990s, in particular the extent to which unionist politicians and industrial leaders were prepared to surrender formerly unshakeable attachments to old political and economic certainties. The release of James Cameron's Hollywood blockbuster film 'Titanic' in 1997 had been key in promoting the value of the heritage attached to the former shipyards. Belfast Harbour Commission removed the restrictive covenants from Harland and Wolff's lease in 1998 in return for a fifty-fifty share of future profits on the regeneration site, now re-branded the Titanic Quarter (Hansard 2002). Set up as holding companies for managing the Titanic Quarter regeneration, Titanic Properties Ltd and Titanic Quarter Ltd marked Harland and Wolff's formal entry into the property development business.

Film historian John Hill describes Harland and Wolff's decision to foreground the Titanic heritage in their recovery plans as a 'striking reversal' in unionist attitudes towards one of the worst disasters in the history of Belfast shipbuilding (Hill 2013, p 38).⁸² Far from exploiting the Titanic connection, the unionist business oligarchies had historically used their political influence to suppress representations of the Titanic disaster on TV, film and radio (Hill, 2013). The decision to promote the Titanic as a positive brand signalled Harland and Wolff's, and by extension unionist Northern Ireland's, acquiescence to the terminal nature of their decline. Hill points to the poignancy of the situation in which the former shipyards, once emblematic of unionist industrial power and political hegemony, were re-branded and mobilized in support of the 'construction of a new post-industrial Northern Irish economy' (Hill 2013, p 39). Unionist politicians were undergoing an equally dramatic discursive

⁸² This striking reversal was first manifested in a press statement released by the company, wishing James Cameron's *Titanic* success in the 1998 Oscars (cited in Hill, 2013, p 38).

transformation. Where demands for government intervention to save jobs in the shipyards had historically been framed in terms of defending Northern Ireland's status in the UK, unionist leaders were now accepting decisions for the 'winding down of the shipyard' on the basis of promises to 'rebrand' Northern Ireland's former industrial heartlands as the Titanic Quarter.⁸³ Having previously boasted of its prestige as a global centre of manufacturing and trade, unionist politicians were increasingly proclaiming that East Belfast could offer 'a better cultural product...not a better shipyard'.⁸⁴

Seeking to build corridors between the city centre and surrounding communities, Laganside Corporation was offering support to community development workers and artists advocating for arts and cultural activities to play a role in the regeneration of Belfast's former manufacturing and shipyard communities. Through funding local arts festivals and bringing artists and arts consultants into East Belfast, Laganside sought to inspire local communities to participate in building a new cultural economy. Shown what was happening in similar post-industrial regions of Britain, local community representatives were encouraged to value local culture and heritage as 'assets and resources that could be part of the redevelopment'. Harland and Wolff's owners and senior managers appeared receptive to the idea that the old industries associated with manufacturing and engineering could be replaced by new cultural industries that would breathe 'life and animation' back into East Belfast.⁸⁵

For many former shipyard workers and their families, however, the experience of economic decline was determined by the bleak reality of unemployment, falling incomes and living standards, dilapidated streets, boarded up shops, the closure of local post offices and libraries and the destruction of long established patterns of life.⁸⁶ The cultural economy might have been delivering economic benefits to the city centre, but for East Belfast, the experience of industrial decline was one of growing economic and social exclusion.⁸⁷ Whilst frequently citing lack of money or poor pedestrian access, residents' reluctance 'to cross over the Bridge' that separated the old East Belfast from the new global Belfast reflected this sense of alienation and exclusion (Hadaway 2001). Assumptions that culture-led regeneration could drive economic growth were central themes in strategic planning and policy documents.

⁸³ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

⁸⁴ Interview with Brendan Murtagh.

⁸⁵ Interview with David Boyd.

⁸⁶ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

⁸⁷ Interview with Deirdre Robb.

However, for those living in the former shipyard communities of East Belfast, there was still an expectation that politicians should deliver tangible benefits of economic development in the form of government-led investment in jobs and skills training and improvements in public services.⁸⁸ In spite of the weakening of their industrial power, the question of who spoke for the interests of ‘the loyalist people of East Belfast’ remained a fundamental concern for the unionist politicians of East Belfast as their parties negotiated the terms of power-sharing between 2002 and 2006.⁸⁹

5.5. Building the new Northern Ireland: the Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast as models of post-Agreement regeneration.

Whilst economic development had played a key role in the management of political instability throughout the period of direct rule, it acquired an even more central role as a vehicle for building a shared future and for promoting the successes of the power-sharing settlement after 1998. The 2002 Programme for Government shows how central economic development had become, not only an instrument but also a political terrain for consolidating Northern Ireland’s new constitutional arrangements. However, the dynamics of power-sharing frequently destabilised development plans, which were harnessed to conflicting political agendas and visions for the future. Unionist and nationalist parties drew electoral support based on their commitment to uphold the values, cultural traditions and political interests of their particular communities. The political parties enjoying the greatest electoral success in post-Agreement Northern Ireland were frequently the most determined champions of their respective communities and the most determined critics of inclusive power-sharing. The defence of unionist culture and tradition became a central political theme among the different parties competing for votes amongst the loyal communities of East Belfast. Evidence of the nature of these political rivalries can be seen in contributions to the 2002 Northern Ireland Assembly Committee of Inquiry, which investigated the decision to remove the restrictive covenants that had limited land use on the former shipyard site to manufacturing and engineering.

At the time of the Inquiry, two months before the collapse of the first power-sharing government, the UUP held the Office of First Minister in coalition with the nationalist SDLP. As the most determined opponents of the power-sharing settlement, the DUP

⁸⁸ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

⁸⁹ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

presented the main political threat and electoral challenge to the UUP. Both parties held ministerial posts in government departments linked to the Titanic Quarter regeneration. Reg Empey (UUP) held the Department for Enterprise and Trade (DETNI), whilst Peter Robinson (DUP) was Minister for Regional Development (DRDNI). Empey and Robinson also sat as MLAs representing East Belfast in the Assembly. Meanwhile the small Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), led by another East Belfast MLA, David Ervine, was attempting to build support as the party that best represented working class interests. Supportive of the 1998 Agreement and adopting a broadly social democratic, Labourist political position, the PUP was seeking to break the hold of the two main unionist parties on the unionist working class.

The DRDNI set up the Committee of Inquiry to examine the complicated political and business relationships associated with the Titanic Quarter regeneration following an Ulster Television investigation into the probity of the land deals negotiated between Harland and Wolff and the Belfast Harbour Commission in 2001. The Inquiry focused on the decision to remove the restrictive covenants from the former shipyard site (Hansard 2002).⁹⁰ During a series of Assembly debates in March and April 2002, the Inquiry investigated the economic rationale for the Titanic Quarter regeneration, whether as a means of bringing investment into East Belfast to support new jobs and skills training or whether as speculative property deal. Apart from expressing different views on the direction of the East Belfast shipyard regeneration, the contributions to the debate also reflected historic fault lines in the unionist bloc. They also revealed the dual nature of the conflict within Unionism between competing social and economic classes and competing representations of the *authentic* character of Protestant Ulster.

Harland and Wolff chairman, Sir Richard Fell, explained the business case for adopting a property-led regeneration model in terms of simple economic benefits. The removal of the restrictive covenants had allowed Harland and Wolff to realise the full value of the land, which allowed it to save hundreds of skilled jobs in the new engineering and ship repair subsidiaries. Asked by Andrew MacFarlane (UUP, MLA)

⁹⁰ The Committee for Regional Development was established to undertake an advisory, scrutiny, policy development and consultation role in policy areas under the remit of the Minister for Regional Development. The 2002 Inquiry interrogated key rationales for removing the restrictive covenants on land use on the Titanic Quarter regeneration site.

why Harland and Wolff shouldn't simply go into administration and make way for new more profitable industrial enterprises, Fell reframed his argument as a defence of cultural traditions and authentic ways of living:

Both my grandfathers worked in the yard, three of my uncles and my wife's father worked in the yard. It has a long tradition in Belfast and it happens to have had a long tradition in my family as well (Hansard 2002).

Harland Wolff's insolvency would not only damage Northern Ireland's reputation but also inflict psychological damage on the city's shipbuilding communities. As a member of the wider unionist family, Fell had a duty to preserve and hand on the legacy of Belfast's shipbuilding tradition to future generations.

Speaking as an East Belfast trade unionist and former shipyard worker, David Ervine (PUP, MLA) challenged the claim that Harland and Wolff was part of a communal patrimony, by highlighting the mercenary interests that held the alliance of holding companies together. Describing Titanic Quarter Ltd as 'a Harland in sheep's clothing', Ervine accused the shipyard bosses of exploiting nostalgia for a Titanic golden age in order 'to cash in on the property bonanza' that was fuelling disinvestment from manufacturing in Belfast (Hansard 2002). Ervine questioned Harland and Wolff's capacity to lead a business recovery plan, let alone take on a property development role. In calling Sir Richard's authority into question, Ervine was publicly challenging the myth of paternalistic Big House Unionism, which cast the industrial oligarchy and its Protestant working class into the role of 'patron and client, protector and protected' (Gibbon, 1975, p 126). In doing so, Ervine was delineating the class position of his political party within the unionist tradition. By building 'swathes of apartments' on the riverside, the regeneration plan would line the pockets of developers and work against the economic interests of working class communities in East Belfast (Hansard 2002).

Adjudicating in his role as Minister for Regional Development, Peter Robinson (DUP) defended the probity of the land deals and reassured the Inquiry that the decision to approve the re-designation of land uses rested on sound economic foundations that reflected his party's priorities for ensuring 'the survival of shipbuilding in Belfast' (Hansard 2002). Invoking a managerial discourse of necessary adaption to change, Robinson argued that the 'the dynamic new development' would drive 'future innovation and economic success' and secure

‘massive job opportunities for the whole of Northern Ireland’. Robinson’s appeal to a collective Northern Ireland interest made a rhetorical identification with the inclusive intentions of the 1998 Agreement. In this way Robinson was able to present himself as a progressive, dynamic and *neutral* agent of change, in spite of his own party’s formal opposition to the consociational arrangements of power-sharing. The Titanic regeneration would ‘be subject to the full rigours of the planning process’, with the ‘public interest’ protected through a ‘partnership’ between the Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast City Council and ‘the wider community’ (Hansard 2002). Whereas the earlier land deals had been based on private deals between Belfast Harbour Commission and Harland and Wolff, there was now ‘a third party’ with an economic interest in the development of the former shipyard lands. Robinson identified this third party as ‘Northern Ireland plc’ (Hansard 2002).

The formulation *Northern Ireland plc* introduced a novel concept into the rationale for the Titanic Quarter’s model of property-led regeneration: the re-imagining of Northern Ireland as a neutral, commercial, managerial entity. This re-conceptualisation of post-Agreement Northern Ireland in the form of a public limited company signalled two important changes emerging in post-Agreement political discourse. Firstly, Northern Ireland plc assumed an equivalence between the needs of a unified community of unionist, nationalist, public and private *stakeholders*. At a time when the DUP had positioned itself against the consociational structures of the new power-sharing Executive, this might be read as an unusually positive gesture towards the aspirations for reconciliation expressed in the 1998 Agreement. More significantly, perhaps, by rendering Northern Ireland plc into the instrument for achieving this reconciliation, Robinson was acknowledging its diminished status as a mere platform for commercial interests. From this perspective, the affirmative values that Unionists attached to their territorial, political and cultural inheritance could be seen merely as assets to be stripped and sold to the highest bidder.

The link between East Belfast’s industrial heritage and Northern Ireland’s prestige and its constitutional status in the UK was made explicit by DUP Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Nelson McCausland in a statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2010, in which he called for the preservation of ‘our unique and rich industrial heritage’:

Industry was one area that differentiated Ulster from the rest of this island, and Belfast was one of the great industrial powerhouses of the British Empire. Industry also formed part of the background to unionist opposition to home rule, and all such moments in history should be commemorated, celebrated and remembered (Northern Ireland Assembly 2010).

Whilst Belfast's shipbuilding history represented an affirmative heritage of prestige and power for Unionists, the Titanic carried a profoundly negative association with catastrophic loss and collective trauma. The co-incidence of timing between the Titanic's fateful maiden voyage and the Second Reading of the Irish Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons on 10 April 1912 established a metaphorical association between the two. From this perspective, the sinking of the Titanic and the existential threat posed to Protestant Ulster by Irish Nationalists and by Britain's acquiescence to their demands for Home Rule became intimately connected (Hill 2013, p 31). The outpouring of unionist grief that followed the loss of the Titanic might thus be seen as an act of 'collective mourning' not only for a loss of prestige but for the 'thwarted nationhood' of the people of Protestant Ulster (Foster 2002, p 333).

From cultural traditions to institutional loyalties, political and religious affiliations and even familial attachments, all that was sacred to the history and memory of generations of loyal Ulstermen and women had been transformed into unique selling points for Northern Ireland plc. In this sense, the formulation of Northern Ireland plc might also be seen as an appeal to a new inclusive *we*, expressed in terms of a dynamic and forward-looking team of managers and workers poised to take over, and committed to restructuring the old Northern Ireland. The Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan provided the technical framework, in which to re-imagine and promote a new shared concept or *social imaginary* of an economically viable, efficient and well-managed post-conflict Northern Ireland, with Titanic Belfast as its cultural centrepiece.

5.6. Northern Ireland plc: the Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan.

By 2003, the Titanic brand had become a key component in a regeneration project, which laid claim to being 'one of Europe's largest and most exciting waterfront developments' (Urban Initiatives 2004). Phil Ramsey elaborates the complicated and occluded corporate structure that supported the regeneration plans, after the incorporation of Titanic Investments Ltd in September 2003. One of a number of

subsidiaries of Harcourt Developments, Titanic Investments Ltd had a controlling interest in the company responsible for the development of the Titanic Quarter site, Titanic Quarter Ltd, which was also responsible for managing the operations of the Titanic Belfast signature project. Ramsey notes that Titanic Quarter Ltd explicitly identified achieving high quality returns on investment as the primary rationale for the Titanic Quarter regeneration, suggesting an exploitative relationship to the heritage of the site (Ramsey 2017 p 17). The Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan proposed the development of a cultural economy on Queen's Island, in which fragments of the city's industrial past would animate new cityscapes, commercial and tourist initiatives aimed at building future prosperity. Capitalizing on the 'national and international significance' of Belfast's maritime and industrial heritage, with its particular association with the 'the ill-fated Titanic', the regeneration plans promised to deliver a mixed economy of high tech, finance, service and creative industries, which would sustain 30,000 to 40,000 new jobs over and above the 20,000 jobs needed for construction (BBC March 2012).

The purpose of a Masterplan is to provide a coherent plan and quality standards for the development of a whole site in the context of its function and place in a particular area. From more critical perspectives, the attraction of localised master planning might be seen as a response to the deregulation of planning in the UK during the 1970s and 1980s, with the consequent decline of formal planning procedures. From this perspective, the Masterplan gives greater depth and coherence to 'carte-blanche neo-liberal approaches' to urban development through speculation to maximise return on investment.⁹¹ This thesis has shown that the rationale for economic development strategy rested on longstanding assumptions that the economy could act as an instrument for social stability and political progress in Northern Ireland. Whilst the approach of development companies like Harcourt towards public assets and financial resources appeared predatory, it might equally be argued that public policymakers were attempting to exploit private developers' potential to capitalize on Ireland's property boom, which was at its height in 2005. Thus, the Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan invoked discourses of social capital and social cohesion, in which the cultural heritage associated with the old shipyards, was linked to community well-being and re-igniting feelings of pride in traditional patterns of work and living. Whilst the visitor centre would be operated by a private company,

⁹¹ Interview with Mark Hackett.

Titanic Quarter Ltd, the Titanic Belfast development would be owned by the Titanic Foundation, a limited company with charitable objectives, whose principal aim was to ‘preserve maritime heritage assets ...[and] and educate people on Belfast’s social, historical, industrial and maritime heritage’ (Titanic Foundation 2011).

The Masterplan established the conservation of the ‘listed Thompson Pumphouse, Titanic and Olympic Slipways, Hamilton Graving Dock and former Harland and Wolff Headquarters’ alongside the ‘designated monuments of the Thompson and Alexandra Graving Docks’, as part of this shared maritime and industrial heritage (Titanic Quarter 2005, p 9). In doing so, it reiterated a key concept that had entered into post-Agreement policy discourse: that different interest groups, whether business, cultural, political or community, would work together to honour both the achievements and the tragedies of the past and to build a shared future. The Masterplan repeated its objective of ‘building the future from the past’ through managerial discourses of teamwork, partnership and stakeholding, in which the exploitation of the Titanic heritage was presented in terms of a shared enterprise.

The promotion of the Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan in Cannes at one of the world’s biggest property market fairs explicitly states the connection between the regeneration of Belfast’s former shipyards and the economic interests of international property developers and financial investors. The Titanic Quarter Regeneration offered investment opportunities in ‘a high profile, European waterfront development’, promising ‘exciting architecture’ and a ‘world class public realm’ that would ‘energize’ the city and bring its shipyard heritage ‘back to life (Titanic Quarter, 2005, p 1). With planning permissions secured for an £8-10 billion investment, the Titanic Quarter regeneration opened up high quality investment opportunities aimed at transforming Queen’s Island into a new ‘city within a city’, encompassing a chain of ‘residential villages’ connected by parks and boulevards. Out of a total 185-acre site, the Masterplan allocated less than 50 acres for industrial use, which it described in terms of building ‘the knowledge economy’ rather than recovering employment and skills in manufacturing (Titanic Quarter, 2005 p 5).

The Masterplan proposed new apartments, cafes, bars and leisure facilities on the 12-acre area of land that surrounded the Abercorn Basin, a semi-enclosed body of water adjoining the Odyssey Arena at the southern edge of the Titanic Quarter. The Plan designated the remaining 160-acres of land, radiating out from Harland and Wolff

old Headquarters and Drawing Offices and the area comprising the Olympic and Titanic Slipways, for economic activities associated with leisure and tourism. This included building a cruise liner berth, riverside apartments, family homes, small business developments and ‘high profile offices’ for the Gateway area, adjoining the Odyssey Arena.

Six months after the Masterplan had been presented to an audience of potential investors in Cannes, it was presented to an audience of local stakeholders in the former Harland and Wolff Drawing Offices. Harcourt Developments, joined by the principal architect and a number of political and public sector partners, including the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, framed the presentation in discourses of recovering communities, reconciliation and building shared space. Eric Kuhne, Head of global architectural brand CivicArts and Concept Architect for the Titanic Quarter regeneration set out his vision for a ‘new sustainable community with its own distinctive sense of place’ integrated into the city and surrounding communities through ‘efficient public transport facilities’ and pedestrian and cycling networks (Titanic Quarter, 2005 p 7). Standing as the ‘Signature Building’ at the heart of this new community, built on ‘genuine social interaction and shared values’, Titanic Belfast would act as an ‘agent of change’ and source of inspiration, helping to establish the Titanic Quarter as part of the ‘dominion of the citizens’ of the whole city of Belfast (Harcourt Developments, 2007, pp 15-17).

Locating the Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan within the government’s post-Agreement Reinvestment and Reform agenda, Secretary of State for NI, Peter Hain urged political, business and community leaders to work together to attract inward investment, increase regional competitiveness and build future prosperity and peace. Highlighting successful regeneration initiatives such as Laganside and the Victoria shopping centre, Hain saw the Titanic Quarter regeneration as an opportunity for advancing a new global Belfast, which would build and promote an image of economic and political stability. Once again, Titanic Belfast would fulfil a pivotal role. As a commercial entity, its function was to achieve ambitious visitor targets, increase revenues and promote the Titanic Quarter as an authentic maritime heritage destination and an attractive investment opportunity. On the other hand, it would take on the functions of a civic institution designed for ‘the advancement of education of the public regarding Belfast’s maritime and industrial heritage’ (Titanic Foundation

2011). In this way, Titanic Belfast represented an attempt to resolve the tension between the economic and civic goals of the regeneration plans.

