

**Community Relations Council**



**Community Relations Council**

**Policy Development Conference**

**“Transformation to a Shared Society”**

**Stormont Hotel, Belfast**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2007**

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## Opening Address - David Hanson MP

Chair, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen I am delighted to be with you today. This is probably the last occasion when I will speak to an audience here on a 'devolved' matter. Some of you may rejoice in that knowledge. I however, will miss the generosity and warmth of the many friends I have made here. It is absolutely right that the agenda that you are considering today – and the issues being discussed at the 133 events during community relations week – are taken forward by locally elected Ministers. That agenda is too important to do otherwise.

When I was gathering my thoughts in preparation for this speech I had a look at the papers from last year's conference – just to try to get a sense of what the conversation was 12 months ago and if it has changed today. You know how it is, when you're in the middle of things – changes - even important changes – seem to be imperceptible.

I firmly believe a lot has changed in a year. So I want to take as my theme turning imperceptible change into a visible, tangible reality.

Duncan Morrow's speech last year talked about A Shared Future becoming/being 'The new common sense'. I would venture to suggest, where once this was posed as a rhetorical question it has become a clear reality now.

I'm sure most of you here today would also recognise that whilst there is significant progress it is also very important to sustain a positive commitment to the collective 'common sense' of a shared future.

### Political Leadership

I know there are a number of recently elected MLAs present today – as well as Edwin Poots, the designate Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure.

It is well worth acknowledging that the Assembly's Committee on the Preparation for Government's report on Rights, Safeguards, Equality Issues and Victims agreed two specific proposals relating to a shared future. First, *'That all parties call for immediate stand-down of all paramilitary organisations as the best contribution to a shared future'*, and second *'That all parties stress their commitment to building a shared future'*.

Devolution is to take place on 8 May. I am delighted that that is so.

The new Pledge of Office affirms that they will *'promote the interests of the whole country represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly – towards the goal of a shared future.'*

These are key examples of how the vision is becoming reality and how, at a political level, things have changed since last year.

The recent major political developments also exemplify the transformational leadership which I believe, in turn has the potential to turn the vision of a shared future into a reality that underpins a new prosperous Northern Ireland.

Hard Work Still to be Done

Last year, part of Duncan's talk was about stopping the violence – and after stopping the violence - the hard work being about sharing.

I believe that that hard work is well under way – that transformation is gaining momentum.

We have in Enniskillen, the first of what I hope will many more shared public housing schemes. For example, what may be a small but significant beginning is the Housing Executive's pilot shared housing scheme in Enniskillen. It is a sad, yet realistic fact that despite some 79% of people saying they would prefer to live in a mixed community neighbourhood 75% of Housing Executives estates are 90% plus, one community or the other.

As Mark Durkan said last week in relation to the peacelines that continue to blight this society the challenges facing all of us, "is not just to settle for a society where we learn to live with each other but to strive for a society where we live together, work together, grow together and enjoy the shared benefits of economic prosperity together." We have to stop living beside each other and begin to live with each other. Carran Crescent is I believe the start of many other initiatives to deliver on that wish.

Last year we saw a significant reduction in the marking of territory during the marching season.

The protocol on flags is beginning to impact, but I would be foolish to think that much more doesn't need to be done. Yes fewer flags were erected. Yes more were taken down voluntarily (and by the police), but could communities not now begin to think that 4 continuous months of flags on arterial routes is a bit too long. Instead of 40% being taken down, shouldn't we aim for 60-70%.

Through the Re-imagining Communities Programme we are slowly but surely starting to move away from images of war and aggression. But here again the work has only started. There are very interesting projects from all communities under way which will see the light of day soon which I believe will encourage other communities to become involved.

In our work on the Review of Public Administration significant steps have been taken to develop checks and balances and embed good relations (community and race) at the heart of those arrangements.

We would not have had such an excellent peaceful summer last year had it not been for the tireless work of people in communities and I want to return to this later.

The IMC report published last week confirmed much progress, but clearly reported that loyalist paramilitaries need to do much more. Whilst some leaders are starting to move their constituency forward the pace clearly needs to quicken.

Belfast City Council is taking forward an ambitious bonfires project which is about tackling the enormous environmental and community damage done each year on our streets. I believe 20 areas in Belfast have agreed this year to be involved and others have been asked to wait until 2008 to become involved. Some may be trying beacons this year instead of bonfires in a project which is teaching the history behind the bonfire tradition, identifying the cross-community damage which can be caused though these celebrations and stopping the burning of tyres! Hard work and practical progress going hand-in-hand.

