

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Queen's University, Belfast
Unit of Assessment: 16: Architecture, Built Environment and Planning
Title of case study: Planning for Peace in Divided Cities
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The importance of this impact relates to how it changed policy and practice in regard to spatial division in Northern Ireland's contested society by linking planning, regeneration and reconciliation. Beneficiaries include: north Belfast communities (33,000 population) which have a new planning framework and knowledge to improve their regeneration; a network of reconciliation agencies, which has endorsed a policy manifesto based on the research; the main government department concerned with planning and development which has embedded reconciliation into its legislative and core policy framework, and Belfast City Council, which has been guided about how best they can tie their 'good relations' strategy to their emerging powers around planning and regeneration.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The problem addressed was how planning in deeply divided cities can unintentionally reinforce socio-sectarian 'territories'. With its international perspective, the research investigated socio-spatial divisions in selected polarised cities and how innovative spatial planning and design can help redress such division. In developing new integrated planning models through local planning/regeneration projects, it engaged community agencies and public policy-makers about redressing socio-spatial division. Research insights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of a spectrum of divided cities , ranging from those facing standard divisions of race and ethnicity to those fractured by rival national sovereignties; • recognition that since planning shapes space socially, and these conflicts are rooted in contests about territory, proactive planning is central to peace-building; • specification of how urban planning is affected by, and in turn affects , wider ethno-national conflict; • identification of dilemmas faced by planners in such polarised contexts, highlighting which planning models optimise twin processes of regeneration and reconciliation; • pinpointing how cities are impaired by ethnically fractured geography; • clarification of the respective merits of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism in achieving social cohesion amid increasing cultural contest; • illustration of how the creation of a pluralist city for a pluralist people demands that planning(a) develops interdisciplinary capacity; (b) synchronises urban planning and policy around social inclusion, community cohesion and conflict resolution, and (c) pursues agonistic engagement with key stakeholders. <p>Following their research on participative spatial planning in regional and metropolitan contexts in Northern Ireland (1998-2004), Gaffikin (Professor and Principal Investigator) and Sterrett (Senior Lecturer and Co-investigator) have conducted comparative research in Belfast, Chicago, New York, Nicosia, Jerusalem, Birmingham, Nottingham, Bradford and Oldham. They have assessed the links between identity and territory in deeply divided cities; developed typologies of urban space in those contentious contexts; emphasised the need to shift from regulatory land-use planning to a more proactive spatial planning, geared to addressing socio-spatial division; and devised effective planning that can help the painstaking building of peace in urban streets and neighbourhoods as well as around the big political table. Since 2005, this interdisciplinary research, in collaboration with civic/user groups and academic partners, such as the University of Warwick and the Great Cities Institute, Chicago, has focused on planning shared space and intercultural engagement within such contested terrain.</p>

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Undertaken collaboratively with policy stakeholders, such as the Local Strategy Partnership, the Community Relations Council and Belfast City Council, this action-research continued during 2005-08, advancing a model of integrative development that has helped shape the region's policy discourse about the spatial underpinning of good inter-communal relations. Recently, planning and local government reform has offered an opportunity for the Department of Environment to partner **Gaffikin** and **Sterrett** in an action-research project (2011-2014) operating with, and targeting benefits towards, four distinct 'communities': (1) *local* areas most impacted by violent conflict, (2) *policy-makers*, (3) the *academy*--in terms of mobilising interdisciplinary engagement among selected universities about urban conflict, and (4) a *global* community of researchers/activists in the field.

In summary, the research has been '...very influential in shaping public debate and developing public policy....Its timely and challenging insights and recommendations have shifted this difficult agenda forward to a very significant degree'. (Permanent Secretary, DENI)

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Gaffikin, F. and Morrissey, M. (2006), Planning for Peace in Contested Space. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30 (4), pp 873-893.

Gaffikin, F. and Morrissey, M. (2010), Community Cohesion and Social Inclusion: Unravelling a Complex Relationship. *Urban Studies*, 48 (6), pp.1089-1118.

Gaffikin, F., McEldowney, M., and Sterrett, K. (2011), Creating Shared Public Space in the Contested City: The Role of Urban Design. *Journal of Urban Design*. 15(4), pp 493-513.

Gaffikin, F. and Morrissey, M. (2011), *Planning in Divided Cities: Collaborative Shaping of Contested Space*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Sterrett, K., Hackett, M., and Hill, D. (2012) The Social Consequences of Broken Urban Structures: a case study of Belfast. *Journal of Transport Geography*. 21. pp. 49-61.

In terms of **research grants**, Gaffikin and Sterrett's work has been underpinned by:

- Over £3/4m from the European Union's PEACE II programme (2005-08) and complementary grants from the Community Relations Council (£107,500) and Belfast City Council (£29,000)
- £35,330 from the ESRC's Skills for Sustainable Communities Programme and
- £500,000 (EU's Peace III): 'Planning for Spatial Reconciliation' (2011-14) project.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impacts can be captured under three main headings, as follows:

Empowering the Local

- influencing the **Making Belfast Work** programme into setting up area partnerships that operate at a geographic scale which permits cross-community regeneration strategies, thereby helping to create the opportunity for development beyond segregated communities; (see letter from Permanent Secretary, Department of Education)