The ambitions of the property-led development proposed in the 2005 Titanic Quarter Regeneration Masterplan were severely constrained by the burst of the speculative property bubble that followed the 2007 global financial crisis. A major borrower during the years of Ireland's property boom, Harcourt Developments suffered severe financial losses when land values collapsed in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland during the final months of 2008 and the early part of 2009 (Carswell 2011). Whilst the impact of the financial crisis forced Titanic Quarter Ltd to scale back on its multi-billion pound waterfront development plans, the Executive's decision to support a government-led partnership of public and private interests secured £77 million to ensure the survival of the Titanic Belfast Signature project (Ramsey 2017, pp19-20). In approving access to public funds, the Northern Ireland Executive provided an economic lifeline to private investors in the property and construction industries that had been most exposed to the collapse in land values (Belfast Telegraph 1 December 2008). In return, the Titanic Belfast Signature project promised to support 'community participation' in the delivery of the project and create jobs. Mike Smith, the Chief Executive of Titanic Quarter Ltd welcomed the Executive's decision as a 'great example of the private and public sector working together to deliver tangible and long-lasting economic benefits for Northern Ireland' (The Guardian 16 January 2009).

The rhetoric of regeneration allowed Titanic Belfast to promote itself as a community space and a symbol of a shared and more prosperous future. However, the project failed to deliver the jobs, apprenticeships and local housing agreed as 'social responsibility requirements' in the planning permission contracts (Belfast Telegraph, 3 May 2012). With its focus on developing the Titanic brand and Titanic Quarter, rather than regenerating East Belfast, the plans failed to address fundamental questions about:

What do these communities need – because you are dealing with the Short Strand enclave, and then you have the UDA and the UVF and even within the Short Strand it is divided. Very fractured communities, but the agenda

was never: what can we do for this community, how can we skill this community up ready for whenever this development happens?’⁹²

The former shipyard communities felt anger at what some saw as ‘deliberate exclusion’, where local people were ‘totally priced out’ of the development and overlooked for jobs.⁹³ Beyond economic marginalisation, some expressed a sense of being physically and spiritually displaced. Within weeks of the launch of Titanic Belfast, local councillors and community leaders in the east of the city were reporting residents’ anger at their exclusion from consultations and dismay that visitors were leaving Queen’s Island without exploring and spending time in ‘the real east Belfast’:

The shipyard was always regarded as being East Belfast, part of East Belfast, but whenever the Titanic Quarter was being developed it was always referred to as being the city centre and not East Belfast.⁹⁴

The Executive and City Council decisions to bail out the Titanic Belfast Signature project lend weight to the view that public policy was dominated by the property development and construction industry, which had exerted considerable political influence during the property boom of the 1990s and 2000s (Ramsey 2017). Ramsey also cites the political priority of promoting an image of post-conflict Northern Ireland as a normally functioning economy. In this respect, the decision to invest public money in the Titanic Signature project carried echoes of the earlier De Lorean debacle described in Chapter 3. *En route* to Titanic Belfast to attend the launch, visitors encountered the insubstantial facades of a Potemkin village on the Lagan. Apartment blocks, retail out-lets and a Science Park held out the promise of vibrant public space, whilst deserted streets and vacant properties betrayed an absence of meaningful social and commercial exchange.

Undeveloped stretches of land at the eastern perimeter of the Titanic Quarter acted as a *cordon sanitaire* between the placeless neutrality of the regenerated waterfront and the terraces of east Belfast’s old industrial heartlands. Threatening landscapes of walled-off streets and boarded-up windows, criss-crossed by slip roads and motorway flyovers separated two of the city’s most economically deprived areas, the Protestant Lower Newtonards Road and the small Catholic enclave of Short Strand. Separated

⁹² Interview with Deirdre Robb.

⁹³ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

⁹⁴ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

from each other and from the new visitor attraction, working class communities justifiably cited ticket prices and poor pedestrian access as obstacles to visiting the city's new waterfront entertainment and leisure zone. However, perhaps they felt a deeper sense of estrangement from the former industrial landscapes that had previously defined their relationship to the city. Whilst the interests of private investors and the goal of economic normalization remained key motivations, the survival of Titanic Belfast was guaranteed through its positioning within the strategy for developing the cultural economy as an instrument for re-imagining a new post-conflict Northern Ireland. Thus, instead of being dismissed as a camouflage for economic and political failure, Titanic Belfast would be celebrated as an icon of Belfast's transformation from a city of conflict to a city of culture. The following section examines Titanic Belfast as a politicized form of heritage, a stage for performing reconciliation and a screen for projecting a sanitised version of the past.

5.7. 'Our Time, Our Place': reimagining post-conflict Northern Ireland

The rationales of economic normalization, reconciliation and building the new Northern Ireland coalesced in the cultural tourism strategy designed to promote the launch of the Titanic Signature project in 2012 (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011, p 8).⁹⁵ Supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry (DETNI), the sponsoring department for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), and strategically aligned to Tourism Ireland, the North-South body established through the 1998 Agreement, the Titanic Signature plan was focused on growing regional tourism by projecting 'a distinct and unique aspect of Northern Ireland's culture or heritage'. The wording of the Titanic Belfast tourism strategy echoed the commitment made in the 1998 Agreement to make a 'fresh start' in honour of those who suffered 'the tragedies of the past' (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). By promoting Belfast's unique selling point as 'an authentic maritime heritage destination', Titanic Belfast would put Belfast on the global tourist map, help build new service sector jobs and attract inward investment to the region. However, rather than simply exploiting the global interest in the sinking of the Titanic, Titanic Belfast would 'pay homage', both to the shipbuilders and the victims of the disaster 'by telling their stories' (NITB 2004, p 18). In addition to delivering economic benefits,

⁹⁵ *NITB-Review of the Signature Projects* (2011) published by the NI Audit Office examines the progress of the five Signature Projects, totaling £159 million and including Titanic (Maritime) Belfast; the Giant's Causeway/ Antrim and Causeway area; The Walled City of Derry; the Christian Heritage/ St. Patrick trail and Mourne Mountains National Park area.

Titanic Belfast would act as a vehicle for changing perceptions of Northern Ireland by ‘bringing the story of Titanic home’ (NITB 2004, p 18).

Reconciliation became a central theme in the NITB’s ‘NI 2012: Our Time, Our Place’ campaign, which framed the launch of Titanic Belfast in March 2012 (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011a). Communicating the purpose of the 1998 Agreement, ‘Our Time, Our Place’ sought to foster cultural and attitudinal change and build positive relationships between and among residents and visitors. Promoting Northern Ireland as a region confidently moving towards a more peaceful and prosperous future, the campaign resonated with the rhetorical formulations of the Joint Declaration in the 1998 Agreement. Appealing to a unified ‘people of Northern Ireland’ to embrace a ‘truly historic opportunity for a new beginning’, ‘Our Time, Our Place’ invited ‘everyone to pull together’ to ‘communicate a positive message’ of pride in ‘our people, our places and our inspiring destinations’ (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011a, pp 8-10). By working together, ‘the people of Northern Ireland’ would place their region ‘on the global tourism map’ (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011a, p 18).

The Titanic Belfast launch provided politicians with a platform to present extravagant performances of reconciliation and communicate positive messages of peace and prosperity to the world. Looking forward to the ‘transformation of tourism...into a £1 billion industry by 2020’, Jonathon Bell, junior minister in the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) linked the construction of the ‘iconic building’ to the ‘ingenuity and brilliance’ of past generations (Hansard 2012). Titanic Belfast not only promised to challenge negative perceptions of Northern Ireland ‘in the heads and hearts of all the potential visitors to these shores’, but also to transform ‘perceptions of our place in our own minds’ (Hansard 2012). Beyond exploiting the socio-economic benefits deriving from the voracious global appetite for information and experiences relating to the Titanic, Titanic Belfast was promoted as the embodiment of a new ‘political maturity’ in post-Agreement Northern Ireland (Hansard 2012).

Over and above the familiar narratives of economic and social regeneration, a powerful rhetoric of radical forgiveness resonated throughout the programme of centenary speeches, celebratory events and commemorative activities that accompanied the Titanic Belfast launch. In keeping with the populist, future

orientated spirit of ‘Our Time, Our Place’, Titanic Belfast welcomed thousands of local visitors and tourists to the Titanic slipway to participate in the ‘Land of Giants’ summer festival, billed as ‘the biggest outdoor arts celebration ever staged in Northern Ireland’ (Titanic Quarter 2012). Celebrating parity of esteem between the two traditions on the island of Ireland, the Titanic Belfast launch was also framed within Ireland’s Decade of Centenaries, a cultural programme marking key events in the Anglo-Irish conflict from 1912 to the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922. Initiated by the Irish government, the Decade of Centenaries identified commemoration and reconciliation as key objectives for its cultural programme, to be achieved by fostering ‘deeper mutual understanding’ of Ireland’s troubled history and reconciliation and dialogue ‘among people from different traditions on the island of Ireland’ (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2012).⁹⁶

The performance of reconciliation remained a central theme throughout 2012 as civic and community leaders, dignitaries and politicians from Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain assembled to welcome HM Queen Elizabeth in June 2012 (Titanic Foundation Ltd. 2013b, p 101). With echoes of the breathless rhetoric of Northern Ireland’s 1953 coronation visit, the Titanic Belfast souvenir programme anticipated a royal visit filled with ‘potent symbols of reconciliation’ (Titanic Foundation Ltd. 2013b). The Queen’s arrival at Titanic Belfast followed her historic handshake with Martin McGuinness, formerly a senior commander in the Provisional IRA, now Deputy First Minister in the government of Northern Ireland (BBC News 27 June 2012). In this way, Titanic Belfast was said to signal a radical transformation that would act as a catalyst for many similar, smaller acts of reconciliation as ‘the people of Belfast’ come forward ‘to tell their stories, to honour the past...and make their peace with this historic moment in time’ (Titanic Foundation Ltd. 2013, p 6).

The cathartic year of commemoration, celebration and reconciliation ended abruptly with an eruption of communal division prompted by Belfast City Council’s decision

⁹⁶ The same year also saw the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games, which provided a stage for a performance of *Britishness*, as a multi-cultural identity. Representations of Britain’s ethnic minorities, alongside England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, were designed to highlight diversity within in the UK and enhance Britain’s image as an open, welcoming nation, where individuals and communities were free to celebrate their creativity and culture (Arts Council England 2009).

to restrict the flying of the Union flag at City Hall.⁹⁷ The council vote taken on 3 December 2012 and backed by the two main nationalist parties, Sinn Féin and the SDLP enraged unionist politicians and provoked almost 3,000 incidents of rioting, protests and violent civil disorder involving 10,000 people across Northern Ireland (Nolan, Bryan, Dwyer, *et al.*, 2014, p 9). Although lasting for over three months, the violence remained relatively small scale in comparison to the bombings, shootings and mass civil unrest of the 1970s and 1980s. However, the real power of the flag protest lay in its capacity to disrupt some of the more extravagant rhetoric that had been used to promote Northern Ireland's 'post-conflict narrative of reconciliation' throughout the year (Nolan, Bryan, Dwyer, *et al.*, 2014, pp 52-53).

The contrast between the narrative of community consensus that had resonated through the Titanic commemorations and the anger that erupted around the removal of the Union flag had exposed the bitter divisions underneath the rhetoric of reconciliation. Blame for the demonstrations and disruptions, believed to have cost an estimated £15m loss of revenue in retail trade, was largely attributed to a small minority of the loyalist working class said to be alienated from the contemporary, inclusive and globally facing city. Some, however, pointed to the well of anger and despair among wider sections of the East Belfast population who accused their political leaders of having 'left them behind... looked the other way [and]... fed them little token gesture nuggets' in pursuit of political power in the new Northern Ireland.⁹⁸ Built on the destruction of jobs, businesses and ways of life, Titanic Belfast exploited an affirmative heritage of industrial power and prestige, whilst delivering few tangible benefits:

Titanic Belfast does not give a true reflection of everyday life in the shipyard. It is Disneyworld....the whole of the Titanic area talks nothing about how we actually manufactured ships...it is glossed over.⁹⁹

For others, however, the setbacks, 'over a stupid flag!' demonstrated the importance of moving the process forward and the need to invest more resources in building political maturity through greater respect for culture:

⁹⁷ The Union flag had been flown every day of the year since Belfast City Hall's inauguration in 1906. The December 2012 vote *limited* the days to no more than 18 per year, in line with British government guidelines for public buildings.

⁹⁸ Interview with Deirdre Robb.

⁹⁹ Interview with Stephen Crosby.

I keep coming back to John Paul Lederach, it takes as long to come out of a conflict as the time spent in the conflict. So I do think that there are more reasons to be hopeful than not.¹⁰⁰

Describing the problem of translating the ‘various – and varied – ambitions of the stakeholders’ into a single coherent narrative, James Alexander, Chief Executive of Event Communications, explained the exhibition concept for Titanic Belfast in terms of locating the Titanic story in the ‘authentic’ history of Belfast. The idea was to create an emotional connection between gallery visitors and the stories of the people they encountered in the interpretive galleries (Alexander 2014, pp 88-89). Using touch screens to navigate their journey, visitors select from a menu of stories drawn from the ‘real lives’ of aristocrats, ladies’ maids, seamen, shipyard workers, politicians and business leaders, who had played a part in the Titanic story (Titanic Foundation Ltd. 2013, p 6). The contemporaneous film and photography on display compensates for the absence of tangible objects, made, handled or exchanged by people living in Belfast’s Titanic era. Selected from national collections, the photographs, including work by R.J. Welch, Harland and Wolff’s official photographer, along with work from the Alexander Hogg and W.A. Green collections, demonstrate the scale of Belfast’s industrial power and level of social organization.¹⁰¹ One of Welch’s most famous photographs shows the Titanic looming in the background, as workers stream out of the yards at the end of a shift. The sheer numbers in the photograph act as a poignant reminder that the same economic forces that brought the shipyards into being would ultimately sweep them away.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant

¹⁰¹ RJ Welch was the official photographer for Harland and Wolff who chronicled Titanic’s early life during construction in Belfast. The National Museums of NI hold Welch’s Harland and Wolff shipyard collection, Alexander Hogg and W.A Green in their collection of over 500,000 historic photographs dating from 1870. More information and a digital selection of images are available on the NMNI website <https://www.nmni.com/collections/history/photographs/>



Fig. 6. 'Home Rule, Rome Rule, Boomtown Belfast, Titanic Belfast 31 March 2012 (Pauline Hadaway)

Some of the most engaging images are those captured by mainly anonymous photographers and filmmakers that record, almost in passing, the 'accumulation of ...the ordinary things in life that epitomise existence' (Bate 2004). Front projected onto large screens in the opening 'Boomtown Belfast' gallery these images provide a remarkably detailed picture of Belfast as a bustling centre of commerce and mechanised progress (Fig 6). Providing glimpses of cramped kitchen houses and narrow backstreets, they act as a reminder of disparities of wealth in a city where wealthy citizens worked and enjoyed leisure within sight and sound of children with no shoes. In one film clip, a group of country people push through a crowd of well-heeled shoppers. Men and women walk purposefully across busy streets on their way to shops and offices:

Horses and carts jostle with cars and mechanized trams for road space. Sailing ships tie up alongside steam ships. A boy gazes out onto Belfast Lough. Ominously, a body of troops disembarks and marches in file through the docks (Hadaway, 2013, p 61).

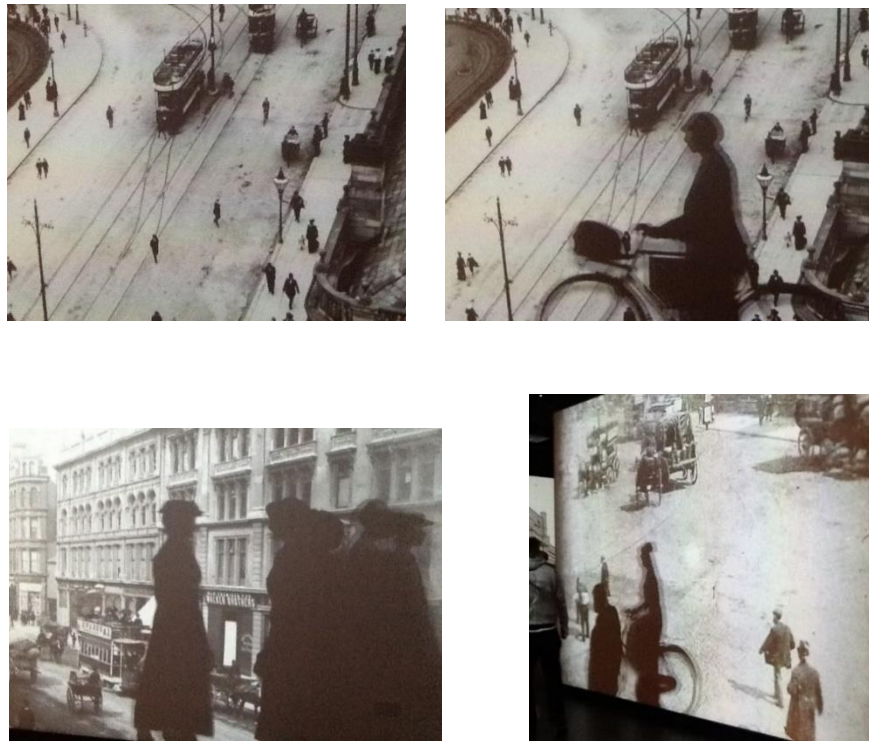


Fig. 7. 'Silhouettes' Boomtown Belfast, Titanic Belfast 31 March 2012
(Pauline Hadaway)

Whilst the film and photographs invite attention, their mode of display denies the opportunity to gaze attentively. For, Titanic Belfast has superimposed life size silhouettes of Edwardian ladies in Mary Poppins' hats, children rolling hoops, street urchins, chimney sweeps and bicyclists, strolling across each photograph and frame of film (Fig. 7). The same pastiche Edwardiana features in other galleries, where lovingly recreated cabins showing first, second and third class accommodation and furnishings are 'brought to life' by computer generated figures acting out clichéd Downton Abbey style vignettes of life on board the great liner. Just as the imposition of a disneyfied aesthetic attempts to soften the rough energy of the photographs and film, so representations of political and sectarian conflict are neutralised, reduced to two-dimensional representations of unionist and nationalist slogans printed on newspaper boards. The stated objective to encourage visitors to 'see people in the past as real people with real feelings' (Alexander 2014, p 91) is subverted by the strategy of inserting sanitised histories and fictional characters between the visitor and the messiness of real lives in Belfast's industrial past.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter responded to critical literature, which identified Titanic Belfast and the Titanic Quarter regeneration as products of capital speculation, facilitated by a policy environment that had been shaped by a political determination to re-invent Northern Ireland as a stable, economically successful post-conflict region. The case study sought to deepen these understandings by adding an analysis of the contradictions arising from the historical uses of economic development as a strategy for normalization. In doing so, the case study explored the recursive nature of policymaking and planning and the dynamic relationship between decision-making and planning and the structural and discursive properties that constitute the policy environment.

The case study showed that plans for developing the former shipyard site first emerged in response to the decline of shipbuilding, which gathered pace in Belfast from the late 1980s. The identification of culture and heritage in the plans for economic recovery reflected a wider sense of pessimism in the face of seemingly intractable patterns of socio-economic decline. Just as the seemingly unstoppable decline of the Harland and Wolff shipyards was a major factor driving the regeneration plans, so the industrial heritage of shipbuilding and its connection to the story of the Titanic were key factors orientating the recovery plans towards consumer and property-led goals. The case study thus confirmed that the interests of private investors and the goal of economic normalization remained key motivations for the Titanic Belfast development.