John Mitchel Gaelic Football Club of Newry recently won the Ulster GAA 'Have A Go' competition. Nothing unusual about that. Ulster club sides are strong and particularly so from the Newry area. What is unusual is that the winning team was made up largely of lads from Poland.

I believe over 200 people from Omagh invested a full Saturday participating in a public forum and workshops to discuss sharing in education. They wanted to become better informed about what sharing in education actually means, to discuss their concerns and hear the concerns of others, to challenge the education issues from the area. This is active citizenship which is so stimulating to see in action.

And this leads me to the subject of dialogue.

### **Dialogue**

An important feature of transformation is that it takes place in the context of Shared Future's challenge for 'differences being resolved by dialogue' in the public domain. Northern Ireland can be described in many ways. It is certainly a place of vibrant communities that generate vigorous debate. We need to maintain that characteristic whilst ensuring that it involves both speaking and listening and, dare I say, coming to accept that the ability to compromise is a talent and not an unforgivable offence.

### **Racial Equality**

Our future/your future is not solely about addressing the historic polarisation of two communities. This society is no longer bipolar. It is becoming – thankfully I would argue - more culturally diverse and rich in texture and complexion. We are all interdependent.

As you are only too aware the most recent 30 years has been a period when Northern Ireland was largely devoid of peoples from other parts of the world with different cultures and traditions. People avoided coming here because of the dangers associated with living here and because prosperity and opportunity were not associated with this place.

Any perceptible change in this area? I believe there is major change. The make-up of the population is changing daily and so many people now see this as a place of opportunity. Changed times indeed and the Racial Equality Strategy seeks both to protect and ensure the acceptance of the new citizens and to guarantee their part in all our shared futures.

Our District Councils are very exercised about engaging with the new communities in their areas and I know of excellent work being done, for example, in Belfast, Dungannon, Ballymena and Enniskillen. Councils right across Northern Ireland are providing the Welcome Packs now available in many different languages very useful.

The Library Service is now an essential resource of new minority groups making use of the internet facilities there. People who are here now are providing every day services to all of us every day. People who are making every day a better day for Northern Ireland.

### **Measuring Change**

Alongside the launch of the Shared Future and Racial Equality Action Plans last year we included a list of priority outcomes and a set of good relations indicators. Not headline grabbing words I know and I don't believe many people picked up on these indicators last year but I believe they're going to play a

vital part in building the shared future reality. They will test perception and enable progress towards the policy outcomes to be measured. A couple of months ago we published the first statistical report of these indicators of what Northern Ireland was like in 2005.

For example, in 2005:

- there were 1470 sectarian and 746 racist hate crimes;
- the latter showing a 17% increase from 2004 – more need to be done to tackle intolerance
- 76% of the population welcome other EU citizens living and working in Northern Ireland. In 2002 this figure was 63%;
- 61% of people would prefer to send their children to a mixed school. In 2001 this figure was 35%, and
- 79% of people would prefer to live in a mixed community background neighbourhood. In 2001 this figure was 66%.

Of course these are just four examples from a very comprehensive set of statistics but I use them to demonstrate what transformation actually looks like. To show that a momentum is building which is going beyond a suspicion that things are gradually getting better to become a conviction. To show how public policy must adapt to reflect the changes in society – changes that are in the main encouraging.

The same measurements will be taken over the next few months for 2006 and then annually. It's important to know if or how Northern Ireland is changing.

Looking back at the last year at a high level I know, for example, the Bain Review potentially offers a major contribution to sharing in education. I know progress on RPA implementation and particularly the good relations dimension of that are important. I've already mentioned the shared housing pilot project. I know the good relations impacts within the Comprehensive Spending Review are important so that diverse budgets across Government are dovetailing to deliver improvements in Good Relations.

But when it comes to analysing the impacts of these measures we're not depending on perception but on measured reporting and evaluation.

### **Partnerships**

From the list of delegates I see that more than half are representing district councils and local groups. So whilst this event is the Community Relations Council's annual policy conference there are people here today who are and have been working on the ground, at the interfaces.

Before going any further, personally I would want to pay tribute to the community sector – and particularly the very many volunteers who have, imperceptibly, been sustaining the fabric of relationships at the grass roots during years when the vision of a shared future seemed an impossible dream. These relationships are the foundations on which transformation is being built. And we owe a lot to those people. People like Jean Brown from Suffolk and Renée Crawford from Lenadoon – (who won't thank me for using them as an example!).