- establishing collaborative regeneration projects with nine difficult-to-access local communities. . Impacts here have been to create engagement among relevant stakeholders and to bring strategic thinking to local issues. Community schemes include Ligoneil, New Lodge, Mount Vernon, Tiger's Bay, Donegall Pass, Lower Ormeau, the Markets and Sandy Row, involving a total population of 25,000. Two of these areas (Mount Vernon and the Markets) have had subsequent investments in masterplans. As expressed by one neighbourhood worker, the impact of the action-research was *'great ... because of the capacity and confidence it (gave) the residents ... in dealing with architects and planners ... (the removal of paramilitary murals) all came from the work we did with Ken and Frank'*. (see Wilson Report, page 7 below). Another neighbourhood worker acknowledged that the work had been *'very good at getting me interested in contested space ... (at looking at the local interface) in a totally different way ... as an underdeveloped space'*. He welcomed Gaffikin and Sterrett's ability to present argument in lay language – *'sometimes with academics you don't know what they are talking about'* – and also to place the issue of interfaces in their wider social contexts.(see Wilson Report, page 6 below);
- empowering local community leaders with planning competencies through working with them on developing local cross-community regeneration strategies (30 people); one neighbourhood worker, for example, said: *'I have the greatest admiration for both Frank and Ken and I'm not sure they even know the impact they have had'*. (see Wilson Report);
- demonstrating how socio-spatial division impedes the linkages demanded by sustainable urbanism, as evidenced by a survey of key players in a cross-sectoral group of 50 at one of our workshops, in which 76% of respondents said that they found the research data very useful, with comments such as *'innovative inspiring ideas for change'* and *'It will have an impact on place-making in Belfast'* (November 2012); and
- showing senior government officials and local activists (150) how practice from other divided cities indicates how neighbourhood planning can be linked to macro-statutory planning in ways that make territorial borders more permeable. Confirmation of the impact of this aspect of the work is evident in the evaluator's appraisal that: *'Gaffikin and Sterrett have placed great store by understanding other socially and ethnically fractured cities internationally, such as Chicago and Nicosia. While this might seem ethereal from a street-level Belfast perspective, on the contrary, the neighbourhood workers interviewed spoke of its tangible value'*. (see Wilson Report, p. 8)

Remaking City and Regional Planning

- The issue of division and segregation has only relatively recently been recognised by the planning agenda. One authoritative source, for example, confirmed that he was *'90 per cent certain'* that *Prof Gaffikin's work had influenced the introduction of the idea of contested space into the official Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland published a decade and a half earlier.'* (See Wilson Report page 7, below). Similarly, the work of Sterrett and Gaffikin was adopted by the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, which uniquely acknowledged the significance of sectarian spatial divisions in the urban area.
- The Strategic Local Partnership, set up to achieve a twin process of regeneration with reconciliation, adopted a strategy of One City, based on the analysis generated by this research about planning in contested space (2005).

Influencing Legislation and Policy

Connected to the above work, it helped to introduce the concept of long-term vision planning, inviting inventive scenarios beyond violent conflict; and ensured that the challenge of socio-

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sectarian division was embedded into the local – regional scale. This impact is evident in a number of key areas of planning practice. For example:

- **Sterrett**'s joint authoring of the publication '*Government Action for our Urban Environment*' (May 2011) triggered a series of significant impacts. Following meetings with four key ministers (May-October 2011), a joint ministerial summit on urban design was held (January 2012) with two key outcomes: (1) a government-sponsored Winter School to explore how a new approach to urban planning and design could address spatial issues in inner north Belfast (March 2012) and (2) publication of new cross-departmental policy on '**Urban Stewardship and Design**' (February 2013). Explicitly acknowledged is the fact that: '*Northern Ireland has a unique set of socio-political circumstances ... (with) a legacy of division ... materialising in many of our urban centres and inner city neighbourhoods.*' It goes on to refer to '*the long term objective of a shared future (with the need to) avoid the creation of near permanent barriers, be they physical or perceived set within the structure of our urban areas.*' This breaks completely new ground in this neglected area.
- Parallel research work on urban structure and form by **Sterrett** with the co-directors of the **Forum for Alternative Belfast** has also seen two official local masterplans being taken forward by Belfast City Council's Masterplan, again a break-through initiative (June 2013);
- An urban design scheme (researched and developed by **Sterrett** in partnership with the **Forum for an Alternative Belfast**) - challenging the design of a major £100m regional roads proposal that would have further segmented the contested space of north Belfast - influenced government's eventual adoption of a more progressive option. This offers the potential for better pedestrian connections and regeneration of the area. (confirmed by Department for Regional Development press conference, December 6th 2012);
- **Gaffikin** and **Sterrett**'s partnership with the Department of Environment on a major EU-funded action-research project, '*Planning for Spatial Reconciliation*' (2011-2014), is seeing further significant impacts on planning policy and practice via engagement about the significance of contested space for spatial planning and regeneration strategy with:
 - senior staff in departments responsible for planning and regeneration (since 2011);
 - the 70 most senior staff in the Department for Social Development (November 2012);
 - And the Environment Minister (April 2013). Most tellingly, following this briefing with the Minister he requested a paper outlining the key lessons from our work, to help him develop an operational agenda about how new planning could redress the intractable problem of socio-spatial division. Moreover, he asked for us to specify how civic capacity to deliver such an agenda could be enhanced (May 2013); This engagement led to:
- introduction of spatial analysis of ethno-religious/ social divisions into the Department of Environment's manual for preparing statutory spatial plans (2013), and inclusion of new policy on spatial segregation and the creation of shared space within the DoE's new Single Planning Policy Document (Summer 2013), which sets the framework for development planning and management. Again, this inclusion sets a precedent for dealing with this contentious issue, and the corroborating letter below from the Director of Planning Policy confirms the importance of this research to how planning can deal with this problem.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The Wilson Report (2013); Director of Planning Policy, DOE;
Chair Ministerial Advisory Group on Architecture & Built Environment, DCAL;
Permanent Secretary of Department of the Education (NI)
Director Mount Vernon Community Development Forum; Director North Belfast Partnership Board