However, taking the 1998 Agreement as a key discursive moment, the case study showed how unionist political and business leaders employed the myth of Titanic Belfast in their attempts to forge a unionist re-imagining of post-conflict and post-industrial Northern Ireland, as an economically dynamic, stable and effectively managed entity, *Northern Ireland plc*. This reconceptualising of Northern Ireland as a neutral, commercial space presumed an equivalence between the needs of a unified community of stakeholders, as opposed to citizens or communities. The case study showed how unionist politicians exploited the affirmative values attached to the territorial, political and cultural inheritance of Protestant Ulster to brand and promote this new Northern Ireland. In doing so, it established that culture-led regeneration has become a practical space for rehearsing, embedding and performing the intentions of

political parties renegotiating their position in Northern Ireland's power-sharing institutions. The case study thus identified Titanic Belfast as a politicized form of heritage, using selected and manipulated representations of the past as a platform of performing, projecting and consolidating new sensibilities of citizenship and community relevant to the new post-conflict Northern Ireland.



Fig. 8. The Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site, 2003.
(Maze Long Kesh Masterplan 2006).

6.1. Introduction to the case study

The first chapter of this thesis introduced a number of controversies surrounding the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration, through an observational study of a consultation process, and through critical perspectives on the wider politicization of cultural development in post-Agreement Northern Ireland (Komarova 2008, 2011; Flynn 2011; Murtagh and Ellis 2011; Buchanan 2014). It drew particular attention to contradictions between politically contested meanings attributed to the former prison and claims that the regeneration opened up space for consensus building and inclusive dialogue. This thesis has subsequently identified weaknesses in Northern Ireland's post-Agreement policy framework that lend weight to arguments that the post-Agreement policy environment has encouraged former political enemies and their political gatekeepers to use cultural development as a field for pursuing sectarian interests and exclusionary practices, under the rhetorical cloak of peacebuilding (Komarova 2008; Flynn 2011; Murtagh and Ellis 2011). It has also established a number of practical difficulties for cultural development managers and planners

¹⁰² The phrase has been attributed to George Orwell's *History is written by the Winners* published in *Tribune*, 4/2/1944. However, the slogan, 'History is written by the Winner' (attributed to republican socialist activist Miriam Daly) famously features on a mural on Oakman Street, West Belfast. https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims/memorials/photos/Belfast_West/Oakman_St/History_Mural/med/BE L09MEM_History_Oakman_St_5047.JPG Retrieved 27/03/2019

seeking to mobilize competing interests around agreed policy objectives and project goals in what has become a highly unstable and politicized policy environment.

Taking the 1998 Agreement as a key discursive moment, the previous chapter identified the Titanic Quarter regeneration and Titanic Belfast as sites for re-imagining and projecting post-conflict Northern Ireland as a neutral, commercial and stable region. Whilst the promise of economic development remained a central idea for mobilizing stakeholder support, the regeneration plans were largely shaped by the need for unionist leaders to redefine their historical relationship to Northern Ireland and to their political communities in the light of the unionist parties negotiating their position in the power-sharing settlement. Similarly, whilst the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration might be seen as a battle for resources or a terrain for re-fighting the old battles between Unionism and militant Republicanism, the following case study considers the regeneration plans as evidence of an on-going battle for meaning within and between the old ideological blocs seeking to negotiate power-sharing in the years following the 1998 Agreement.

The structure of this case study reflects two key phases in the conception and development of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration plans, between 2002 and 2013.¹⁰³ The first phase (2002-2009) encompassed the transfer of the site, a series of consultations into the development of a museum to the conflict and the publication of the Maze/Long Kesh Masterplan, which proposed a multi-sports stadium, conflict transformation centre, agricultural show grounds, commercial zone, and housing development (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p 13). Following an accounting review and a strategic analysis, carried out by the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and Department for Finance and Procurement (DFP), the procurement process for the Masterplan was terminated in 2009. The second phase of the development began with the establishment of the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation in 2009 and ended with First Minister Peter Robinson's unilateral decision to halt the development in 2013.

¹⁰³ This case study draws on the 2011 Evaluation of *The Transfer of Former Military and Security Sites to the Northern Ireland Executive*, undertaken by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), which provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration between 2002 and 2011. Based on an examination of key documentation and interviews with senior officials from the OFMDFM and other relevant government departments, the Review identified two key phases in the development from 2002-2009 and from 2009 -2011. This case study continues the examination of the Phase 2 from 2011 up to the collapse of the regeneration project in 2013.

Having located the regeneration in the British government's plan for economic investment in post-conflict reconstruction, the case study examines the republican case for a museum to the conflict. Understanding museums and archives as repositories of knowledge and regimes of power, it examines the documents proposing a museum on the site of the former prison as manifestations of a struggle to construct and authorise a new republican *imaginary* of post-conflict Northern Ireland. The case study also considers the effects of the unionist counter-position on the plans, in the light of attempts to veto the 'museum at Long Kesh or the Maze' and redesign the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration as a vehicle for restoring political stability and economic normality to Northern Ireland. In doing so, it argues that the Maze/Long Kesh Masterplan, with its multi-sports stadium and International Peacebuilding centre and the later Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) consultation process emerged as part of a strategy for circumventing the battle for meaning that was holding back the delivery of the regeneration plans. The case study proposes that the authorisation of the republican narrative of the former prison estate, as recorded in the official Historical Buildings Listings, represented a veto on the future development of the site as a post-Agreement peacebuilding project.

6.2. Public asset or liability?

The largest of five former military and security bases, the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site was transferred 'free of charge' to the Government of Northern Ireland 'with the object of regeneration... [and] for partnership with local communities and businesses' (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p 5).¹⁰⁴ Known as RAF Long Kesh between 1941 and 1945, the 360-acre former airfield had been parceled into two separate sites: a British army base, comprising 23 acres, which became Long Kesh internment camp during the early years of the Troubles; and a high security prison estate, comprising 347-acres, known as HM Prison Maze, which was constructed in 1974 to confine men convicted under terrorism legislation (OFMDFM 2008). Following the closure of HM Prison Maze in September 2000, the

¹⁰⁴ The Northern Ireland Audit Office Report lists Maze/ Long Kesh, County Antrim (347 acres) alongside Ebrington Barracks, Derry City (26 acres); Magharafelt Barracks, County Derry (7 acres); Malone Road Barracks, south Belfast (2.5 acres) and Crumlin Road gaol, north Belfast (17 acres). The 2004 transfer of the 347-acre Maze/Long Kesh prison site followed the 2003 transfer of the smaller Ministry of Defence site. Thus, the total Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site comprised 360 acres in 2004 (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p. 19).

Office of the First and Deputy first Minister (OFMDFM) established a cross-party working group, the Maze Regeneration Unit, to initiate one of the most ambitious and controversial regeneration projects ever to emerge in post-Agreement Northern Ireland. The decision to set up a special unit in the heart of the Northern Ireland Executive reflected both the strategic importance and the political sensitivities around the regeneration site.

The site is located 4 miles south-west of Lisburn city centre and 9 miles from Belfast city centre. Situated within 90 minutes of four million people in Ireland, north and south and close to two airports, the Belfast-Dublin motorway and the main road running east to west, the site was identified as a central plank in the British government's Strategic Investment plan for post conflict reconstruction in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2006, p 19). 'Twice the size of Belfast's Titanic Quarter...and four times the size of Canary Wharf', Terence Brannigan, Head of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, described the site as one of the biggest and most politically significant post-Agreement redevelopment opportunities on the island of Ireland (BBC Northern Ireland News 24 April 2013). The management structures put in place to oversee the regeneration of the site indicate its significance as part of the post-Agreement Reinvestment and Reform Initiative strategy that formed a central plank of the power-sharing government's 2002 programme. The transfer of ownership was ratified by the Strategic Investment and Regeneration of Sites (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, which made the OFMDFM responsible for the holding and management of the site and established the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) as the body responsible for delivering the plans. The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) was given responsibility for monitoring and evaluation.

The political sensitivities surrounding the development of the site arose in part from its historical association with the Troubles and, in particular, with the Republican Hunger Strikes of 1980 and 1981, in which eight IRA prisoners and two INLA prisoners died. Remembered by former prisoners as a place of 'foreboding...heartache, pain, torture, brutality, loneliness, starvation and death', the H Blocks are revered as the defining symbol of 'the legitimacy of Irish Republicanism and of the courage, humanity and dignity of a risen people' (*An Phoblacht/ Republican News* 17 December 1998). Brendan Murtagh, who participated in consultations around the future of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration,

described the depth of feeling that the prison evokes among Republicans in terms of a ‘genuine Robben island experience’:

Memories, identities, incarceration, colonialism, the prison protests, all those things. In a genuine ontological way. They meant it.¹⁰⁵

In a powerfully commemorative culture, the former prison was inexorably linked to the history, experience and historical memory of Irish Republicans and the broader nationalist community (McAtackney, 2005; Purbrick 2003; Graham and McDowell 2007).¹⁰⁶ The Blanket men and Hunger Strikers had played a crucial role mobilizing support beyond the republican heartlands north and south of the Border between 1976 and 1981 (Bean 2007). Annual commemorations of the Hunger Strikes subsequently became a means of rallying the faithful and holding the ‘republican family’ together. In this way, the meaning of Maze/Long Kesh was situated within the history of the republican struggle in the prisons, which in turn had ‘mirrored and informed’ the structures and meanings associated with that struggle in the wider republican community (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 27). For those still committed to achieving a united Ireland, the commemoration of the sacrifices of republican prisoners represented a perfect synthesis between history and political agency. For all these reasons, unionists regarded the former prison estate with deep animosity.

The immediate political sensitivities at the time of the transfer arose from the controversial decision to grant early release to prisoners convicted of terrorist offences and affiliated to paramilitary organizations, which had agreed to maintain an unequivocal ceasefire.¹⁰⁷ The scheme, the result of negotiations between the British government and Sinn Féin, led to the release of 428 republican and loyalist prisoners, including 143 serving life sentences, between Christmas 1998 and July 2000. Whilst accepting early release as a necessary step on the road to lasting peace, many were appalled to see TV and newspaper reports showing some of the most prolific bombers and gunmen involved in the Troubles being greeted by friends,

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Brendan Murtagh, participant on SEUPB Maze/Long Kesh consultation.

¹⁰⁶ In Northern Ireland, many nationalist and unionist communities are territorially distinguished by murals, posters, flags, gardens of remembrance, memorial plaques, parading routes and graveyards, honouring the dead.

¹⁰⁷ The deal was particularly controversial because it had been concluded in the absence of any obligation for the paramilitary groups to surrender their weapons. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/jul/28/northernireland> (Accessed 14 June 2017).

family and supporters at the prison gates.¹⁰⁸ The carefully constructed political rhetoric of reconciliation and rapprochement was frequently troubled by the spectacle of loyalist and republican prisoners punching the air and shouting to the waiting media. In the euphoria of the moment, some spoke aloud what many in the Republican movement privately felt about the actual and symbolic importance of the prison:

We had achieved the status of political prisoners even if the British government never admitted it. The prison struggle was a microcosm of the larger struggle (BBC News 28 July 2000).

With weapons still in the hands of the paramilitary groups and with the shock of the Omagh bomb still fresh in the public mind, the early release scheme exposed the pragmatism with which former enemies were negotiating deals behind closed doors, with little regard either for the rule of law or for the victims of the conflict.¹⁰⁹ In doing so, it provided fuel for unionist narratives that represented the future development of the Maze/Long Kesh site in terms of a ‘betrayal’ and ‘an affront to innocent victims’.¹¹⁰ The need to manage the growing ‘cultural war’ between different narratives of victimhood would present significant challenges for the regeneration of the site as a space for reconciliation.¹¹¹

The strategic importance of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration lay in its potential to reframe the utilitarian strategy for normalization within the peacebuilding objectives of the 1998 Agreement, with its commitment to foster:

Sustained economic growth and stability in Northern Ireland and for promoting social inclusion pending the devolution of powers to the new Northern Ireland Assembly (Northern Ireland Office 1998a).

¹⁰⁸ Samples of news report showing reactions to the early release of paramilitary prisoners available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45-usfyLuOs> (Accessed: 13 July 2018)

¹⁰⁹ The pragmatism of the early release scheme provides useful examples of peace process deal making and the way ‘constructive ambiguity’ has shaped the policy environment and surreptitiously altered the constitutional and judicial framework of Northern Ireland and Britain. For example, the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee established that PM Tony Blair and Secretary of State for NI Peter Mandelson had privately authorized ‘letters of comfort’ granting legal immunity to paramilitaries suspected of ‘scheduled offences’, including murder, who were ineligible for early release because they had gone ‘on the run’. The deal was made with Sinn Féin in order to secure the 2007 restoration of power-sharing but withheld from the unionist parties and the UK Parliament (Hansard 2013).

¹¹⁰ Interview with Paul Gallagher.

¹¹¹ Interview with Paul Gallagher.

Thus, apart from its economic potential, the development of the site was seen as a testing ground for power-sharing and as a measure of the success of 1998 Agreement. In recognition of its function as space for building positive peace by confronting the legacy of the conflict, the OFMDFM set up a cross-party advisory group to represent stakeholder interests. Reflecting the emphasis on fostering cross-community participation, representatives from the four largest unionist and nationalist parties (UUP, SDLP, Sinn Féin and the DUP) were invited to sit alongside representatives from the UK Treasury's private finance and infrastructure investment agency (Partnerships UK), alongside civil servants from the OFMDFM, the Department for Finance and Personnel (DFP), the Central Procurement Directorate, Land and Property Services and the Departmental Solicitors' Office.

Following the suspension of regional power-sharing in October 2002, responsibility for legislating and implementing the Reform and Reinvestment Initiative was passed to Westminster. Although still responsible for the Maze/Long Kesh development, civil servants in the OFMDFM were now acting under the leadership of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for economic policy. This arrangement remained in place until power-sharing was re-established in May 2007. Wary of being drawn back into its former role mediating the competing demands of nationalist and unionist political parties, the British government set up a consultation process to minimize its political exposure. Whilst the Strategic Investment Board and civil servants in the OFMDFM continued to set and monitor broad development targets, the UUP, SDLP, Sinn Féin and the DUP were invited to nominate political representatives to sit on a new Consultation Panel tasked with:

Affecting the transfer of the Maze/Long Kesh site; commissioning a land use study; spearheading a programme of consultation and making recommendations on the appropriate implementation machinery for the development of the sites' (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p 11).

Underneath the dry, technical wording, the Consultation Panel, now dominated by political appointees, had been given wide ranging powers to determine, in the words of a leading member, 'the potential uses of the site as a social, economic and *cultural* resource' [my italics] (O'Muilleoir 2003, pp 21-22).¹¹²

¹¹² The political appointees included David Campbell, Chair (UUP, appointed by the recent First Minister), Michael McKernan, Vice Chair (SDLP, appointed by the recent deputy First Minister), Roy Bailie, (UUP nominee), Gerry Cosgrove, (SDLP nominee), Martín O'Muilleoir (Sinn Féin nominee) and Edwin Poots, (DUP nominee and MLA for the local constituency of Lagan Valley).

6.3. A New Future for the Maze Long Kesh

In August 2003, in what would come to be seen as a highly significant decision, the DoE agreed to undertake a survey of the architectural and historical value of the site. The decision followed a request from Lisburn councillor and former Maze prisoner Paul Butler, acting on behalf of Sinn Féin and republican ex-prisoners group Coiste na nIarchimí. Aware of the Unionists' determination to clear the prison buildings from the site, Sinn Féin sought a conservation order as a necessary first step for developing the former prison as a museum and heritage site (Irish News 23 August 2003). The application for statutory listing was strongly opposed by two senior DUP politicians with constituencies in the locality, Lagan Valley MP Sir Jeffrey Donaldson and MLA Edwin Poots, who appealed to the British government to prevent it on the grounds that it would:

Damage our ability to attract the kind of investment and provide the sort of facilities that would make it open and accessible for all the people of Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office, July 2003).

However, the DoE decided to approve the Sinn Féin led request and ordered a survey to assess, record and evaluate the historic value of the site, under the direction of civil servants from the OFMDFM, the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency (NIEA) and the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS). The survey, which comprised 'historical research, the compilation of a detailed record and an assessment of the current condition of the site' formed the basis of the future Historic Buildings (HB) Listing (CGMS Consulting, 2004).

At the time the survey was commissioned, the site comprised three main elements: the decommissioned HM Prison Maze, the former Long Kesh Internment camp and the former Long Kesh army barracks (largely demolished). In its evaluation of the historic and architectural value of the former 'prison complex', the Historic Buildings service describes it as:

A unique example of late 20th century emergency prison design. The Compound Prison displays the organic development of a temporary internment camp, reminiscent of WWII P.O.W. camps around the UK, into a more established structure with the concrete perimeter wall symbolising its increasingly permanent nature and the escalation of the 'Troubles'. The Cellular Prison drew on influences from the USA and

was probably the first UK example to utilise the H Block cellular form. The historical significance of the whole prison, in relation to the 'Troubles', is high with the structures, imagery and even name being synonymous with that conflict. (Department for Communities, Historic Building Listing HB19/04/0303).

In 2005, following an examination by senior conservation architects in the Historic Buildings Listing service, the DoE approved the listing of ten buildings and structures on the site. This decision would have far-reaching political and practical consequences. Aside from protecting the physical integrity of the retained buildings, the statutory listing placed the history of the prison complex in an ostensibly neutral, publicly accountable and legally defensible space. For republican supporters of the museum plans, the official listing affirmed the value of 'Long Kesh' as a key historical site, where future generations could come to learn about the history of the conflict. One Lisburn Sinn Féin councillor went so far as to claim that the decision placed the former prison estate 'on a standing with Robben Island, Auschwitz and the Berlin Wall' (Irish News 23 August 2003).

The 'unalterable and lasting consequences' of this legally enforceable listing became clear ten years later, when the DUP First Minister Peter Robinson announced his unilateral decision to withdraw political support for a proposed peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh (*Newsletter*, 15 August 2013). Directing his fury towards the former (unionist) chair of the Consultation Panel, Robinson claimed that the existence of prison buildings, 'seeping with highly controversial, divisive and painful history', had become an insurmountable barrier to plans for building a peace centre (*Newsletter*, 15 August 2013). Presenting himself as a hostage to the planning process, the First Minister stated that the development of a peace centre would be halted until Sinn Féin could prove that they were 'serious and sincere' about creating 'genuinely neutral space' that does not portray:

Any version of our history... [or] any exhibition, tour, display, museum, memorabilia, material or presentation of Maze or Northern Ireland content (*Newsletter*, 15 August 2013).