Your presence today and participation in the workshops which follow is a leavening ingredient in high-level policy development. When and not if, transformation happens it will be because of action at local level. Of course it's important that central government facilitates change but relationships,

interdependence and understanding, happens between people. Not between policy statements, not between organisations but between people.

I'm taken by a headline in Belfast City Council's Good Relations Strategy. 'An interface may not even be noticeable to others but local people know exactly where it is. It can be crossed simply by crossing a street, passing a landmark or turning a corner'.

I believe the aim which we all hold is that the local people who know where the divides are will be the first to see them go.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have just last week heard the good news of record jobs promotion some 3,500 by Invest Northern Ireland with over £½ billion of Foreign Direct Investment. But economic prosperity in the long run will be secured with political stability, availability of skills and importantly if Northern Ireland is seen as a place where people want to invest because we have a truly shared, inclusive and vibrant society. That surely is the challenge for all of us.

In business, a trademark is a distinctive symbol to identify particular products. As I conclude my remarks I want to encourage you all to see the society described in a shared future as the registered trademark for Northern Ireland.

**Keynote Address: Saso Klekovski,  
Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC).**

Most of what I have learned about conflict transformation is from Northern Ireland. The first time I was here was in 2001, and since then I have been a guest here 4 times bringing different types of delegations, mostly journalists and religious leaders, who weren't from Northern Ireland. For me it is a very big honour to now speak to you on what our experiences are from Macedonia.

When I was preparing for the conference I looked at the comparisons between Macedonia and Northern Ireland. I found that the two most common results of the search were conflict and football. For sometime I was tempted to talk about your glorious victories over the Republic of Ireland and very good results with England. Still most of my presentation will be about Macedonia, our step forward to a shared society and I would like to generally focus on four parts.

I will talk about the Ohrid Framework Agreement which is our agreement and its actions, challenges and successes. I will try to explain what the drivers & context were for change and what the future challenges are very shortly.

Macedonia and Northern Ireland are very interesting and historical subjects. Both Macedonia and Northern Ireland were central parts of great empires, the British and the Ottoman. We share the same problem that both the Republic of Macedonia and Northern Ireland are part of large geographical areas, with similar names - Macedonia Island/Northern Ireland and there are some disputes over the terminology used. A sense of this historical experience is one of our known historians once said that only the Irish can understand Macedonians, but that was nearly a century ago.

Macedonia has a population of 2 million people. We are divided on ethnical and sectarian base and we are in trouble. I find this term trouble very interesting; we say conflict but you use the term trouble which is quite an interesting way to avoid the term conflict. We both have agreements. You have the Good Friday agreement and we have the Ohrid Agreement of 2001 and from this perspective I can say that only the Macedonians can understand the wish of the people very well. For me it is very interesting that Macedonians can understand both the positions of republicans and unionists and I think that is a very good experience for me.

There are some big differences and one of these is that Macedonia is an independent country. We have a government and functioning institutions. The second big difference is that we are multi-cultural. We have a majority of ethnic Macedonians; the second largest community is ethnic Albanians with 25 %. What also makes us different from Northern Ireland is that 11% of the population is made up of five smaller communities which consist of, Turks, Serbs, Roma, Bosniak and Vlach's, all of them are divided on religious base. We have Orthodox Christians with two fifths majority and one fifth of the population is Muslim. The usual combination is that ethnic Macedonians are Orthodox Christians and that ethnic Albanians are Muslims.

The third big difference is how 'well' we are doing in unemployment. I heard some people complaining about how many unemployed people there are in Northern Ireland. When I checked the internet I discovered you have an unemployment rate of 4.6, compared to unemployment in Macedonia which is consistently over 35 percent. I think these three differences significantly influence the differences and outcomes of the agreements of Macedonia and Northern Ireland.

The Ohrid Agreement was very much influenced by how the Northern Ireland experience worked. It was about how to stop the hostilities between different groups, how to deal with expression of identity, education and the use of languages. It was about non-discrimination and equitable representation in government and special parliamentary procedures.