Whilst it may appear fanciful to believe that the peacebuilding or heritage potential of the site could ever be exploited in the absence of any material or historical reference to its troubled history, this was precisely the compromise that had been agreed between the DUP and Sinn Féin after they became partners in the power-sharing government in 2007. This impossible constraint was imposed on all future

planning for the Maze/Long Kesh development and written into the mission statement of the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation, the body set up to deliver the regeneration plans. Reflecting on the significance of the compromise, the Head of the Development Corporation recalled:

Both sides said we want to maximise the economic, the historic and the reconciliation potential. That's the words they used as the joint deal. But that remains the challenge on this site: how to bring all of that together. We certainly recognized the economic potential. We certainly recognized there is reconciliation potential, in terms of it being transformed into a shared site, but nothing will be done unless the plans have regard to what was here before.¹¹³

Foucault's concept of the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse is helpful for understanding the significance of the Historic Buildings Listing as a manifestation of power relations and struggles in post-Agreement cultural development policy and practice. Applying an understanding of discourse as an expression and instrument of institutional and political power, the decision to record the *republican* narrative of the history of the former prison as the authoritative version of 'what was here before' determined the structural and discursive framework that would govern the future development of the site. The professional expertise that underpinned the official authorisation provided politicians and policymakers with an objective, evidence based rationale for future decision-making that would, it was hoped, settle the dispute over the meaning of the site or at least 'take the passion out of it'.¹¹⁴ Thus, the significance of the Historic Buildings Listing arises from the legitimacy it bestows on a particular narrative of a politically contested and emotionally charged episode in the struggle against British rule in Ireland.

As a practical effect, the official listing placed a legal constraint on future development plans in a way that would ultimately expose the fatal contradictions at the heart of the cross-party consultative process. For, in addition to meeting the economic and peacebuilding goals set out in the Reinvestment and Reform strategy, the future development would have to comply with a preservation order on buildings and structures that many unionist members of the Consultation Panel regarded as shrines to IRA terrorism. The survey and subsequent listing, which became

¹¹³ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

¹¹⁴ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

determining factors for the future direction of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration, are subjected to close textual analysis in the following sections.

6.4. Northern Ireland Environmental Agency Historic Buildings Listing 19/04/0303

The following analysis of the text of HB Listing 19/04/0303 throws light on the rationale behind the request to designate specific structures on the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site as listed buildings. There are two starting points for the analysis. The first is a view of policy and planning documents as instruments for constructing meaning and validating political assumptions by, as it were, writing social reality into being (Fairclough 2003). The second is a definition of heritage as those parts of the past selected for economic, cultural, political or social purposes in the here and now and preserved as a cultural inheritance for the future (Graham et al. 2000). Drawing attention to the narratives that have been selected and omitted from the record, the analysis explains the significance of the listed buildings as representations of affirmative histories, which legitimate the armed struggle to end British rule in Ireland. The importance of this evidence of political intervention into processes of cultural development policy, planning and the management merits the close textual analysis that follows.

HB Listing 19/04/0303 provides an ‘Exterior Description and Setting and a summary of Historical Information’ for the retained structures on the site of the former Maze Prison complex, situated on the Townland of Maze and Culcavy near Lisburn, County Down. The General Record of the Site contains ten sub-listings (A to J), each providing more detailed external descriptions and historical information for the individual retained structures. The structures are listed according to their location in the former prison complex. Structures, which were formerly outside the prison walls, are listed in sections A-D, while those formerly within the prison walls are listed in sections, E-J. The retained structures are described as follows:

- ‘H’ Blocks 6, 7 and 8 each located within separate fenced compounds, with ‘H’ Block 6 also comprising a vehicle entrance, airlocks, and observation tower;
- Multi Denominational Chapel, fenced enclosure, security hut and low garden wall;

- A section of concrete perimeter wall including perimeter watch towers
- The prison hospital
- A Cellular Administration Block with emergency control room;
- A section of the former internment camp, comprising compound fence, airlock, 3 prisoner accommodation Nissen Huts, Gym/Kitchen block, crafts hut and ablution block;
- Two large steel framed aircraft hangars.¹¹⁵

In the section marked ‘Evaluation’, the document attributes the selection of these ten buildings and structures to their architectural significance as elements of ‘an emergency prison system’, built in response to different phases of the conflict. It also notes the ‘historical significance of the whole prison in relation to the “Troubles”’, pointing out that ‘the structures, imagery, and even the name... [are]...synonymous with that conflict’ (HB 19/04/0303)

6.5. Constructing the narrative: partisan perspectives from HB19/04/0303

Exterior Description and Setting

This section of HB 19/04/0303 provides a 350-word description of the whole site as it stood at the time of the 2004 survey. Beginning with an overview of the 360-acre site of the ‘whole Maze Prison Complex’, which was still largely intact, the listing describes a landscape of flat ‘low lying bog’, bounded by a ‘series of razor wire fences’ that follow ‘historic field boundaries’ in an irregular demarcation. The ‘prison complex’ was situated at the centre of this site, ‘contained within a continuous high concrete perimeter wall (2.1 miles long) punctuated with watchtowers’. The document explains that the ‘whole prison complex’ had previously been split into two separate prison sites: the ‘Long Kesh Internment centre, also known as Maze Compound’ and HM Prison Maze, also known as Maze Cellular.

Likening the Long Kesh Internment centre to a Second World War Prisoner of War camp, the document describes a fenced in compound, sub-divided into five smaller compounds, each bounded by high perimeter fences, which were ‘patrolled by a guard and a dog’. Each compound held loyalist and republican prisoners, separately housed in dormitory Nissen huts. Each compound was serviced by an additional

¹¹⁵ For a diagram of the structures see: <https://apps.communities-ni.gov.uk/Buildings/buildMain.aspx?Accept>

dining and recreation hut and a ‘purpose built timber hut ablution block’. HB19/04/0303 describes the second site, ‘HM Prison Maze, also known as Maze Cellular’, as a separate area, consisting of eight ‘H’ Blocks, containing visitors’ reception centres, ‘inmate search blocks’ and recreation grounds.



Fig. 9. Inertia security structure at former Maze Prison. Northern Ireland. (Pauline Hadaway 2003).

The Historic Building Listing provides a lengthy description of the ‘internal boundary walls, fences and dead zones, referred to as “Inertias”’, which formed the security systems of HMP Maze (Fig.10). The description is striking in the way it provides an insider’s perspective, which resonates with numerous descriptions of the prison’s ‘punitively disorientating and dehumanising effect’ given in testimonies and written in the memoirs of former prisoners (cited in Purbrick 2004). The Historical Buildings Listing records that:

The whole area is typified by greyness and lack of colour. The lack of any view.....to hills in the distance is striking. Strung between walls and helping to emphasise a sense of enclosure outside the buildings are wires with plastic toilet floats attached to prevent helicopter access (HB 19/04/0303).

Emphasising the sense of enclosure and surveillance, the Listing describes the complex monitoring systems with the watchfulness of a prisoner looking for opportunities to escape, marking out weaknesses in key areas ‘around the visits complexes’:

Primary observation towers...located immediately outside the perimeter of the Cellular Prison, manned by army personnel... [who]...monitored both the inertias within the perimeter and the hinterland between the perimeter

wall and the site boundary fence along with the main Cellular Entrance...The least secure and smallest of the towers were located to the north and south of the H Blocks serving to monitor the activities of inmates in the exercise yards (HB 19/04/0303).

Historical Information

The Historical Information section of the General Record comprises 1,968 words. The first 225 words describe the history of the site from 1941- 1969, beginning with a description of RAF Long Kesh, which operated as a Second World War airfield ‘principally associated with training flights’ and later providing maintenance for nearby RAF Maghaberry. The Long Kesh airfield had three runways and six hangars, including ‘the two surviving hangars to the north of the main runway used in the construction of Stirling aircraft, which have been listed as retained structures. After the airfield closed in 1945, the British army used the site as an ‘Army Command Vehicle Park’. This part of the Listing explains that the site also became home to a local Gliding club, which was forced to relocate in 1969 after the land ‘was acquired to build the Long Kesh Internment compounds’. The next section in the Historical Information entry covers the period between 1969 and 1983. It comprises 885 words (almost half of the entire entry) and provides a concise, but detailed, summary of the prison as a site of political struggle.

One of the most striking features of the narratives in this section is the focus on the personal experience and political perspectives of republican prisoners, particularly those involved in prison protests associated with the Provisional IRA’s struggle for ‘the re-instatement of political status and commensurate privileges’. This section of the Listing does not explain the history of internment in great detail (see ‘omissions’ later in this chapter). However, it draws careful attention to differences between interned and convicted prisoners, in terms of defining their status in the criminal justice system and within the prison regime. The narrative explains that the internment camp received growing numbers of prisoners who had been convicted through the courts after direct rule was imposed in 1972. This shift towards obtaining convictions through the criminal justice system resulted in a change in the official identity of the prison, when Long Kesh detention centre was renamed HM Prison Maze in 1974. The Listing describes this new category of convicted prisoners as ‘prisoners convicted of politically motivated’ offences.



Fig. 10. Republican Prisoners in Long Kesh Internment centre c. 1974,
(Belfast Exposed community archive)

This section highlights a second striking feature of the HB 19/04 0303 narrative: the use of highly contested terms such as ‘political status’ and ‘politically motivated’ in descriptions of republican prisoners and their actions. The question of whether to grant political status to prisoners of Troubles related offences was, and remains, highly contested. Republicans had historically used designations like political prisoner or prisoner-of-war both as a matter of principle and as a propaganda tool for establishing the legitimacy of the armed struggle against British rule in Ireland. From its formation, the Provisional IRA had consistently used the designation in statements and propaganda material. For example, during secret talks with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in 1972, the Provisional IRA leadership placed an ‘amnesty for political prisoners’ among demands for the withdrawal of British troops and ‘self-determination for the Irish people’ (BBC News 10 July 1972). The British government was equally determined, both as a matter of principle and for propaganda purposes, that there were no ‘political prisoners’ in Northern Ireland; and that following the end of internment, no-one was ‘imprisoned without due process of law’ (Public Record Office Northern Ireland 1988).

The concept of the political prisoner gained prominence in political discourse between 1972 and 1980 after prisoners who had been convicted of ‘offences related to the civil disturbances in Northern Ireland’ were granted ‘special category’ status (Public Record Office Northern Ireland 1988). Whilst the criminal status of these prisoners remained unchanged, they enjoyed special privileges, including exemption from work and from wearing prison uniforms. These privileges, granted solely to ‘prisoners involved with paramilitary organizations’, were won as concessions from the British authorities following a series of prison protests including a hunger strike (Public Record Office Northern Ireland 1988). The British government’s decision to

grant ‘special category’ status might be seen both as constructively ambiguous and pragmatic. On the one hand, the designation ‘special category’ represented a linguistic sleight of hand. On the other hand, the privileges granted to the paramilitaries were simply an acknowledgement of the abnormal character of HM Prison Maze, which was operating as a de-facto POW camp at this time:

Each paramilitary group had an OC who acted as spokesperson and a first point of contact between that group and the governor of the prison. This system was used in both Maze Compounds and Maze Cellular (HB 19/04/0303).¹¹⁶

Another striking feature of the HB Listing is the way it subverts British policy by challenging the narrative of normalization as applied to the prison regime. The Listing makes particular reference to the 1975 Gardiner Report, which had recommended new ‘measures to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland’ in the context of ‘civil liberties and human rights’, including an end to internment, a programme of prison construction and new management systems to address the ‘loss of disciplinary control’ (HMSO, 1975). The HB Listing describes the way that Britain’s attempts at normalization fuelled further resistance among republican prisoners. It continues with an extremely detailed account of the prison protests that began on 15 September 1976 and ended in October 1981 after the death of 10 republican prisoners on hunger strike. The narrative in the HB Listing firstly establishes a rationale for the prison protests, beginning with republican prisoners, received into the newly built cellular prison as ‘ordinary criminals’, refusing to wear prison clothes. The prisoners ultimately resorted to covering themselves in blankets, a form of protest that became known as ‘The Blanket Protest’. The prison authority’s decision to remove further special category privileges escalated the Blanket Protest, fuelling:

General resentment amongst prisoners of the way in which they were being treated and housed in the new H blocks (HB 19/04/0303)

By 1978, with over 300 men on protest, the Blanket Protest escalated to a ‘no-wash’ protest when prisoners refused to leave their cells to wash and began smearing their cell walls with excreta. This phase of the protest continued for two more years. The

¹¹⁶ OC is the term used by the Provisional IRA as shorthand for Officer Commanding. Again, it is striking that a term, which bestows a military rank on convicted terrorists, should appear in an official document produced by an agency sponsored by the DoE.

narrative describes a further escalation of the protest, when seven prisoners embarked on a hunger strike in September 1980, demanding:

To be able to wear their own clothes, refrain from prison work, have free association, have weekly parcels and visits and the restoration of lost remission.

The hunger strike ended after 53 days on 18 December with:

The strikers (being) taken from their dirty wings to a clean wing before being moved to the hospital for medical observation.

Once again, the Listing provides an unusually positive account, describing a second series of hunger strikes that began on 1 March 1981, led by Bobby Sands. Given Bobby Sand's iconic status in republican history, his description as 'the IRA prisoners OC' is striking. The phrase not only reflects a republican sensibility, but would be regarded as contentious and unacceptable by Unionists. The Listing spells out the significance of Bobby Sand's leadership, as a force for building solidarity among 'fellow republican prisoners' and mobilizing electoral and political support among the broader nationalist community:

This protest was supported by fellow republican prisoners with representatives from the two republican organizations joining him. In April, the Irish Republican Socialist Party and Peoples Democracy won two seats in the Belfast City Council elections and Bobby Sands won the by-election in Fermanagh and South Tyrone on April 9th to Westminster. He died a month later in the hospital block as a result of the hunger strike with a crowd of 100,000 attending his funeral (HB 19/04/0303).

This section also explains that 'no-wash' and hunger strikes were being carried out at Armagh (women's) jail in solidarity with republican prisoners in the Maze prison and that a further 30 Republicans in the 'H' blocks joined the protest to support the hunger strikers' demands. This section ends with a description of 'the escape in September 1983 of 38 republican prisoners'. The story of the prison escape represents an affirmative narrative for republican supporters. The final section of the Historical Information section establishes another important affirmative narrative: the 'historic role' played by the prisoners in helping secure the peace agreement following the 1998 Agreement. The early prisoner release scheme is presented as a positive outcome of the peace deal, following a 'visit to the Maze of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland' in 1997. The Historic Buildings Listing ends on the 1st April 2004,

when ‘the UK Government relinquished control of the site as part of the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative’ (HB 19/04/0303).

6.6. Claiming the narrative: striking omissions from HB 19/04/0303

Meanings ascribed to heritage are conditioned not only by the historical and political context of events and places but also by subjective criteria, including the degree of personal involvement and political or emotional attachment to those events and places. In this way, different experiences and interpretations of the history of the buildings and structures on the Maze/Long Kesh site reflect different relationships of power and different experiences of the conflict inside and outside the prison walls. There are sharp differences between the experiences of prisoners, prison staff and people who were injured or lost friends and family through the actions of prisoners. It is striking, therefore, that the Historical Information in the HB19/04/0303 Listing has very little to say about different experiences outside the specific Provisional republican narratives of the prison protests, which mainly focus on the years following the Blanket Protest in 1976. The most significant understatements and omissions in the HB Listing include those narratives relating to the period of internment, those relating to loyalist prisoners and to the experience of Prison Officers. Most significantly, there are no records relating to the experience of victims of prisoners’ actions.

Whilst the HB Listing establishes the contestation about the political status of the prisoners, it has little to say about the experience of interned prisoners held in Long Kesh internment camp or about the political significance of internment. After Partition, the unionist government had granted itself coercive security powers, including the power to intern citizens without trial. Internment had been used in every decade since the 1920s. A total of 1,874 Republicans and nationalists and 107 Loyalists were detained without trial between 1971 and 1975 (McLaughlin and Baker 2010, p 84). The use of arbitrary and extra judicial powers against such large numbers provoked immense anger amongst the nationalist community and helped undermine the appeals of those who had advocated a non-violent political agenda. Many saw internment as an attempt to put down the wave of insurrection that swept nationalist areas in response to the violent suppression of civil rights protests. The backlash to internment not only brought down the unionist state, but also broke the alliance between Unionism and the British state upon which unionist power was founded

(Ruane and Todd 1996, pp 130-131). Austin Currie, the moderate SDLP leader, described internment as ‘the biggest recruiting sergeant for the IRA’ and a watershed moment for the conflict in Northern Ireland. In spite of its political significance, the narratives of internment do not belong to the Provisional movement in the same way as the prison protests and 1980 and 1981 Hunger Strikes, being shared with the broader Catholic and nationalist community and with smaller numbers from the Protestant community.

The experience of loyalist prisoners is also understated in the HB Listing, except where it relates to the particular experience of the republican prison protests. For example, the Listing notes that: ‘six UDA members, seeking segregation, started a hunger strike with a further 150 refusing to leave their cells in 1982’ (HB 19/04/03033).



Fig. 11. Loyalist prisoners in Long Kesh internment camp, c. 1974
Belfast Exposed community archive

Describing the subsequent riot by loyalist prisoners, in which 200 cells were ‘wrecked’, the narrative draws attention to fields of mutual interest and potential solidarities between republican and loyalist prisoners:

The effect of this was de facto segregation...an important historical development in the Maze as it permitted defined segregated prisoner communities. As a result the loyalist and republican prisoners began to concentrate their challenges on the prison staff rather than the different factions (HB 19/04/0303).

If little is recorded about the experience of loyalist prisoners, the narrative has even less to say about prison staff and victims of the conflict. A single sentence records the experience of victims, with a simple statement that ‘61 people had been killed

outside the prison' during the period of the 1981 Hunger Strikes. In another sentence, the HB Listing explains that prison staff became victims of the 'increase in paramilitary activity' that accompanied the prison protests, with '12 staff and 1 senior member of the management team losing their lives [sic]'. The fact that 'one prison officer died and a number of others [were] shot' during the 1983 escape by 38 republican prisoners is briefly recorded.

The experience of prison staff as victims of the conflict became a matter of public and political concern in the years following the 1998 Agreement, and played a decisive role in determining the progress of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration. The Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee Fourth Report on the Prison Service in Northern Ireland (1999) provides information on the extent and the lasting impact on the lives of prison staff and their families during the Troubles, recording that:

29 members of the Northern Ireland Prison Service staff have been killed, including the Deputy Governor of HMP Maze, and many have been injured. Even in the recent period of relative peace prison officers have been attacked in their homes. In 1996/97 alone, there were 122 reported threats against staff and 50 officers were admitted to the special protection scheme (Hansard 1999, Introduction, Section 13).

Once again there is a striking contrast between the official narratives in the Parliamentary Select Committee Report and in HB 19/04/003. The HB Listing notes, with a sense of approval, that the segregation of loyalist and republican prisoners allowed them to 'concentrate their challenges on the prison staff rather than the different factions'. In contrast, the Select Committee Report highlights the sinister nature of those 'challenges', which placed 'considerable psychological pressures on prison officers and Governors':

Personal information about prison staff including where they live and family details such as where their children go to school is regularly gathered by members of terrorist groups [and] used to great effect by prisoners who remain in close contact with active paramilitary units outside jail. In such circumstances, casual references by prisoners to officers' personal lives involve a sense of menace, which is consciously played on by many prisoners, particularly in the Maze. The normally expected balance of control within a prison is substantially reversed, with prisoners able to influence, and in some cases even control, staff through intimidation (Hansard 1999, Introduction. Section 14, 1998).

6.7. History is written by the losers?

As the largest and most politically sensitive of Northern Ireland's former military and security sites, the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration became a central preoccupation for the new power-sharing government of Northern Ireland. All the parties agreed on the strategic goals of the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative, which were to secure 'the economic and social regeneration of local areas...in ways and for purposes which represent a tangible benefit of the peace process' (HMSO, 2002). However, following the approval of the HB Listing in 2004, plans for the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration were also required to acknowledge the historical significance of the 'retained' prison buildings and structures. This study has shown that both sides held diametrically opposed views about the role of the former prison complex in the future development plans. Most of the unionist parties wanted to see the prison complex obliterated and forgotten, whilst Sinn Féin supporters wanted it to be retained and developed either as a heritage site or as a potential museum of the conflict (Graham and McDowell, 2007).

The history of the prison protests and the 1981 Hunger Strikes are central to republican claims to legitimacy, symbolic of their rejection of criminalization and British rule. As an official document, commissioned and published by a department in the government of Northern Ireland, HB 19/04/0303 takes a strikingly partisan and unexpectedly republican view of the history of Long Kesh. This suggests that far from being objective or neutral, the process of selection and interpretation of the material in HB 19/04/0303 prioritized narratives that placed the struggle of the republican prisoners at the centre of the Maze/Long Kesh history. In other words, the history of Maze/Long Kesh becomes the history of the republican struggle; in this case, the losers wrote the history. The purpose of the next section of the case study is to identify the key discursive and rhetorical strategies employed by Coiste to promote the retained buildings on the Maze/Long Kesh site as a cultural heritage asset and an economic resource.

6.8. Constructing Ambiguity: Coiste na nIarchimí's 'A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze?'

The Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel, set up in 2003 to explore potential uses of the site as a social, economic and cultural resource, operated in a very challenging

political environment. The collapse of the UUP and SDLP power-sharing government in October 2002 had coincided with a surge in electoral support for the DUP and Sinn Féin, the two parties with the most polarized views about the future development of Maze/Long Kesh. This increasing polarization was evidence of the contradictory nature of the power-sharing arrangements, which formally relied on cross-community agreement to redefine old political goals and remobilize around a shared vision of a new Northern Ireland. The more moderate SDLP and UUP expressed their commitment to power-sharing by agreeing to jointly deliver a programme for government focused on ‘bread and butter’ issues such as improving public services and building prosperity for the people of Northern Ireland. However, the commitment to abandon the grand narratives of Ulster Unionism and Irish nationalism posed problems for those parties that had historically mobilized around an ideological commitment to maintaining the Union or fighting for a united Ireland.

In the face of challenges and rivalries arising within their own communities, the DUP and Sinn Féin focused on allaying political fears among party activists that the leadership might be ‘selling them out’ (Bean 2007, p 118). For Sinn Féin, this meant reassuring their core supporters that the historic struggle for Irish freedom remained relevant. Meanwhile the DUP sought to represent themselves as the principal defenders of Protestant heritage and historic Protestant rights and freedoms. The histories of Maze/Long Kesh became a key part of these inter and intra-communal struggles. For Sinn Féin, the narrative of prison protests and resistance acted as a force for forging solidarity against unionist counter narratives. In this way, differences over the future of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site both reflected and were exacerbated by the growing communal polarization in politics and society and by the unstable, contradictory, negotiable nature of the power-sharing arrangements. Negotiating a place at the head of the power-sharing government depended on winning seats in the Assembly. The electoral success of the DUP and Sinn Féin rested on their ability to present themselves as the most determined champions, or tribunes, of their own respective communities. Each party therefore focused its electoral strategy on advancing its own community interests. Thus, as Sinn Féin and the DUP sought to grow their electoral base, the challenge arose: how to negotiate a power-sharing deal, which would allow the two most uncompromising parties in Northern Ireland to share power, not *in spite of* but *in order to* pursue, or at least to be seen to pursue, their separate, and fundamentally incompatible, goals.

Whilst the use of economic investment as an instrument for normalizing and managing inter-communal relations remained a central theme in strategic investment and regeneration planning after 1998, mandatory power-sharing relied upon cross-party consensus rather than competition over resources. The tactical use of constructive ambiguity to construct an appearance of consensus by weaving together previously incompatible political positions and interpretations of history had allowed the parties to the 1998 Agreement to articulate shared goals through discourses of reconciliation and peacebuilding. The following sections consider the tactical use of constructive ambiguity in consultation and planning processes, which sought to harness cross-community consensus for one of the most contested regeneration initiatives on the island of Ireland both *based on* and *in spite of* its historical meaning.

‘A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze?’ was published as a conference report in 2003 by Coiste na nIarchimí (Coiste) as a contribution to the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation. Coiste had emerged as part of the post-1998 settlement, as one of the largest groups providing support and assistance to former paramilitary prisoners.¹¹⁷ Acting as an umbrella organization for ‘groups and individuals working for the social, economic and emotional well-being of current and former republican prisoners and their families’, Coiste’s principal aim was to ‘facilitate the reintegration of Irish republican released prisoners of The Troubles.’¹¹⁸ Largely staffed by former political prisoners and activists associated with the Provisional movement, Coiste played a key role bringing former paramilitaries into the political process after the 1998 Agreement, as the IRA and other paramilitary groups decommissioned their weapons and prepared to disband.

¹¹⁷ In a written answer in the House of Lords, the British government stated that just under £14 million had been distributed to 90 prisoner support projects and organizations representing prisoners and/ or supporting prisoners from loyalist and republican paramilitary groups (on ceasefire) between 1998 and 2004, Grants ranged from £1,000 to £1.38 million. Coiste received a total of £925, 569 during this period (Hansard 2004).

¹¹⁸ See website for mission statement, aims and objectives. Coiste’s support for developing ‘political tourism’, such as the Belfast Black Taxi tours, was a way of providing ex-prisoners with an income by re-telling narratives of the conflict. In this way, Troubles tourism became part of the local cultural economy in nationalist neighbourhoods in Belfast and Derry. Available at: <http://coiste.ie/> (accessed 27 September 2019).

6.8.1. The function of the Coiste Report

‘A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze?’ reports on a conference of the same name held at the Lagan Valley Island Centre, Lisburn on 14 June 2003. Responding to the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel process, the conference was designed to ‘promote discussion among relevant sectors’ as to ‘what could be done creatively, inclusively and with sensitivity with the site’ (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 1). In this way, ‘A Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze’ represents itself both as a space for open and transparent dialogue across a wide range of regional interests and as a response to an appeal for ‘innovative’ proposals for developing the site. The Coiste Report also provides a summary and supporting arguments for its proposals to build ‘a museum at Long Kesh’, which will:

Provide opportunities for people to reflect on how they would tell – and exhibit – their story, their perspective, artefacts associated with the prison and views on current wider political developments (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, pp 27-28).

In this way, the Report functions as a tool for promoting a particular set of political narratives and project goals.

6.8.2. Discursive and rhetorical strategies in the Coiste Report

In attempting to conflate its own dialogical and promotional functions, the Coiste Report obscures a number of important divisions between unionist and republican perspectives on plans for a museum at ‘Long Kesh or the Maze?’ It also employs a number of discursive and rhetorical strategies to bridge these divisions, principally by weaving political differences into discourses associated with peacebuilding and the cultural economy. For example, the question posed in the title of the conference and conference report sets up an equivalence between two powerfully antithetical words: the Maze and Long Kesh, both of which are used to identify spatial boundaries in the development plans. While Republicans identified the prison complex as *Long Kesh*, Unionists called it the *Maze*, or *HM Prison Maze*, which was also the name that the British had attempted to impose through normalization and criminalization. Speakers wishing to avoid self-definition or identification with a particular historical narrative or political identity often employed variations of the hyphenated *Maze/Long Kesh*. The Report uses the terms *Long Kesh*, *Maze*, *Maze/Long Kesh*, *Long Kesh/the*

Maze and even *the maze* intermittently. In doing so, it accumulates a ‘web’ of contested meanings within a single narrative of policy themes (Fairclough 2000, p 91) in this case ranging from culture-led regeneration to building shared space.

The concept of shared space has been articulated in different and often contradictory ways that have informed different kinds of policy interventions in Northern Ireland since 1972. Two dominant regeneration models emerged during the years of the peace process and following the 1998 Agreement, based on idealizations of reclaiming shared space either as a neutral zone of economic and social activity or as an arena for active engagement and ‘deliberate dialogue on difference’ (OFMDFM 2005a) Part 2, ‘Reclaiming Shared Space). These different conceptions have frequently been linked to different communal traditions, with unionist communities tending to prefer the idea of neutral space against nationalist preferences for diversity and respect for difference (Knox 2001; Komarova 2008). With its emphasis on the neutrality of the venue, the cross-community composition of the participants and the discursive function of the event, the Coiste conference report, articulates and weaves together these different and contradictory conceptions of shared space.

For example, the (non-aligned) Alliance party Lady Mayor of Lisburn opened the conference, which was attended by fifty-five participants, drawn from a range of statutory, cultural and community organizations (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, pp 2-3). The participants included representatives from the Museum and Galleries of NI, the NI Museums Council, the WAVE victims’ support group¹¹⁹, Healing through Remembering, the Ulster Society¹²⁰ and the Falls Community Council. The Report also names local Sinn Féin councilors, republican ex-prisoners, an SDLP politician, alongside two representatives of small cultural groups with unionist and loyalist associations. Louise Purbrick, an academic and member of the Memory, Identity and History research group at Brighton University is listed as a keynote speaker, alongside Coiste director, Mike Ritchie and Martin O’Mulleoir, member of

¹¹⁹ WAVE is a grass roots, cross-community, voluntary organization formed in 1991 to support people bereaved of a spouse as a result of violence in Northern Ireland, later expanded to incorporate the needs of children and young people and anyone injured or traumatised through the Troubles. <http://www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk/about-us> (Accessed 28 October 2017).

¹²⁰ Founded in 1985 the Ulster Society was dedicated to the promotion of ‘Ulster-British heritage and culture’ and seen as part of the ‘cultural turn’ in Ulster Unionism as it attempted to rebuild itself after the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As the UUP declined, the Ulster Society’s promotion of an Ulster Scots identity and language was appropriated by the DUP.

Maze/Long Kesh consultation panel and proprietor of the nationalist newspaper, the *Andersonstown News* (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, pp 2-3). The emphasis on the cross-community nature of the conference draws attention to the absence of Ulster Unionist and DUP politicians or unionist members of the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel.

Similar contradictions between ideas of neutrality, diversity and cultural recognition arose from the choice of the conference venue. Located less than five miles from the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site, Lagan Valley Island Centre was home to the newly incorporated city council, which had achieved city status the previous year under the campaign slogan of 'Lisburn City for Everyone'. Whilst the council offices provided an ostensibly neutral venue, unionist councillors held over 64% of the seats and were frequently accused of using their combined power to exclude nationalist councillors from decision-making processes (BBC News 22 June 2003). Less than a week after the Coiste conference, Sinn Féin councillor, Paul Butler described Lisburn council as 'the last bastion of unionist domination'. Arguing for 'partnership, equality and mutual rights', Butler demanded that Unionists accept power-sharing or face a political boycott. Unionists countered with a defense of the principle of majority consent, claiming that they were simply engaging in the 'wheeling and dealing' of democratic politics (BBC News 22 June 2003).

Lisburn could be seen as a microcosm for the increasingly communalized politics of post-Agreement Northern Ireland, with unionist councillors largely united in their opposition to the proposed museum on the Maze/Long Kesh site. The MP for Lagan Valley, Jeffrey Donaldson, explained the basis for unionist opposition during a parliamentary debate on the future of the Maze in the week following the Coiste conference. Attributing the Lisburn conference to 'a group of former prisoners' seeking to commemorate the IRA hunger strikers, Donaldson rejected Coiste's proposal on the basis that:

We need to keep the site neutral. If we are to attract the kind of investment that would make the Maze site a premier strategic location for Northern Ireland, it must not have political overtones (Hansard 2003).

The promotion of economic investment as a tool for achieving political stability had been a central theme in Britain's normalization strategy under direct rule. It had continued under power-sharing based on the 'new economic development strategy' written into the 1998 Agreement (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). In his official

capacity as a member of the Maze Consultation Panel, Martin O'Mulleoir framed the future development of 'the Maze/Long Kesh security sites' within familiar discourses of building 'a stable and peaceful society' through economic development. Echoing the 2002 Reinvestment and Reform Strategy, O'Mulleoir emphasised the social and economic value of the regeneration, as a vehicle for leveraging in 'new sources of funding... [in order to] address the substantial backlog of major capital investments required to give Northern Ireland a first-class infrastructure for the 21st century (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, pp 20-21). With echoes of earlier British appeals as an 'honest broker' seeking a cooperative response, O'Mulleoir reminded the conference that:

It is particularly important that sites and assets that have up to now been associated with conflict should be transformed into symbols and engines of economic and social development (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 20)

The conceptual work of O'Mulleoir's conference speech is to create a symmetry between Coiste's determination that 'part of Long Kesh be preserved as a heritage site' and the more broadly acceptable goal of unlocking the economic potential of the site (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 1). The speech achieves this symmetry by folding Coiste's rationale for a 'museum at Long Kesh or the Maze' into the objectives of the economic investment strategy that underwrites the cross-party commitment to 'reconciliation and rapprochement' agreed in the Declaration of Support of the 1998 Agreement (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). Whilst careful to delineate the spatial boundaries between 'the two Maze sites', comprising 'the MoD site at Long Kesh' and 'adjacent Maze prison site', O'Mulleoir's speech is ambiguous about the communal and political divisions that constrain the 'development potential of the former maze prison [sic] and adjacent army base' as a cultural heritage site:

There is a **desire across the whole community** [sic] and, critically across the political spectrum for a regeneration that delivers local, regional and national benefit in social, cultural and economic terms (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 22)

Leaving aside the problem of defining 'the whole community' in Northern Ireland, the aim of achieving *a* regeneration [my italics] that delivers a range of positive social and economic benefits had never been contested. On the contrary, all the parties agreed the economic potential of the site 'across the political spectrum'. However, by creating an equivalence between the 'social, *cultural* and economic' [my italics] benefits of the Coiste regeneration plans, O'Mulleoir blurs the divisions surrounding

the vexed question of the historical and cultural meanings attached to the prison buildings and structures. O'Mulleoir further blurs the objectives of the Coiste plans and the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel, of which he is a member, when he states that:

The aim of the Panel is to unlock the potential of the site and promote the optimum development and regeneration. The Panel has toured the site to see at first hand the enormity and scale of development that is needed. The tour included visits to the former H Blocks/Kitchens/Prison Hospital/Chapel/Short Term Unit and main Prison perimeter walls... (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003 p 22).

Through this verbal sleight of hand, O'Mulleoir links the aim of the Consultation Panel, which is to 'promote the optimum development and regeneration' of the site, to Coiste's proposal that 'part of Long Kesh be preserved as a heritage site' (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 1). The structures comprising the heritage of Maze/Long Kesh are set out in a hyphenated list that includes the most contested heritage asset on the site: the Prison Hospital, where Bobby Sands died on Hunger Strike in May 1981.

In his keynote speech to the conference, Coiste director Mike Ritchie further obscures the political nature of Coiste's proposal to build a 'museum at Long Kesh' within instrumentalist discourses of culture-led regeneration. Once again echoing earlier attempts by British policymakers to find workable solutions for restoring normality, Ritchie draws attention to similarities between the proposed museum at Long Kesh and initiatives like 'Albert Docks [sic], Salford Quays and many more', which use heritage and museums as a 'hook' to put:

Places, which often offer indistinguishable services, the same retail outlets and similar small business, 'on the map' and so contribute to local economies (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 31)

The benefits of developing the local economy might appear self-evident in Liverpool or Salford. However, as successive direct rule governments learnt, in a divided society like Northern Ireland social and economic policy cannot be framed around assumptions of any kind of shared economic or political interests. Unlike The Lowry on Salford Quays, the cultural component for the proposed 'museum at Long Kesh' invoked a highly contested history, associated with events and ideologies that disrupted comforting discourses of culture-led regeneration and tested the cross-community orientation of the conference. For example, Ritchie describes the educational value of the site in terms of visitors learning about the 'development of

custody policy from POW internment camps through to cellular confinement'. The museum would show how 'resistance to criminalisation and the development of virtual POW status' mirrored and informed the development of the conflict outside the walls (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 27). At its most polemical, Ritchie's speech lays bare the importance of the 'museum at Long Kesh' as a vehicle for establishing the legitimacy of the historic republican struggle. Observing that 'there could hardly be a better venue' for a museum of the conflict, Ritchie articulates the central question that is posed by the history of the prison:

Whether the Troubles were a war/conflict or whether it was – as British Government policy sought to have it – an aggravated crime wave (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 28).

With these words, Ritchie reveals that the meaning of the prison and its relationship to Britain's *hyphenated* war/conflict in Ireland has not been consigned to history, but is implicated in the politics of the here and now. Thus in a single sentence, the Coiste Report exposes the contradictions between the discourses of culture-led regeneration and reconciliation and rapprochement that govern its proposal for a 'museum at Long Kesh or the Maze'.¹²¹ Perhaps by way of addressing the contradictions in the Coiste proposal, Ritchie attempts to elaborate a radical concept of the museum as a focal point for unresolved dialogue and multiple narratives:

Collective memory is an important facet of continuing divisions. A site, which has affected so many people and a discussion as to how to use such contested space, would provide many opportunities for people to reflect on how they would tell their stories (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 28).

However, two further proposals are made that reflect very different conceptions of the museum as a shared space. The first proposes that in the event that 'no consensual agreement is possible', the site should remain 'empty' as a place for reflection rather than being 'cluttered with exhibits'. The second suggests that separate spaces should be allocated to the 'various stakeholders', who could each represent their own particular experience (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 29). The clustering together of these very different proposals might suggest a pragmatic pre-empting of unionist objections or possibly an attempt to find a workable solution to the problem of

¹²¹ The publication of this section of the report in *An Phoblacht*, the magazine of the Provisional Republican movement, suggests that the proposal to build a 'museum at Long Kesh' was designed to appeal to an audience of Republicans and Sinn Féin supporters.

contested meanings attached to the ‘museum at Long Kesh’. However, it may also suggest a lack of conceptual clarity, either around the purpose of the proposed museum to the conflict or around the meaning of shared space. Looked at more broadly, the contradictions in Coiste’s proposal lend weight to Milena Komarova’s observation that conceptual weaknesses in Northern Ireland’s post-Agreement policy framework have opened the door to the ‘exploitation of discourse for political ends’ (Komarova 2008, p 9).

6.8.3. Layering on the narratives

The Coiste Report articulates strategies for resolving the contradictions in its plans that invoke policy discourses of partnership, equality and peacebuilding. In contrast to the top down, politically appointed Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel, Coiste proposed setting up a ‘stakeholder trust’ made up of prison staff, ex-prisoners, victims of the conflict, representatives of the museum and tourism sector and members of ‘the wider community’. With its remit to agree values and principles for addressing ‘real and sensitive questions of memory and loss’, the stakeholder trust would apply peacebuilding methodologies to create processes of participative design, aimed at converting conflict to cooperation (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 29). Louise Purbrick advances similar ideas in her keynote speech, which sets out a rationale for conserving the prison buildings and creating a museum on the ‘Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site’, with the purpose of increasing ‘understanding of conflict and its human consequences’ (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, pp 6-8). Where Mike Ritchie had invoked the Albert Dock and Salford Quays as models of culture-led regeneration, Dr. Purbrick locates the ‘grim architecture’ of the Maze/Long Kesh prison within an archaeology of twentieth century conflict that includes the Berlin Wall, Gamma site at Greenham Common Airbase and District Six in Capetown (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 7). By provoking ‘a sense of difference and commonality’, the Maze/Long Kesh prison would open dialogue between all the different histories it embodies and ‘between the visitor and the person who once was there’ (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, pp 14-15).

Framing the ‘Maze/Long Kesh prison’ development within a policy discourse of access, inclusion, diversity and community empowerment, Purbrick cites the 1999 Burra Charter as the leading example of best practice, which ‘recognises the need to involve people in the decision-making process, particularly those who have strong

associations with a place' (Australia ICOMOS, 1999). Drawing a parallel with Robben Island, Purbrick argues that the Coiste proposal is strengthened by coming 'from people who had once inhabited the place' and who are now willing to 'participate in the processes of recording that past' (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003 pp 5-6). The speech thus invokes a conception of site-specific museums and historical sites as spaces, in which individuals and groups may author their own representations, freed from authorized representations based on presumptions of superior knowledge and expertise (Bennett 1998, p 104). From this perspective, the imposition of 'authorized meanings' through official Historic Buildings process, based on conventional practices of selection, empirical research and conservation undermines the authority of communities to tell their own stories (Smith 2006 p 3).