We first had to deal with the conflict in 2001, which was small but still a conflict. We had the demobilisation and disarmament, which was carried out with international supervision. We had an amnesty which included Ucktria combatants; in total 2500 people got amnesty. The amnesty was valid for everyone except the war crimes and war criminals. We currently have two people who are going to the International Hague and are expected to face charges for war crimes. After that we had to deal with our strength of security which was mostly Macedonian army and police taking over control of the territory and establishing state monitoring of violence. At this stage in early 2002 there were no armed forces outside of the state or government forces. The most disputed part of the Ohrid Agreement was the issue of ex combatants. Most of them are ex army and police members and the rest were ex combatants of Ucktria. It is under discussion and it is quite a hot issue at this stage. Mostly because the ex-combatants are expecting the state pensions in the same way as the ex-police and army officers got theirs.

We then moved onto languages. We had a very serious view of compromises between the two sides; very difficult issues. Obviously the issues of flags and languages are the most difficult issues coming here. We agreed two years ago that flags of ethnic communities can be used in addition to the Macedonian flag in municipalities where they represent over 50 % of the population. At this stage we have 84 municipalities; 25 of which fly the Macedonian flag with another including: Albanian, Turkish and Roma flag. This was a much disputed issue with a very heavy and long discussion.

Education for the students in native language was not disputed and easily accepted. The government is providing primary and secondary education for all children regardless of their language.

We agreed to positive discrimination in the state universities which means there is a guaranteed quota for the non Macedonian ethnic communities. Even if they have not such good results in the entrance exams, they are accepted into state universities.

We have personal documents issued in native languages as well as Macedonian. That means if you are ethnic Albanian you have the right that your passport be written in Albanian language and that your name is in its original alphabet. Official languages were very disputed; we agreed to recognise as official, languages used by over 20% of the population at Macedonia state and municipality level.

Each of the seven groups mentioned can speak in their language in their municipality if they number more than 20% of the population. Now the huge discussion is whether Albanian is recognised as official language in the municipalities where ethnic Albanians do not live - it is highly disputed issue at the moment.

Identity and Education are the most sensitive issues; equitable representation was less sensitive and less disputed. We agreed on non discrimination, equitable representation in public administration and a guaranteed quota for minority groups in the constitutional, ombudsman and juridical council. This guaranteed seats for non Macedonian communities in these bodies.

In 2001 only 3% of the security forces were Albanian, now they make up 15%, with Turks, Bosniak, Serbs making up a further 4%. There was a significant move within the defence forces and the army where there were no Albanians some years ago, now 14% of the service men are Albanians and 7%

made up of Roma Turks, and Bosniaks. In terms of employment in public administration we used to have 7% Albanians and now it is 13% Albanians and 6% for others.

This year the government decided to triple the state budget to give employment opportunities in the public services, to non Macedonian communities. This was not disputed but it was very difficult, because at the same time we had to reduce our public administration, which meant more or less firing ethnic Macedonians and hiring people from other communities. It was not so easily swallowed by the public but still people agreed that Albanians and others had to be better represented in public administration. Now, of course, there is a discussion about how many of these people are actually in management and senior positions? But I can tell you that the deputy chief of staff of the army is ethnic Albanian, and there are 2 generals who are ethnic Albanian, but still Macedonians are not feeling secure enough to grant the chief positions in the police and army and security forces to non Macedonians.

The power of government was the next part of the agreement. More powers to municipalities, transferring a lot of responsibilities from the central government to the municipalities. The most disputed part was the revision of the boundaries of the municipalities after the census. The census was carried out in 2002 and the revision of the boundaries in 2004. This was the highly disputed part as many people thought that this was against the basic agreement of the Ohrid Agreement.

A double majority vote was established at the state and local level on certain issues, such as identity, culture, languages and education. Double vote is basically Macedonians and non Macedonians which is now creating certain problems because it is not clear how we decide who is Macedonian and who is not Macedonian. It is now a personal statement; it is a private issue on who is what; it is actually a little bit abused by different sides. We have a committee for relations of communities which is actually a mediation body, if there is disagreement on certain issues. Some of the very important steps of implementation were that we actually had a coalition to implement the first part of the agreement. This was very necessary to push the process forward. In our case the agreement was translated to constitutional changes and amendments which in 2001 transformed Macedonia to the state of the Macedonians and 6 other communities. The previous definition was a bit different. We had a census in 2002 and we had elections in 2002 and actually we established new government to implement most of the framework agreement.