In the light of the polarity of unionist and nationalist opinion, there is a tension between the official HB Listing of the retained section of the prison complex and the ambition to permit a multi-layering of narratives that destabilize any singular claim to truth. Similarly, the proposal that people with strong historical associations with the former prison should be involved in decision-making about its future development runs counter to the determination that 'an agreed set of buildings' including the Prison Hospital, be retained as sites of historical and architectural significance *prior* to establishing the 'stakeholder trust' (Coiste na nIarchimí, pp 30-32). The decision to list the retained buildings in the Historic Buildings database effectively ensured that every aspect of decision-making surrounding the future development of the Maze/Long Kesh site would be constrained in perpetuity by a statutory requirement to conserve the pre-selected structures and buildings as sites of historical and architectural interest. This decision, alongside the choice of buildings for pre-selection and the nature of their recorded histories, suggests that underneath the surface rhetoric of reconciliation and rapprochement, Coiste's proposal for 'a museum at Long Kesh or the Maze' was driven by a strong desire to impose its own authorized narrative on the site.

6.9. Contradictions and conundrums

Over a decade later, reflecting on the challenges that were still holding back the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration, the Chief Executive Officer of the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation described the complex political conundrum facing the power-sharing parties overseeing the project in the OFMDFM:

Whilst both sides recognise the economic development of the site and are committed to exploiting this potential to the full, Sinn Féin see the former prison complex as a historically significant site that reflects the new political dispensation, while for the DUP, it can only ever be just a large cleared site for economic development.¹²²

The observation echoes the frustrations of successive British ministers and policymakers who had spent three decades confronting the contradictions inherent in the strategy of normalization. Whilst Unionists might accept the need for reform, they largely understood normalization in terms of restoring normality, whereas nationalists understood it in terms of a transformation from a previously aberrant state. These different outlooks, grounded in two very different historical experiences of Northern Ireland lay at the heart of the battle for meaning that prevented the two sides from working together to exploit the potential of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration.

This battle for meaning, or culture war, reached its greatest intensity around the supposed republican intention to turn the former prison into a ‘shrine’. Unionist fears, which go to the heart of the site’s contested history and meaning, brought the regeneration plans to a halt in 2013. Speaking to the Coiste conference, ten years earlier, Mike Ritchie had invoked the 1998 Agreement to remind ‘those who are worried that [the site] will be used as a republican shrine’, that all the parties have agreed to act in ‘good faith’:

The key question here is whether this ‘fear’ is actually that people don’t want the republican story told... (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 30)

The contradictory and negotiable nature of the power-sharing settlement has given rise to an unstable political and policy environment, where claims and counter claims of *bad faith* have become a recurring feature of political discourse. Whilst Ritchie’s response to unionist fears carries an accusation of bad faith, it also concedes that ‘genuine’ fears may have arisen as a result of ‘misapprehensions and misunderstandings which are themselves the result of conflict, division and decades of not talking to each other’ (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 30).

With its association to Catholic veneration of saints, the term ‘shrine’ is loaded with religious and political significance. The H Blocks, the image of Bobby Sands and the

¹²² Interview with Kyle Alexander.

Blanket Men had become part of republican iconography through murals and other forms of commemorative art and culture. However, being well acquainted with the political power of ritual and tradition, unionist taunts about the *cult* of Bobby Sands and the atavistic and *priest-ridden* nature of Irish Republicanism are consciously provocative. Nevertheless, whilst Republicans and former republican prisoners may not venerate the hunger strikers in a religious sense, many regard the sacrifice of Bobby Sands and his comrades as a vindication of their own deeply felt political ideals. For former IRA prisoner and hunger striker, Brendan Hughes, the republican Hunger Strikers were simply ‘decent, ordinary people, not saints’, however:

The situation brought out something special, unique. We were all frightened and no one wanted to die. But they were able to walk to their death because they believed in the struggle, the objective – one thing is for certain, a criminal couldn’t have done it (Bean and Hayes, 2003. p 85).

6. 10. Managing contradictions: the MLK Masterplan and Implementation Strategy (2006).

The next section of this case study examines management strategies for overcoming the contradictions between the unionist and nationalist positions that were holding back development on the Maze/Long Kesh site. This analysis of management strategies and practices uses Anthony Giddens’ concept of the duality of structure as a tool for theorizing the relationship between cultural policymaking, planning and the external properties and structures of power-sharing. The starting point is to understand power-sharing as a reflexive process leading towards a yet unknown resolution or transformation, rather than simply a competitive process for gaining immediate political advantage or material resources. From this perspective, the management strategies employed in the 2006 MLK Masterplan and Implementation strategy were aimed at de-politicizing the contested narratives attached to the site by folding them into discourses of regeneration and peacebuilding, which could then be presented within a technical masterplanning framework. The use of the masterplan as a bridge and a tool for visualizing goals, setting constraints and constructing consensus is significant. With their ‘low-strength language’ and preference for stock photography, generic formats, technical maps and drawings, masterplans are used as rational planning tools for setting out clear definitions, goals and a vision (Van Vooren 2012, p 238). However, where problems arise in consultation or planning

processes, masterplanning may also be used to smooth over differences. The supposed intention of presenting an effective, clearly defined project with agreed goals and measurable aims and objectives may mask an evasion of decision-making or even a conscious strategy of permanent transition. The final section of the case study uses discourse analysis tools to explore the contradictions that lay beneath the apparent coherence of the ‘MLK Masterplan and Implementation Strategy’ and its proposal for an International Centre for Conflict Transformation (ICCT). The final section of the case study will then examine Phase 2 of the regeneration plans, which followed the restoration of devolved government lead by a DUP/ Sinn Féin coalition. It focuses on the consultation process that was designed as a vehicle for progressing new plans for building Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Centre (PbCRC) at Maze/Long Kesh.

The MLK Masterplan and Implementation Strategy was published in May 2006 by the MLK Monitoring Group, a committee of civil servants within the OFMDFM working under the direct rule government following the suspension of devolved government in 2002.¹²³ The MLK Masterplan, with its flagship Peace Centre was presented to the public in a press statement by local DUP Assembly member, Edwin Poots and Sinn Féin councillor Paul Butler, the chair and vice chair of the MLK Monitoring Group. The statement, crafted by a local PR and Marketing consultancy exemplified the dominant discursive framework of cultural economy, regeneration and peacebuilding. The rhetorical style and presentational strategy echo the founding texts and political choreography of the post- Agreement dispensation:

The International Centre for Conflict Transformation symbolizes where we have come from in this society and points us in the direction of where we want to go, towards a society, which looks outward in hope and not inward in fear. It is not a cliché to say this is really about turning swords into ploughshares... Our vision for the centre is strong and purposeful and we hope it will be a global beacon for peace and reconciliation (Carlton Baxter Communications 30 May 2006).

The press statement was designed to project a confident image and strong unity of purpose needed to boost inward investment and bring the plans back to life. Using

¹²³ The MLK Masterplan and Implementation Strategy is organized as ten sections, nine chapters plus an Executive Summary. The Masterplan enumerates paragraphs within each section, for example, paragraph 3 in chapter 1 is enumerated 3.1; and paragraph 23 in chapter 5 is enumerated 5.23, etc. I will use this system when quoting from the Masterplan. Paragraphs in the Executive Summary will be designated ES.1, 2, 3 etc.

the rhetorical symmetries of the 1998 Agreement, the statement sought to mask the contradictions between the viability of the economic objectives for the development and the lack of consensus about its meaning and purpose. Blurring the differences between nationalist and unionist visions for the regeneration, the statement claimed that:

The entire development, if successful, will [not only] acknowledge our shared past but build firm foundations for our collective future. [The Masterplan is] an exciting, multi-faceted plan which, if implemented, will provide world-class facilities on a site accessible to all the people of Northern Ireland and agreed by the four main political parties (Carlton Baxter Communications 30 May 2006).

Anticipating objections to the MLK Masterplan, the joint statement invoked the idea of public consensus, warning that ‘those who stood in opposition’ should get behind the £1bn investment for the ‘benefit of society as a whole’. Echoing the brisk, managerial style of post-1998 governance, the statement suggested that there had been a pragmatic trade-off between Sinn Féin and the DUP:

The development of the Master Plan [sic] has not been easy as the Monitoring Group tried to accommodate many and varied interests, political, social and economic, but we believe a balance has been struck between recognizing heritage in the form of the International Centre for Conflict Transformation and embracing a dynamic future symbolized by the multi-purpose sports stadium and other developments (Carlton Baxter Communications 30 May 2006).

All the objections and proposals advanced by the contending ethnic tribune parties and community gatekeepers throughout the consultation process had been synthesised through the masterplanning exercise. The purpose of the exercise had been to manage and re-configure these conflicting views about the relationship between the museum, the retained buildings and the regeneration as a whole, in order to achieve the transcendent and potentially unifying goal of economic development.

With no ‘single iconic proposal’ on the table, the brief was to ‘create the necessary synergy’ to deliver the regeneration by combining a selection of proposals from 58 submissions submitted to the masterplanners (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p 12). A team of external management, engineering and development consultants, including the design company that produced the template for the London 2012 Olympics, undertook the brief. Seeking to build confidence and consensus between the key *political* stakeholders, the direct rule government nominated representatives

from the main parties to a Consultation Panel, which was supported by a Secretariat from the OFMDFM and teams of officials drawn from regional government departments.

The MLK Masterplan draws a clear link between the ‘objective to develop [the MLK site] for regeneration’ (OFMDFM 2006b, 1.3) and the need to deliver ‘long term social and economic benefits to the whole community’ (OFMDFM 2006b, ES.3). While the strategic framework for the Masterplan is largely informed by RRI priorities for investment, regeneration and normalization, it also articulates the ‘Government’s vision’ for a future society, built on ‘equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence’ (OFMDFM 2006b, 2.24). Under the heading ‘Equality and Inclusiveness’, and quoting directly from Article 1, iii and v of the 1998 Agreement, the Masterplan states that ‘the two main communities’ have agreed to share power on the basis of:

Full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities’ (OFMDFM 2006b).

With its focus on building shared space and a shared future, the Masterplan explicitly situates the MLK regeneration within the policy and conceptual framework of the 1998 Agreement. As a ‘key physical expression of the ongoing transformation from conflict to peace’, the transformation of a bitterly contested site into an ‘inclusive and shared resource for the whole community’ would provide evidence of the success of the joint British Irish strategy for normalization and long term peace and stability (OFMDFM 2006b, 1.2).

The policy environment obtaining between 2002 and 2006, the period when Northern Ireland was governed directly from Westminster, gave the Masterplan its distinctive content and character. The focus on developing a ‘multi-purpose sports stadium’, which would bring Ireland’s ‘three main sporting bodies, the (all-Ireland) Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), the Irish Football (soccer) Association (IFA) and the Ulster branch of the Irish Rugby Football Association (IRFU) was very much in the mold of popular cross-community initiatives under direct rule.¹²⁴ The strategy for

¹²⁴ There is a strong association between sports and sports stadia and political allegiances and identity in Ireland. In Northern Ireland, many fans who attend Windsor Park to support Linfield Football Club and the Northern Ireland national team claim the stadium for their Protestant identity

creating shared space through a grand flagship scheme, attractive to external investors was driven by the Northern Ireland Office.¹²⁵ However, the Masterplan made it clear that its recommendations were ‘purely advisory’ and conveyed no intention on the part of government to deliver (OFMDFM 2006b, ES.2). Limited to providing guidance to decision-making, based on an assessment of policy environments and consultation with key stakeholders, the Masterplan aimed merely to identify ‘development principles’ and provide ‘scenarios’ and ‘conceptual layouts’ for ‘consideration by government, subject to all due diligence’ (OFMDFM 2006b, ES.2).

The Masterplan envisioned a mixed use development comprising a ‘Sports Zone’, with a 42,000 seat stadium; a ‘Rural Excellence and Equestrian Zone’; a ‘Leisure Village’; ‘Employment Zone’ and ‘Community Zone’ (OFMDFM 2006b 3.18).¹²⁶ The proposal for developing ‘an International Centre for Conflict Transformation’ situated in the listed prison buildings and structures retained on the site reflected many of Coiste’s proposals for an educative facility and space ‘for reflection on conflict resolution’. The Masterplan envisaged ‘a new building of iconic status’ housing ‘a visitors’ centre, an interpretative centre, conference facilities and offices’ (OFMDFM, 2005b E.S.19) The purpose was to host activities associated with conflict transformation, ‘with a special focus on the history of the peace process’, including opportunities for ‘people from abroad interested in learning about conflict resolution processes (OFMDFM, 2006b E.S. 19).

The Masterplan also proposed that the ICCT should ‘provide facilities for visitors to appreciate the historical importance of the prison’ and ‘an inclusive opportunity for those involved in the conflict to tell their stories’ (OFMDFM 2006b, E.S.19). Reflecting the recommendations of the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Report, the Masterplan emphasized an academic and international focus for the ICCT, which would involve local universities, and organizations in other parts of the world that

and some see it ‘as a metaphor for an imagined Ulster’ (see Bairner, A., & Shirlow, P. (1998). For an explanation of the similar relationship between Gaelic sports and Irish national identity, see W.F. Mandle (1987).

¹²⁵ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

¹²⁶ Many of the components of the Masterplan bore a remarkable resemblance to the proposals for ‘a national stadium for...the major sporting bodies in Northern Ireland’, a ‘centre for rural excellence’ and ‘mixed use’ industrial and retail opportunities, which had been advanced by Lagan Valley MP Sir Jeffrey Donaldson during a debate on the RRI in the House of Commons in June 2003 (Hansard 2003).

have undergone or are going through periods of similar transformation and change (OFMDFM 2006b, 4.103). To facilitate local community involvement, the ICCT would provide a ‘neutral, inclusive and constructive’ meeting space outside the retained structures (OFMDFM 2006b, 4.96). The positioning of the sports stadium and all the other main developments approximately a mile away from the ICCT reflects a conceptualization of the ICCT as a ‘place apart’ (Fig. 12).

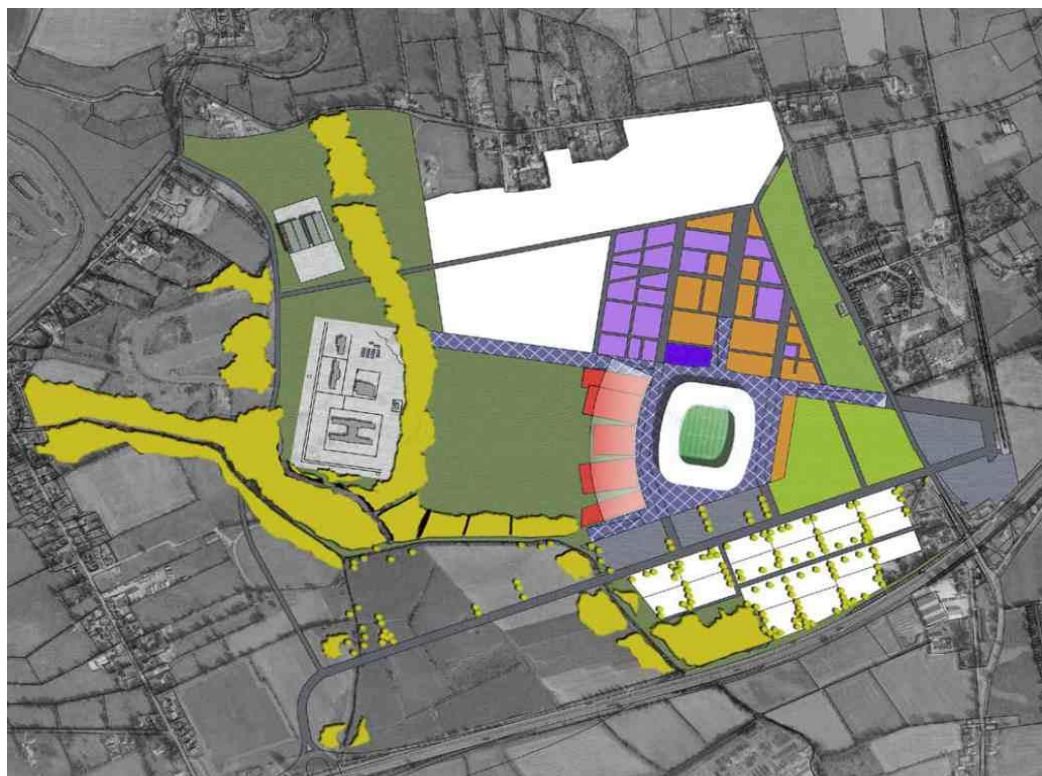


Fig. 12. ‘Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel Scenario 1’, Section 3
Maze/Long Kesh Masterplan, 2006

Descriptions of the spatial and conceptual relationships between the ‘new building of iconic status’ and the ‘existing listed prison buildings’ in the Masterplan suggest that the relationship between the history of the site and its future development remained unresolved:

The International Centre for Conflict Transformation is focused on the listed structures and involves the appropriate reuse of these buildings. The Masterplan provides a parkland setting for the centre and ensures that other uses would not affect the functions of the centre or the historic significance of the buildings. There is the potential for synergy with other uses to help to establish the international profile and identity of the Maze/Long Kesh. High standards of design and landscaping would be required (OFMDFM 2006b, 4.106).

What does it mean for the ICCT to be ‘focused on the listed structures’? What would

constitute an ‘appropriate reuse’? Explaining that these questions remained matters for discussion between ‘the political parties and relevant key stakeholders from the conflict transformation and related sectors’, the Masterplan made it clear that in spite of the three-year consultation process, fundamental differences surrounding the future uses of the prison complex remained unresolved (OFMDFM 2006b, 4.105). The Masterplan spoke clearly enough when defining uses for the ‘listed hangars’ as ‘exhibition spaces’ for the ‘display of historic aircraft’ and as an interpretative centre for visitors to learn about ‘the history of the Maze/Long Kesh... from its earliest days as an Airfield’ (OFMDFM 2006b, 4.107). Crucially, however, the Masterplan does not deliver Coiste’s key ambition for a ‘museum at Long Kesh or the Maze’, in which the retained prison complex ‘act[s] as an artefact in and of itself’ (my italics)... for teaching about history and the impact of the conflict on people’ (Coiste na nIarchimí 2003, p 32).

The Masterplan proposed that a ‘parkland setting’ that would enclose the ICCT and might help to minimise the potential impact of ‘different uses’ and ‘functions of the centre’ and ‘the historic significance of the buildings’. Fig. 12 and 13 demonstrate the ‘provision of strategic landscaping’ (OFMDFM 2006b, 1.14) as a way of ‘linking’ the ICCT and the listed buildings (including the prison complex and the airfield hangars) together and connecting them with other projects on the site. Ironically, by situating the listed buildings in this way, the Masterplan drew even more attention to their special status. In other words, in attempting to play down the historic significance of the site, the Masterplan located the retained buildings separately and situated the H Block in a hedged enclosure, where there was every chance that they would be perceived or, in time, even become a shrine.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Interview with Kyle Alexander.



Fig. 13. 'International Centre for Conflict Transformation and Precinct including Listed Buildings and Structures', Section 4, Maze/Long Kesh Masterplan, 2006.

After devolution was restored in 2007, the Northern Ireland Office transferred responsibility for implementing the MLK Masterplan and Implementation Strategy to the new power-sharing Executive, now headed by the DUP and Sinn Féin. The NIAO Evaluation attributes the 'termination of the procurement process for the Maze/Long Kesh Masterplan' in April 2009 to a failure to demonstrate 'a clear value for money case' for the proposals, which carried an 'indicative capital cost of £256 million' (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p 12). The political dynamics that constrained the new power-sharing government, were structured by inter and intra communal rivalries. The DUP was particularly concerned about potential accusations that they were granting legitimacy to Republicans or ignoring the feelings of victims (BBC News Northern Ireland, 25 July 2007). However, whilst controversies over alleged plans for a 'terrorist shrine' continued to preoccupy the political parties, the fatal objection to the Masterplan finally turned on a rather more mundane issue. The economic feasibility of building a multi-purpose sports stadium on the site was undermined by an unwillingness among sports clubs and fans to travel to stadia

outside their localities (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p 12). In other words, plans that had been driven by the British government's need to strike a power-sharing deal between unionist and nationalist politicians fell before the desires of Soccer, Rugby and GAA fans, who preferred convenient access to their favourite sporting fixtures.

6.11. Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution at Maze/Long Kesh

The 2008 global financial crisis had a severe impact on the economies of the UK and Ireland and on the availability of public and private investment for projects like the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration. It was during this uncertain political and economic climate that the power-sharing Executive wound up the MLK Monitoring group. The Monitoring group was replaced with an interim Programme Delivery Unit, tasked with completing the physical reclamation of the site and progressing two new developments: a Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Centre and the relocation of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS) show, known colloquially as the Balmoral Show (Northern Ireland Audit Office, p 14). This represented a significant scaling down of ambition, but perhaps more importantly, it left the retained buildings starkly exposed in the plans. The alleged terrorist shrine now stood in uncomfortable proximity to an agricultural showground traditionally associated with the rural backbone of Unionism in Northern Ireland.

A new economic model and rationale for the regeneration was presented in a 2009 statement issued by the leaders of Sinn Féin and the DUP. The statement remains even now, the only joint statement that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister ever made concerning the MLK development. Given the political sensitivities, the statement would have been carefully considered and drafted and is thus key to understanding the conundrum at the heart of the Maze/Long Kesh development:

The 360-acre site, which remains in public ownership, is a site of regional significance. We fully recognize the economic development potential of this site and we are committed to exploiting this potential to the full, particularly given the economic climate we now find ourselves in.

In order to do so, we will establish a Development Corporation which will take this project forward and will build on the work previously undertaken by OFMDFM and the All Party Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel and which will have regard to all the elements of the site including any listed buildings.

As we seek to maximize the economic, historical and reconciliation potential of the site we will continue to work with all those bodies interested in contributing to the development of the site (Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation Annual Report, 2013).¹²⁸

The statement encapsulates the aims and master narratives of the MLK plans but also its contradictions, which would ultimately bring about its collapse. The shared vision for exploiting the ‘economic development potential’ of the site would be realised through the standard regeneration model of the Development Corporation, building on all the work previously undertaken. However, the scope of the development, as defined in the statement, encompassed ‘all the elements of the site *including any listed buildings*’ [my emphasis]. Once again, the MLK development was pulled back into the intractable conflict around the representation of ‘what had gone before’. Managers employed simple conflict management and mediation techniques to manage antagonisms and facilitate agreements between the parties. However, decision-making became a slow and painstaking process as the choreography of political power-sharing took over.¹²⁹ Senior planners and project managers leading the Development Corporation found themselves drawn into the management of cross-community political squabbles with its complex choreography:

[A senior council official] from a DUP background asked, what is going to be the first thing that will go on this site? And I realized what he was really telling me was, if the first thing to go on this site is something to do with the H Bocks and the listed buildings, it won’t get my support.¹³⁰

The MLK regeneration remained in the media spotlight throughout this period, with particular concerns about costs to the public purse, which were estimated at £14.4 million in April 2009 (Northern Ireland Audit Office 2011b, p13). As costs mounted, unionist and nationalist politicians continued to pursue their zero-sum strategy, advancing their community’s favoured projects against the interests of the other. The management of these antagonistic forces provided the impetus for moving the project forward during this period. The agents of change were the Special EU Programme Body (SEUPB), which had been set up to ‘promote cross-border community co-

¹²⁸ Thanks to Kyle Alexander for drawing my attention to the significance of the 2009 joint statement.

¹²⁹ For an insight into the political choreography of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration after the restoration of power-sharing, see Hansard (2010).

¹³⁰ Interview with Kyle Alexander.

operation' as one of six north/south implementation bodies following the 1998 Agreement. The SEUPB was supported by the NI Task Force, which had been set up by the European Commission (EC) after devolution was restored. In 2011 after two years of negotiations, with an £18.2 million EU grant on the horizon, the power-sharing Executive finally signed off the Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Centre project and the RUAS relocation.

The offer of EU Peace III funding, with match funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), was subject to a requirement to undertake a further stakeholder consultation. This consultation, designed and managed by the SEUPB, brought representatives of ex-prisoners, prison staff, victims, political parties, academic, cultural and community organizations together in a series of 'difficult and honest conversations' about the future of the site.¹³¹ The SEUPB also set up an international advisory group, to run in parallel to the local stakeholder consultation. This group included representatives of significant international peacebuilding NGOs and museums, including Swiss Peace, Constitution Hill (South Africa), the International Coalition of Sites of Conflict and the Imperial War Museum in Salford. International 'starchitect' Daniel Libeskind, designer of the Jewish Museum in Berlin was invited to attend three local stakeholder workshops in 2012, where he presented sketches for the 'iconic' Peacebuilding centre. The SEUPB consultation process reflected a classic conflict transformation praxis designed to develop the capacity for groups to 'live with apparent contradictions and paradoxes' (Lederach, 2005, p53). In this way, the SEUPB consultation process operated according to a peacebuilding logic that sought to change 'competitive debate' into 'constructive controversy' and more open and cooperative dialogue through a battle of meaning and words (Deutsch, 2000, p 28; Galtung, 2004).

One of the key aims of the SEUPB consultation process had been to re-conceptualise the peace centre as a shared rather than a neutral space. Where the Masterplan had conceptualised the peace centre in terms of multi-purpose space, with workspaces and study spaces and a separate interpretative space, the SEUPB consultation invited participants to reconceptualise it as a single interpretive space that would encompass all the stories associated with the site. The educational workshops involving a wide

¹³¹ Interview with Julie Harrison

range of local and international stakeholders became creative spaces, where different perspectives and experiences were shared.¹³² This coming together of different perspectives ‘helped dilute the political meanings’ attached to the site, ‘elevating it out of the mundane, squalid little sectarian battleground that it had become’. The consultation involved academics, architects, artists and communities talking about conflict and peacebuilding in ways that deliberately distracted attention from the ‘shrine to terrorism’ narrative:

The police and prison officers we spoke to at the time seemed genuinely to be saying: yeah this is a good project; we can tell our stories and they can tell theirs.¹³³

Whilst the idea of building a Peace Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh continued to intensify anger and divisions *outside* the consultation process, the groups involved in the SEUPB conceptualisation workshops came to believe that they were part of a common enterprise of transformational purpose:

The feeling within those very diverse groups of prisoner organizations, politicians, community organizations, arts, museums people, and civil servants was a growing consensus that this was something that we needed to drive forward.¹³⁴

The growing internal cohesion of these diverse groups inside the process contrasted with the violence and division emerging in the wider community as the flag protests erupted in late 2012. It was at this moment that DUP First Minister Peter Robinson wrote a letter that ended the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration.

Even in the context of a decade of protracted consultations, false hopes and false starts, the timing of the First Minister’s decision to unilaterally stop the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration took Northern Ireland by surprise (BBC, 15 August 2013). Less than two months before the decision, planning approvals had unlocked £18 million European funding; the First and Deputy First Minister had jointly and emphatically endorsed the new peace centre at a photo-call on the site, which promised to create 5,000 jobs and transformation the economy. By late June 2013, with technical investigations for road infrastructure investment already underway, the Maze/ Long Kesh Development Corporation had begun to brief the construction industry, which

¹³² Interview with Julie Harrison.

¹³³ Interview with Brendan Murtagh.

¹³⁴ Interview with Chris Bailey.

had promised to create 2,000 new jobs to complete the £25 million building project, scheduled to open its doors in 2015 (Maze/ Long Kesh Development Corporation 27 June 2013). The First Minister, Peter Robinson's decision to veto the Peace Centre represented a remarkable *volte-face*, which prompted the immediate withdrawal of European funds and placed the entire multi-million-pound investment in jeopardy.

Robinson announced his decision in an angry twelve-page letter written during the parliamentary recess, sent from a hotel room in Florida and published in full in the (pro-unionist) Belfast Newsletter (*Newsletter* 15 August 2013). In his letter from America, Robinson blamed the project's collapse on a breakdown in community consensus about dealing with matters relating to the past. The breakdown in consensus had arisen from a combination of Sinn Féin's 'aggressive behaviour' towards unionist culture and 'towards the innocent victims of IRA terrorism'. However, the main thrust of the First Minister's attack was directed towards Sinn Féin, but towards the 'cheap, nasty and fraudulent party politics' and 'scaremongering' of fellow Unionists in the UUP and Traditional Voice of Unionism (TUV) parties. In claiming that the project was nothing more than a 'shrine to terrorism under the guise of a conflict transformation centre' the two unionist parties were guilty of 'inventing stories and seeking to frighten.....those who have suffered most from violent terrorism'. Robinson reaffirmed the basis of his commitment to the Peace Centre, as a 'genuinely non-partisan shared space' with 'widespread support throughout the community', citing the growth of Peacebuilding as an international 'export industry', which could 'bring new employment and investment to Northern Ireland'. However, the First Minister concluded, it would be fatal to proceed in the absence of 'widespread support throughout the community', without which Northern Ireland would become 'a laughing stock across the world as its Peace Centre was seen as the cause and source of division' (*Newsletter* 15 August 2013).

6.12 Conclusion

This chapter responded to observations grounded in my professional practice and in a number of critical perspectives, which linked practical problems arising in the planning and delivery of cultural development and peacebuilding initiatives like the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration to conceptual weaknesses and constructive ambiguities in the post-Agreement policy framework and political settlement. Promoted as part of a peace dividend for Northern Ireland, the Maze/Long Kesh

regeneration posed the question of how to reconcile and coalesce antagonistic views around the history of the conflict into a coherent development plan that would drive economic growth and build peace. Whilst the case study showed that cultural planning and development processes open up space for former conflict parties to imagine different futures, it questioned the usefulness of the proposed museum to the conflict or peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh as vehicles for building consensus around the nature and political direction of that future. By examining different iterations of plans for a museum to the conflict, an International Conflict Transformation Centre and a Peacebuilding Centre between 2002 and 2014, the case study confirmed that the attachment of peacebuilding objectives to the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration introduced conflict and complexity into planning and consultation processes. It also confirmed the link between conceptual vagueness and contradictions in the post-1998 political settlement and the use of constructive ambiguity in project development processes both as a tactic for pursuing sectional interests and for masking contradictions and conflict between different stakeholder interests.

The case study also situated the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration in the policy framework of Britain's economic investment strategy, which had been used as a political tool for managing community relations and for legitimating direct rule government in Northern Ireland since 1972. However, the case study showed that the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration did not represent a battle for resources but rather a battle for meaning. Promises of economic benefits could not resolve the battles between the republican narrative and unionist counter-narrative of Maze/Long Kesh, nor redeem the regeneration as a vehicle for restoring political stability and economic normality to Northern Ireland. In this way, the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration mirrors the Titanic Quarter regeneration, both being shaped by the political imperative for the former conflict parties to redefine historical relationships to Northern Ireland and to their political communities in the light of their participation in power-sharing. Thus rather than a terrain for re-fighting old ideological battles, the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration provides further evidence of the on-going battle for meaning that formed an integral part of the post-Agreement peacebuilding process. Having assimilated the structures and discourses of a peace process with no agreed endpoint, culture-led regeneration initiatives like Maze/Long Kesh came to reflect the instability, conflict and inertia of political power-sharing in Northern Ireland.

The strategic and symbolic importance of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration inevitably made the development plans a focus of political interest, with oversight given to the OFMDFM under power-sharing and to the NIO during the 5-year period of direct rule. The tactical manoeuvres of the political stakeholders were aimed at taking control of planning processes, largely by imposing constraints on the plans. For example, the policy that prohibited representations of the history of the former prison complex was imposed by the First Minister as a condition for cross-party support for the peace centre plans. However, the First Minister's veto could also be seen as a response to the ruling that the regeneration plans acknowledge the authorised and extremely partisan histories attached to the listed buildings and structures retained on the site. The case study demonstrated the burden placed on strategic development and project managers attempting to mobilize political stakeholders around workable development plans with an agreed vision and a coherent set of goals and objectives.

The strategy for keeping the different political stakeholders in the development process veered between attempts to provide something for everyone in the plans and attempts to negotiate concessions between the opposing parties. The rationale of providing something for everyone informed plans for a cross-community sports complex on the site. Mediation strategies also included carefully crafted policy and masterplanning documents and press statements designed to mitigate, manage and mask the intractable nature of the underlying political conflict. In a final attempt to circumvent the political stalemate, the SEUPB set up a consultation process in 2011 that attempted to insulate the planning and development process from external political intervention. This case study has attributed many of the failures of the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration plans to the unstable and highly politicized policy environment of post-Agreement Northern Ireland, in particular to the assimilation of peacebuilding objectives into project development and implementation processes. However, the SEUPB consultation process poses an interesting challenge to an overly deterministic view of the relationship between cultural development and peacebuilding in post-Agreement Northern Ireland.

In spite of 'a degree of healthy cynicism' about consultation processes, community stakeholders participating in the SEUPB consultation saw it as a positive and worthwhile endeavour aimed at fostering 'genuinely open dialogue' between police

officers, prison warders, former paramilitaries and architects and planners about the future design of the proposed peace centre. The determination to find creative solutions that would resolve the tensions surrounding the meanings attached to the former prison resonate with understandings of art, culture and creativity as spaces for exchange and as bridges between the imaginative world of ideas and the external world of social and economic systems. Those involved within the consultation process and those pursuing political battles outside the process experienced the contradictions and conundrums of Maze/Long Kesh very differently. Whilst those inside the process explored imaginative possibilities for transcending or sublimating sectarian difference, those outside sought to constrain the choice of imaginative possibilities within the parameters of predetermined political agendas.¹³⁵

Significantly, the design of the SEUPB consultation process was not based on a purely theoretical application of peacebuilding models, but emerged from decades of practical experience, developing and managing projects through a series of unstable and conflicted policy environments where management practices associated with conflict resolution ‘had become part of our DNA’.¹³⁶ In this way, the methodology for designing the consultation process both reflected and was shaped by the historical formation of policy responses to recurring problems arising from the political conflict in Northern Ireland. This valuable insight throws light on the complex interplay between the external dynamics and factors that inform the subjective agency of managers, planners and policymakers and other political actors. The interplay between recurring external political challenges and the need to respond to policy dilemmas and mobilize stakeholders around agreed project goals can thus be seen as a primary factor shaping cultural management practice. Ultimately, the determination of the co-creators to work together inside the consultation process did not withstand the external dynamics towards political stalemate nor could it save the regeneration plans in the face of ‘sustained hostility from outside.’¹³⁷ However, in choosing to exclude political stakeholders from the creative process the SEUPB consultation process represented an attempt to implement a critical management practice that might pursue peacebuilding goals whilst defending the integrity of cultural

¹³⁵ Interviews with Brendan Murtagh, Julie Harrison and Chris Bailey.

¹³⁶ Interview with Julie Harrison.

¹³⁷ The political hostility towards the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration became focused on the SEUPB consultation process and gave rise to a number of hostile Freedom of Information requests for documents relating to both.

development and consultation processes as autonomous spaces. The need to develop a critical management practice capable of defending cultural development as an autonomous space will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7. Conclusion: Cultural development and the politics of peacebuilding in post-Agreement Northern Ireland.

7.1. ‘And never the twain shall meet’.¹³⁸

This thesis began with a professional viewpoint on the problem of implementing cultural development plans in a contested and highly politicised policy environment. This problem informed a desire to develop a more critical management practice that might take greater account of the role of the cultural manager as a decision-maker confronting complex flows of events, inter-actions, inter-dependencies, systems, structures and regimes of power. As a cultural manager, tasked with writing, mobilizing support and implementing a strategic plan, although not in circumstances of my own choosing, I wanted to look outwards to understand the nature of the social and political structures that framed and constrained my autonomous decision-making. Beginning with the immediate question of how to manage social, economic and political constraints on decision-making, the thesis turned to the experience of fellow cultural managers to find out how far my problems represented a more general crisis of management decision-making.

Interviews with cultural managers, planners and policymakers at strategic and institutional level identified significant concerns about high levels of political intervention and the encroachment of political objectives and partisan agendas into strategic planning, organizational development and project development processes. As political gatekeepers used cultural policy, cultural development and culture-led regeneration initiatives and management processes as vehicles for pursuing sectional interests, cultural managers described the destabilising and demoralising effects of political interference in decision-making, not only at the macro-level of strategy-making but also in areas of professional expertise, such as the management of museum collections or the content of exhibitions. The need to negotiate and mediate between implacable political factions seeking to insert or sometimes impose their political interests and narratives on consultation, development and other creative

¹³⁸ Reflecting on the contested meanings of the peace centre at Maze/Long Kesh: ‘One side says it’s going to be a shrine to terrorism. The other that it is Robbin Island. And never the twain shall meet’ (interview with Brendan Murtagh).

processes has largely been experienced as an unwanted, disempowering and yet somehow unescapable imposition.

There was also a powerful perception that the gap between the political parties' ostensible commitment to exchange and dialogue and the shortfall in inclusive practice has been responsible for disrupting planning and development processes on the ground. Operating under financial restraints, cultural managers were responsive to changing political environments and acutely aware of the need to win political support for projects. However, the experience of working in a partisan and sometimes overtly hostile political environment fuelled a pervasive mood of exhaustion and powerlessness, based on a perception that decision-making had been taken out of the hands of cultural managers and planners and placed in a political space beyond their immediate control. On the other hand, this sense of frustration with politicians using culture and heritage as battlegrounds for pursuing partisan agendas and re-fighting old wars appears to have re-enforced a powerful belief in the potential of cultural development to effect social transformation. Where cultural development initiatives have failed to open up space for dialogue, these failures are frequently attributed to weaknesses in political leadership and political processes.

Studies of social and economic policymaking in post-Agreement Northern Ireland have attributed problems associated with growing political intervention, the shortfall in inclusive practice and poor planning and decision-making to structural and conceptual weaknesses in the political settlement that followed the 1998 Agreement (Komarova 2008; Flynn 2011; Buchanan 2014). Political scientists have drawn attention to the inherent contradictions of the 1998 settlement, including its ambiguous function as a template for managing conflict or a pathway towards wider social and political transformation (Aughey 1999; O'Leary 1999; Dixon 2005; Taylor 2008). This thesis agrees that the decision to bind the most determined champions of the contending forces in Northern Ireland to a mandatory power-sharing coalition has institutionalized deep-rooted political antagonisms at the heart of political decision-making and created an unstable policy environment. Further, the institutionalization of cultural rights or 'parity of esteem between the two traditions on the island of Ireland' has intensified competition between and within unionist and nationalist communities (Northern Ireland Office 1998a). The emphasis on cultural recognition has also driven an essentialist and commemorative agenda, manifested in disputes

over cultural rights, symbols and traditions that provoke crises in the Executive and conflict on the streets. This instability has created challenging external environments, which further disrupt project planning, development and implementation, driving a vicious circle of delay and distrust. The problem of managing political antagonisms has intensified following the devolution of political authority from the Northern Ireland Office to the unionist and nationalist parties sharing power after the 1998 Agreement.