All the legislation needed to implement the agreement was adapted by the parliament between 2001 and 2005 and actually there is no more legislation needed to implement the agreement. The most critical moment was the vote on territorial boundaries and municipalities. In 2004 the opposition called for a national referendum which failed but it was very close to main political parties saying we don't like this anymore to implement the agreement because we are stepping outside the principals of the Ohrid Agreement. But just to say this was the minimum package, but there was a political will for extra steps and I think that this is very important to enabling this over several years to deliver extra step.

In the agreement a site for guaranteed education in native language in primary and secondary schools was established. The government decided to open a state university in Tetovo. This is the main ethnic Albanian town in respect of the usage of the Albanian language. We started joint ventures, private initiatives and national media. It was very important to have at least one place where we learn and share the same things without being divided.

The government decided that some community holidays be promoted to state holidays; it was a very courageous decision to promote Ramadan to state holiday. I think we are the only Christian nation where Muslim celebration is state holiday. We are now building joint understanding around that.

We have established councils for inter-religious co-operation where the main churches and religious communities are represented. We have 5 constitutional religious communities in Macedonia - the Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Islamic Community, Methodist Church and Jewish Community.

In 2006 a survey was carried out to measure people's views on inter-ethnic relations on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=poor and 5=excellent). The findings for this research averaged 2.5 which was regarded as positive. In the midst of the conflict in July 2001 forty one percent of the population regarded ethnic problems as the most important issue for the country; this dropped to one per cent in 2006.

Still, the top problems for most of the Macedonian people were unemployment, poverty and corruption. These were the top 3 inter-ethnic problems, which were never seen at very top but now we see that implementation of the agreement absorbs most of the negative energy and we are very happy about that. What is the context, why did this happen?

I think that there are 4 main issues - non-violence, accommodation of main aspirations of the communities, international community and shared power in government.

Macedonia was a battle front in many wars. What was to happen in Bosnia a decade ago, happened to Macedonia a century ago. We also had the battle front of both world wars and the general attitude of the people was that we had enough wars. Also the memories of the Bosnian war were very fresh for the people and that's why somehow we have this non-violence and avoiding conflict culture.

Macedonia separated from Yugoslavia in a peaceful way. There was not one single conflict which resulted in any Yugoslav family leaving the country.

We had a very short conflict in 2001 with a relatively small number killed; taking into account that it was a conflict between armed rebels, and the army and police forces, in very wide area of our border with Kosovo. There is a very strong attitude that we don't need any more wars in our country. But also, it was very important that our agreement accommodated the aspirations of both sides. The basic aspiration is that we have security. The most important thing for Macedonians was to keep the territorial integrity of the country. Albanian aspirations were equality.

I think that the common ground was that we had the deal for a Unitarian state which accepted multiculturalism and equality of different people. Basically we accepted there were no territorial solutions for ethnic issues and this was very important understanding in the process. Actually many people thought that with the municipality boundaries, we were stepping out of this principle but I think that this is very basic issue. Of course the international community were heavily involved. NATO, EU, Americans, and Europeans; everyone was there.

One big difference from Northern Ireland is that we are not a member of the EU. There is still a big carrot to be offered to our politicians, if you are good guys one day you will become NATO and EU members and I think that this is giving positive motivation to our political leaders to move.

Shared power in government

We had a shared history before 1991, before the independency. Before, in the socialist period, Macedonia was defined as the country of the Macedonians, Albanians and Turks. In 1991 we decided

to cut the Albanians and Turks, but still there had been experiences of shared society. Since 1991 the country was governed by coalition governments formed by political parties of ethnical Macedonians and Albanians. Even during the conflict of 2001 the government was a coalition government of ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. Of course, in 2001 Albanian combatants at Ucktria transformed to a political party and won the elections in 2002. In 2002 social democrats and ex-combatants, Ucktria in our case, formed a government in 2002 and they implemented the agreement by 2006, which is very similar to what is going to happen hopefully in Northern Ireland.

Republicans and Unionists will form the government. We had that type of government in 2002 and what is very interesting is the government lost the elections. They implemented the agreement in 4 years and in 2006 they lost the elections. The people decided they wanted to change the government. I think that this is very healthy because what we are seeing now is that instead of the winner of both sides forming the government we have a move to ideological coalitions across the ethnic communities. At this moment we have a government of centre-right. I think that this is very important that for the first time the politics has moved away from ethnic to ideological, which is a very healthy sign for Macedonia.

The future challenges after the election - we realised this is a dynamic process and we have to be careful how we balance the low vote & state monitoring of violence, economic prosperity, democracy, non violence and interdependence. The success from the past is not everlasting success but we have to reach new balances and some of the future priorities, what we call dissemination of the agreement; implementation at municipal level. People basically make a difference at a very local level, how they can communicate to their municipality, on what language. What is the socio-economic development there and that's why we think it is now very important to focus actions of the implementation of the agreement from the national level to the municipality level.

We are very much advocating the strengthening of a multi-cultural society. We think that the smaller communities, the 11% of the others are very important to sustain multi-culturalism and not to move to national concept. The small communities can be mediators between the big communities.

I recently heard you have a Chinese MP in your parliament. It is not the same as the Turkish MP in our parliament but I think they can give some mediation capacity between the two sides.

We must, of course, focus on building community relations and generally we like to move more from ethnic policies to strengthening the anti-discrimination legislation in the institutions; moving collective rights to individual rights and for that we need much stronger anti-discrimination legislation and institutions.

The two other issues which are not related to interdependence and ethnic relations is combating organised crimes and corruption, education and combating poverty. One of the most serious risks now for Macedonia is organised crime and its relation to political extremism. These two things are going together; the organised crime needs political extremism to create instability which is good for the business and the political extremists need the funding which is coming mostly from drug smuggling and human trafficking. Macedonia is very heavily criticised by the United States for human trafficking and white slavery issue. These are very important things and the way the government is dealing with organised crime is very important.

I joked with some of the participants because in Northern Ireland there is not a strong drive to change because somehow you are doing well if you compare with Eastern Europe or Macedonia, where we have 5 times bigger unemployment, I think that you are functioning better with your government than Macedonians are functioning with their government. But still I think we have a much stronger performance of the government on the social issues such as education and poverty, especially as this is the same in Northern Ireland, mostly connected to minority communities, with Albanians unemployment is 50%, with the Romas it is 80% - very high numbers.

To finalise I think that thanks to some shared experience in the past we succeeded to make significant steps forward and of course there are future challenges. Northern Ireland is now where Macedonia was in 2002 accepting the challenge of forming a shared government, to implementing most of what you have agreed, which I hope will open new perspectives for Northern Ireland in the same way I hope that new perspectives will open for Macedonia.

## Our future together - Duncan Morrow

There are lots of ways to explain conflict in the North of Ireland. Politics, religion and economics are always part of the mix. And there is no doubt that the politics of empire, hatreds and exclusions which shaped religion across Europe and discrimination and injustices in the economy all played their part. There is equally no doubt that there have to be changes in politics, religion and economics if we are ever to speak about change or real peace.

But on their own, politics, religion and economics do not really offer enough to explain why we got to where we got to. Put simply: there are many places which have less democracy, places where there are far more uneven balances between competing faith groups, places with far greater poverty and inequality than Northern Ireland which have not had years of violent conflict.

The hidden secret is not that politics, religion and economics caused conflict: but that conflict led us to promote political, religious and economic solutions which turned out to be the causes of the next turn of the screw: Because once we think our neighbour is our enemy, it is OK to think about ways to defend ourselves. All of a sudden killing is somehow understandable. Excluding people from political power is not an act of violence, but necessary defence, attacking their policemen is not violence but attacking a legitimate target who oppresses our community. Attacking members of the minority who live in our areas is not sectarianism but sad wisdom. Instituting laws to pick people up on suspicion but without sufficient evidence for a normal court is not injustice but homeland security. Turning a blind eye to the activities of people who pass information becomes a necessary evil. Violence is not violence but war, the state does not promote cohesion but fuels division, killing is not killing but heroism, law is not an instrument of justice but of injustice and discrimination is not prejudice but wisdom. And before we get too pious, this is a logic which infects all of us. And once we are caught in it, it is very hard to come out and say that what we did was wrong, no matter how many victims there are. 'You have to understand the situation' we say.

What I am getting at is quite complex: If you want to end conflict you undoubtedly have to address issues of economics, politics, culture and religion. But and equally, if you want a lasting settlement you have to alter the relationship that keeps turning politics and economics, religion and culture into weapons which we need to defend ourselves by attacking our neighbours: the sense that we are enemies.

Good Relations, Human Rights and Equality are not cause and effect. They are essential partners. Because enemies never seek the interests of their neighbour. And enemies always seek to keep that little advantage 'just in case'. And enemies regard trust as at best naïve and at worst as a Trojan horse. And they never want to vindicate equality or rights or to celebrate diversity. Or to put it another way, and I am clearly struggling to say what I want to say here: A shared future depends on more than making deals between old enemies. It requires us to make a new relationship where old enemies become partners and friends. And it therefore means, in the immortal lyrics sung by that great political philosopher Karen Carpenter 'We've only just begun...'