This thesis agrees with Milena Komarova's insight that ambiguous meanings encoded within the 1998 settlement have allowed political actors to pursue partisan agendas through the manipulation of discourse. This constructive ambiguity embedded in the text of the 1998 Agreement has permeated through and given shape to the structural and discursive properties of cultural development planning and policymaking in Northern Ireland. The practical effect of ambiguities and contradictions in the operations of government has been to further fuel mistrust and encourage greater intervention in policymaking, particularly in the realm of symbolic representation, where political actors seek to exert control over decision-making at macro and micro level. The repeated attempts and failures to resolve conflict, whether through political processes or through managerial processes such as consultations and masterplans or carefully worded press statements and promotional campaigns, shows the limitations of conceptual ambiguity as a strategy for negotiating consensus or achieving long-term policy goals.

Studies that emerged in post-Agreement Northern Ireland have drawn similar attention to incongruities between the ostensible commitment of regeneration plans to build shared space for citizens and economic rationales aimed at exploiting commercial opportunities in a post-conflict city emerging from decades of conflict and underinvestment. The sense that there were hardly any barriers to the economic forces sweeping across Northern Ireland fuelled a powerful perception that decisions on planning and development were being taken according to political and economic rationales that were beyond the control of citizens. From this perspective, the moralizing narratives of cultural development and peacebuilding were used to mask the commercial interests of developers and their political allies and to cover up repeated failures to deliver promised social and economic benefits (Shirlow 2006;

Shirlow and Murtagh 2006; Jewesbury and Porter 2010; McLaughlin and Baker 2010; Ramsey 2013).

However, despite repeated failures, frustrations, deep levels of mistrust and a growing sense of disempowerment, belief in the transformative potential of cultural development and culture-led regeneration and a commitment to peacebuilding remained strong among cultural managers, planners and policymakers. The sense of exhaustion and frustration with repeated setbacks and failures in the political process appeared not to have weakened their belief in the potential of cultural development to deliver social and economic benefits and bring about social transformation. Whilst frequently complaining about the need to mediate between political actors who were stuck in the past, they were conscious of the positive benefits of their work, deriving great satisfaction from their role as mediators and peacebuilders.

Buoyed up by the optimistic mood that emerged in the years immediately preceding and following the 1998 Agreement, policy actors and cultural managers felt they could make a significant contribution to the political project of re-imagining Northern Ireland as a shared, post-conflict space. Their determination was matched by a similar determination among national and regional political actors to invest in cultural development and culture-led regeneration initiatives as part of a strategy for rebuilding Northern Ireland's shattered public infrastructure and securing the foundations for power-sharing. This shared belief in cultural development and culture-led regeneration as forces for overcoming the legacy of the past and driving the political process forward raised further questions about the political dynamics of peacebuilding and its symbiotic relationship to cultural development. These questions necessitated my *tour d'horizon* of the structural and discursive properties of cultural development in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, in terms of their historical formation as conscious responses to practical policy dilemmas in a site of protracted conflict. Guided by Giddens' concept of social reflexivity, culture-led regeneration initiatives in post-Agreement Northern Ireland might be understood not so much as development projects with end points but rather as 'a necessary part of a process that we all had to come through', aimed at bringing about a 'maturation' of social and political relationships in Northern Ireland and building genuine respect for cultural diversity.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Interview with anonymous senior civil servant.

7.2. Fresh insights: working within the process

The decision to build an historical account of social and economic policymaking in Northern Ireland and to explore sociological concepts of the relationship of structure and agency was key to understanding the complex and contradictory dynamics of cultural development and the politics of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland after the 1998 Agreement. By taking a historical view of policy formation, this thesis identified important patterns of continuity and change between direct rule and post-Agreement policymaking. Having established the historical and political events and social and economic structures that had shaped the regional policy environment, the thesis was able to draw fresh insights by examining the dynamic interplay between the external world of economic structures and social systems and the inner world of decision-making agents.

The 1998 Agreement was a key discursive moment, in which political structures and discourses associated with peacebuilding and power-sharing took centre stage and in which both the policy environment and consciousness of policy actors and cultural managers were radically changed. Nevertheless, in spite of the significant structural and discursive changes that followed the 1998 Agreement, many of the assumptions embedded in post-Agreement policymaking had been formed in earlier policy responses. In particular, the application of economic investment as a political instrument for authorizing direct rule and managing community relations had been routine since 1972. The use of the economy as an instrument for normalization rested on the assumption of a causal link between social and economic factors, such as unemployment, poor housing and inequality, and inter-communal conflict in Northern Ireland. The cultural turn in social and economic policymaking simply led to an increasing convergence between social and economic normalization and discourses associated with cultural development, culture-led regeneration and policies aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours.

One of the unintended consequences of mobilizing economic investment to deliver political objectives in Northern Ireland had been to destabilize cultural development, planning and decision-making in ways that frequently mitigated against the long-term goals of political and economic normalization. As successive governments focused on managing competition for resources between unionist and nationalist

communities, the desire to address social and economic inequalities was repeatedly thwarted by the very conflicts and communal divisions that they sought to resolve. Whether proposing investment in houses and industry or seeking to reduce levels of crime and social exclusion, economic normalization rested on the highly contested assumption that it was both possible and desirable to return Northern Ireland to a reformed *status quo ante*. Repeated failures to create stable political structures for governing Northern Ireland thus exposed the contradictions of the normalization strategy and tested the limits of economic investment as a political tool for building consensus. In this way, Northern Ireland's distinctive forms of culture-led regeneration emerged in response to deep-rooted and long-standing political, social and economic policy dilemmas exacerbated by decades of economic and political failure. The 1998 Agreement changed the structural and discursive properties of the regional policymaking environment by shifting the locus of political decision-making to a regional Executive and Assembly, in which Unionists and nationalists agreed to put aside their competing claims to national belonging in order to share power. However, the focus on economic investment as an instrument for stabilizing the political process remained unchanged. In the context of recurring crises, failures, promises and hopes of change, the strategy of linking political objectives to economic policy posed significant challenges to politicians and policymakers under pressure to deliver or at the very least project an image of social transformation and economic normality.

The previous section set out the key policy weaknesses linked to the structural contradictions and conceptual ambiguities of the post-1998 settlement. However, by applying analytical tools from the social sciences, the thesis was able to open up deeper understandings of the discursive and rhetorical strategies employed by the former conflict parties, who had agreed to put aside their distinctive political goals in the interests of power-sharing after 1998. Whilst the structures of mandatory power-sharing forced political actors to pursue their partisan interests surreptitiously and in opposition to each other, the primary function of the 1998 Agreement was to establish a new structural and discursive framework for government decision-making and policymaking, in which power-sharing would take priority over the pursuit of partisan political goals. The conceptual ambiguity of the settlement provides considerable scope and rhetorical cover for both parties to work within this process, whilst promoting mutually contradictory and even hostile positions. The parties'

commitment to making a *fresh start* cannot, however, simply be dismissed as cynical *realpolitik*. On the contrary, the 1998 Agreement functions both as an instrument for binding Unionists and nationalists together in government and as a template for rehearsing and embedding power-sharing as an organising principle and process for political decision-making and social and economic policymaking.

Therefore, in actuality and in spite of their mutual hostility, the parties' repeated commitment to making a fresh start signals their consent to relegate the old political goals of Ulster Unionism and Irish re-unification in favour of the project of building a new Northern Ireland. The rhetoric of economic and social transformation and reconciliation gives moral coherence and a sense of political purpose to power-sharing. However, in relinquishing their distinctive political goals, unionist and republican politicians have opened themselves up to accusations of betrayal and of the abandonment of their traditional constituencies. The political parties sharing power have frequently sought to reconnect through symbolic and rhetorical appeals to the old traditions of Irish Republicanism and Ulster Unionism. Often expressed in terms of cultural re-imaginings of a new Northern Ireland, these symbolic and rhetorical appeals inevitably reflect mutually contradictory conceptions of cultural and communal belonging. The conceptual ambiguities, designed to hold the power-sharing structures together thus reflect a much deeper incoherence and disorientation about political purpose and goals.

Political actors have encroached upon cultural development as a political terrain, using culture-led regeneration projects like Maze/Long Kesh and Titanic Quarter as opportunities to pursue electoral advantage by winning resources for their side and halting the other side's ambitions. The contradictory dynamics of power-sharing, combined with the recurring and routinized nature of policy dilemmas and policy responses were key factors shaping the Titanic Quarter and Maze/Long Kesh regenerations. For example, the 2002 Assembly debates about the strategic direction and probity of the Titanic Quarter regeneration provided a platform for the unionist parties to promote their economic plans and political vision. The DUP put the case for a property-led regeneration that would become the centerpiece of the *new* economically successful and politically stable *Northern Ireland plc*. By invoking Belfast's former industrial glory as the city that built the Titanic, the DUP leadership also sought to consolidate its relationship to the former shipyard communities who

had played a leading role building and defending the Protestant state as part of the unionist family in the *old* Northern Ireland. DUP politicians were thus able to promote their capabilities as effective stewards and modernizing managers in the new dispensation, whilst simultaneously reaffirming their commitment to act as staunch defenders of unionist tradition. The successful completion of the Titanic Quarter regeneration and Titanic Belfast project can thus be attributed to a determination to harness economic regeneration to the service of political stability, economic normalization and the promotion of a new unionist *imaginary* of post-conflict Northern Ireland. Whilst serving these political objectives, however, the capturing and mythologizing of the troubled histories of the Belfast shipyards was less successful in terms of opening up space for seeking new truths about the past or rebuilding economic prosperity in the former shipyard areas. On the contrary, it provided a platform for performing reconciliation, and a screen for projecting economic normality and obscuring inequality and exclusion

Whilst situated within the same strategic framework of Britain's post-Agreement economic strategy for institutionalizing power-sharing in Northern Ireland, the plan to build a museum to the conflict at Maze/Long Kesh was ultimately shaped by Sinn Féin's need to redefine its relationship to its history and to its republican family. In the aftermath of the Omagh bombing and facing demands for weapons decommissioning as a condition for entering the political process, Sinn Féin used the consultation process for a 'Museum at Long Kesh or the Maze' to demonstrate its commitment to open and transparent dialogue in the *new* Northern Ireland. However, by invoking the affirmative narratives of the prison protests and the Hunger Strikes, Sinn Féin simultaneously reaffirmed the legitimacy of armed struggle against British rule in Ireland. Whilst equally committed to the pursuit of neo-liberal economic strategies as its partners in government, Sinn Féin was unable to concede its affirmative narratives of the prison protests and Hunger Strikes to realize the economic potential of the strategic partnership with the DUP. Thus, disconnected from clear material goals or commercial interests, the Maze/Long Kesh development process degenerated into a crude battle between republican narratives and unionist counter-narratives, which ended in a stalemate. Whilst the DUP was able to veto the construction of the Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Centre, Sinn Féin was successful in authorising a republican narrative that will ultimately determine the meaning and status of any future Maze/Long Kesh regeneration as part of the

republican *imaginary* of post-conflict Northern Ireland. In a practical sense, the Historic Buildings listings place a legal constraint on future regeneration plans. However, in authorizing a Provisional Republican narrative, the official listings ensure that any future development will undoubtedly be used as a political resource.

This thesis began as a reflection on my own sense of disorientation about the purpose and goals of my organization's development plans and my own crisis of authority and decision-making. As a cultural manager seeking to maintain boundaries against political interference in a small gallery of photography, but lacking the material resources to implement my strategic vision, I wanted to develop critical approaches to strategic management. Resisting the impulse to smooth over contradictions in planning, consultation and development process, a critical cultural management practice would confront the challenges of an increasingly instrumentalized and politicized policy environment and be prepared to defend the integrity of its core purpose. The years that followed the 1998 Agreement have been marked by a growing sense of uncertainty about the future and a search for moral legitimacy, which has often focused on rediscovering and sacralising the achievements and tragedies of the past. Widespread recognition of the importance of civil society as an arena for developing the necessary cultural values of tolerance, compromise and willingness to participate in dialogue, means that culture has become a major preoccupation for politicians and policymakers grappling with problems of social fragmentation and political disengagement.

Whilst hopes of future peace and prosperity are infinitely preferable to a return to political violence, the rationale for using cultural development as a vehicle for peacebuilding and power-sharing in post-Agreement Northern Ireland is incompatible with many aspects of good cultural management practice. This thesis has shown the practical difficulties that face cultural managers attempting to develop and deliver projects in the absence of common meanings and agreed goals. The achievement of pre-determined goals on time and in budget is a measure of successful project management, whilst peacebuilding processes are open-ended and evolving. The incorporation of peacebuilding and power-sharing objectives into project

management therefore carries the risk of both conflict and inertia, as delays fuel a sense of decay, with the ‘mice nibbling away at plans from around the edges’¹⁴⁰

The Maze/Long Kesh case study showed the burden placed on strategic development and project managers attempting to mobilize support for plans that lacked firmly agreed objectives and goals. Strategic development managers define their role and purpose through the dynamics of negotiation, assertion and, where necessary, compliance with external forces. However, as one senior strategic manager observed, managing conflict in peacebuilding projects in post-Agreement Northern Ireland sometimes feels like ‘pushing a stone, twice the force of gravity, up Cave Hill’, in a situation where everyone is pushing in different directions (Collins 2003, p 17).

This thesis posits a dynamic relationship between cultural development, the external political and policy environment and the consciousness of cultural managers, policymakers and planners engaged in project development and policymaking processes over time. It attributes weaknesses and failures in cultural development to the unstable and highly politicized policy environment of post-Agreement Northern Ireland and to the problems of assimilating peacebuilding and power-sharing objectives into project development and implementation processes. Policies for achieving peace, reconciliation and power-sharing are not simply abstract wish lists added onto solid strategic goals, but political objectives that take on a material existence through the accumulation of conscious, practical responses to persistent social, economic and political problems and recurring policy dilemmas. The frequent deadlocks in cultural development initiatives mirror the wider sense of stasis in post-Agreement Northern Ireland, driven by a vicious circle of inertia, crisis and collapse within the political institutions.

The Titanic Belfast launch coincided with the beginning of Ireland’s Decade of Centenaries and Britain’s Olympic opening ceremony. These programmes and performances expressed a belief in cultural participation as the mechanism for resolving contradictions and conflict in society. Despite some spectacular failures and disappointments, belief in the capacity of culture and the cultural economy to act as vehicles for managing the contradictions of power-sharing and re-imagining post-conflict Northern Ireland remains resilient. It is also clear that, in spite of the weakening of some of the old ethno-cultural political formations, the political crises

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Paul Gallagher.

and choreographies of power-sharing will continue to disrupt the field of cultural development for the foreseeable future. Although ostensibly about a failed Renewable Energy scheme and prolonged by tensions over Brexit, the collapse of the power-sharing Executive in January 2017 was intensified by long-standing DUP opposition to nationalist demands for an Irish Language Act (*Irish Times* 20 February 2018). Invoking the 1998 Agreement's commitment to uphold 'equality, good relations, inclusion and mutual respect', Sinn Féin called on Britain to meet its obligations to 'resolutely promote' the Irish language (*An Phoblacht* 14 November 2016). Whilst Sinn Féin insisted that there would be no re-establishment of the Assembly without a stand-alone Irish Language Act, the DUP insisted on similar 'legal protections for British culture and Ulster Scots' (*the journal* 31 August 2017). After three years without a functioning government, power-sharing was re-established in Northern Ireland in January 2020 with a new deal, which combined financial incentives with the promise of a new Statutory Office of Identify and Cultural Expression, alongside two new commissions, dedicated to promoting the Irish language and Ulster Scots/ Ulster British traditions (HMSO 2020).

The resilience of the belief that cultural development opens up imaginative and practical space for building peace and power-sharing helps explain the readiness of cultural managers, planners and policymakers to continually adapt and accommodate to changing political priorities. In reformulating social and economic problems as cultural dilemmas and promoting culture as an instrument for social transformation, cultural managers have played a significant role defining and influencing the instrumental orientation of cultural policy. Instrumentalist policy agendas do not simply constrain the ambitions of cultural development plans, but provide opportunities for development managers to advance their organizational or sectoral interests and to fulfil their own political agendas. However, the instrumentalization of culture is a two-edged sword. Managers tasked with developing cultural organizations and projects in the public and voluntary sector frequently encounter tensions between the necessity to raise funds, secure material resources and mobilize political support and the responsibility to protect the integrity of the organization's or project's core artistic, intellectual or social purpose. Whilst setting out clear social and economic objectives and goals, cultural development plans should articulate a coherent and defensible definition of culture, not simply as an instrument for achieving external policy objectives but as a distinctive area of activity within the

organization or project. The definition and defense of culture as an autonomous sphere of activity need not be exclusionary or elitist. On the contrary, as a practice of intellectual and artistic creation, shared through processes of interaction and exchange, culture provides an imaginative bridge between different worlds and ways of living (Williams 1961). The reclaiming of culture as a defined and defensible objective in cultural development plans is the first step towards building a critical cultural management practice.

Interview respondents and dates of interviews

Kyle Alexander worked for eighteen years with Laganside Corporation, including 5 years as Chief Executive. He has been an Adviser to the Strategic Investment Board since 2008 and was Chief Executive of the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation since 2011. Interviewed 6 October 2016.

Anonymous Senior Civil Servant has worked at strategic level in departments responsible for social and economic regeneration and cultural policy in the government of Northern Ireland (1997-2014). Interviewed 25 February 2020.

Chris Bailey was Arts and Heritage Officer in the Arts and Heritage Division, Belfast City Council (1997-2006) and Director of the Northern Ireland Museums Council (2006-2016). He also contributed to the SEUPB Maze/Long Kesh consultation process (2011-2013). Interviewed 6 September 2016.

David Boyd has worked as an arts practitioner developing, researching and acting as an advocate for art in the community in East Belfast and across the city of Belfast since 1990. He is the founder and director of Beat Initiative (East Belfast festival arts). Interviewed 25 February 2020.

Stephen Crosby is an engineer, who worked in Bombardier Belfast on Queens' Island during the 1980s and 1990s and was a committee member for community development organizations: Partners and Community Together (PACT) and Titanic PACT, Sydenham, Belfast BT4. Interviewed 3 April 2020.

Paul Gallagher is an academic and member of the Wave and the Wave Injured Group, a Belfast-based cross-community support group for victims of the conflict. Interviewed 23 July 2020.

Mark Hackett is a Belfast based architect and founder member of Forum for an Alternative Belfast 2007. Interviewed 23 July 2020.

Julie Harrison was Adviser to the Strategic Investment Board and co-designed and managed the SEUPB Maze/Long Kesh consultation process (2011-2013). Interviewed 13 February 2018.

Laurence McKeown is a writer and academic and former republican prisoner. He was also a Board Member of Coiste na nIarchimí (1998-2004). Interviewed 13 February 2018.

Cahal McLaughlin is Professor, School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast. He was also Director of the Prisons Memory Archive and participated in the SEUPB Maze/Long Kesh consultation process (2011-2013). Interviewed 6 September 2016.

Brendan Murtagh is Professor, School of Natural and Built Environment and Institute of Spatial Environment, Queen's University Belfast. He participated in the SEUPB Maze/Long Kesh consultation process (2011-2013). Interviewed 6 October 2016.

Deidre Robb is former Visual Arts Officer, Arts Council of NI and Arts Development Officer, Belfast City Council (1998-2015). She was the Project Manager of 'Art in the Eastside' and 're-Imaging Northern Ireland'. Interviewed 31 July 2020.

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