I want to suggest, that sustainable peace here requires not just a new balance of power, or a new truce, or a series of pitched battles each day. For Britain and Ireland it means the end of defining our cultures as them and us, or of seeking to assimilate one by secretly dominating or smothering the other. On this six county border territory it means that Nationalist and Unionist, Protestant and Catholic put an end to the normality of enmity and an end to the notion that there is a them

contaminating us, and instead redefining us to include all of us with our wider solidarities and relationships in a new us. And all of this remains true in all and every imaginable jurisdiction. And by moving from a politics which is defined by hostility, territorial control and domination we also make possible a space which is defined by the generosity of its welcome for all those who have come and will come to join us.

The Rubicon is a small river in Northern Italy that played a large role in classical Roman history. But that was the point: the small size of the step disguised the sheer scale of the implications. Next week, we enter a critical stage in the journey towards peace: power returns to local hands. But the decisive test is not simply, whether we can carve out power together: the core of our peace process is not politics or devolution, but that great unmentionable - reconciliation, and the thing it makes possible – a shared future. Once, when travelling in northern Austria, we passed a small sign on the road on a small rise between two villages: continental watershed. The middle of nowhere turned out to define the entire river system for a continent. Every raindrop that fell to the north flowed to the Baltic or North Sea. Every raindrop on the other side fed the Mediterranean. If in sharing government, we also begin to think about the future as a shared destination we can truly say that the water has started to flow in another direction. Reconciliation is the new common sense, not last year's lunacy. And instead of hating and conspiring to defeat each other and trying to manage and limit the consequences, the agenda is one of change and transformation into a sustainable and shared society.

A lot of people don't like the word reconciliation: too religious, too nebulous, too touchy-feely, too community relations, too 'nice'. I was recently at an event, where a very respected colleague noted that the coupling of peace and reconciliation in Ireland was pretty unique. Not only that: it had only emerged as a dogma in the mid 1970s and was actually a mechanism for avoiding issues of rights and justice in a mush of community dialogue.

But for me much of this is based on a real misunderstanding. Reconciliation is not nice work. Reconciliation is not mushy in the slightest. It is not even a thing at all. It is a word stretching to try describe what happens when people, across societies in this case, take decisions to work together as partners, and find a genuine basis on which to agree ways to acknowledge and actively address issues of politics and economics, culture and politics together. But the critical and vital element, which makes all the difference is that it is something we do together. And the paradox is, that once the decision to work together is taken, then the conversations become more not less real, rights can be vindicated and upheld and the conflicts become opportunities to meet and resolve differences not war by other means.

What makes reconciliation essential here is that we share this place together. All of the other roads to ending violence against us require us to be more violent. Hitler's answer to his Jewish problem was extermination of a whole people. The final solution was accepted by a whole political system. Land for peace is the best we seem able to imagine in the Middle East, but it is a peace of 'we will be alright as long as we have nothing to do with each other. From the Balkans, we learned that the killing and expulsion of one's enemies could be called 'ethnic cleansing', a simple act of washing ourselves clean of the contamination of other people. I will never forget travelling to Kosovo and asking an Albanian radical there what had improved since the war, and the sinister glee in his response 'No Serbs'. Maybe if 500,000 of my people had just been driven out by the Serbs I would feel the same. But to understand everything is not to condone everything.

The decisions which make for reconciliation are not easy to make. There is an understandable tendency out there to say, 'we have got quite a distance, let's try to avoid controversial issues and concentrate on quick wins and consensus. The economy gets mentioned a lot, as do health and education and opposition to water rates. So too, paradoxically, do issues of race and ethnicity where the degree of violence towards new arrivals here has rightly alarmed all political parties.

All of them are important, but none of them stand alone. It is an illusion to believe that the issue of sharing can be avoided. Of course we cannot do everything in a day: Dungannon, no more than Rome or maybe Geneva, was not built in a day. But there is no such thing as an issue which does not require us to consider our shared future: Decisions about education are inevitably decisions about how we shape the next generation and its relationships. Decisions about housing cannot be taken clearly or fairly if our first priority is to defend our current territorial segregation. Investment cannot be attracted, if Northern Ireland continues to exhibit fundamental instability, new talent will not locate here if this is a place of fear and intolerance. One of the most telling statistics in the challenges facing us, is that Northern Ireland exports more of our best sixth formers outside and attracts less external high flyers to study here than any other region of these islands. Strategic Investment is investment in things which can engage and attract everyone. Even this week we are putting up new 'peace' lines which we should maybe call massive enforced separation structures (which usefully works out as mess) as a barrier against intimidation, fear and violence. Not much sign of neighbourhood renewal on either side of that then. The executive cannot decry the expulsion or intimidation of one group of people while turning a blind eye to the expulsion of another. Hate crime is a problem for the system because it reveals a system of hate which is eating into our lives together well before there is a vicious attack. And all of that is before we tackle parades, policing and justice and flags and emblems. A Shared future and economic prosperity are not alternative policy priorities but absolutely critical twins. The Comprehensive Spending Review is an opportunity to underline this combination. A shared future is not a threat to political success, it is its absolutely essential partner. The task is to re-imagine and rediscover our cultures as cultures of welcome and conviviality not opportunities to delude ourselves that we have abolished or destroyed our neighbours. The alternative to a shared future is indeed a scared future, or a shared failure or a shared out failure.

The core opportunity for leadership in the next years will be to outline a vision of what all this peace has been for. It is no longer adequate to justify peace on the basis of the awfulness of war. Change is happening in front of our eyes, and the old paradigm of two communities may survive politically, but it does so by ignoring many of the issues which have grown up around it. This will be a task not just for politicians, but for community, business, religious and intellectual leaders as well. In exploring and debating what the good society looks like, the habits of sharing can be learnt. One of the critical issues to unlock this must be finding ways to deal with the past. There is a demand from many for silence, but nobody has worked out how to deliver it into the future. Furthermore, as Mary McAleese remarked, silence in Ireland has usually been festering not golden. And those who have suffered real loss will not and cannot be silent.

Austria spent forty years pretending that the war had happened in another place called Germany. While it bought time, it had the effect of turning truth into the enemy of politics and truth-tellers into the enemies of the powerful. It is a dangerous legacy. But the strength of our new partnership will only be secure when it is strong enough to sustain the public exposure of the stories and secrets we already know about one another without destroying our shared future. Because the problem in this country is not the raw evidence, usually known as 'the truth', but the rumour and supposition which

flourish while we find it too hard to face the truth about us, our people and our cherished delusions. And in the interim, the victims suffer and the truth tellers are publicly defiled.

If we date the peace process from the Downing Street Declaration of 1993, it has now gone on for 14 years. That is more than twice as long as World War II, longer than the long escalation from Civil Rights to the Hunger Strike and as long as the school life of any pupil. For too much of that time, peace has felt like pushing water uphill. We in the Community Relations Council hope that next week marks the beginning of rolling the water down the other side of the hill, and the end of managing disaster and the beginning of transformation to a shared society. We will do what we can to push.

## **PLENARY**

Six workshops were delivered after the main speeches which focused on a number of themes. Each workshop had inputs and presentations from both policy makers and practitioners on a specific issue, and the participants were asked to produce one main point/issue from the discussions which was fed back during the plenary proceedings.

### **WORKSHOP 1 – Conflict Transformation**

What are the implications of moving from culture of conflict management to a culture of conflict transformation and what can we learn from Macedonia?

### **WORKSHOP 2 – Transforming Ex-military bases and prisons**

“Separate but equal is not an option” A Shared Future.

Separate consultation is not an option .

We will get shared and agreed development/transformation only after a facilitated process of cross-community consultation as an agreed base for transforming these sites.

### **WORKSHOP 3 – Interfaces, transformation through economic development**

- I. Peace-lines as a
- II. Need a joined up approach
- III. Should be policy on city, social, economic and physical plan
- IV. Needs to be done now. Should not be left behind in new era

### **WORKSHOP 4 – Transforming Parades and Protests**

Need for a common definition of shared space – physical and mental and for communities at a grass roots level to be resolved to engage on the development of this definition

### **WORKSHOP 5 – Transforming murals and memorials**

“Agreed, accurate and not divisive”

Inclusive dialogue needs to be the underpin in imaging our future and acknowledging our past

- contested narrative
- multiplicity of stories past and present
- invite new understanding

### **WORKSHOP 6 – Transforming relationships in a divided society**

Need to challenge racism and sectarianism but in a manner that avoids the failed approaches to sectarianism via honest/truthful conversations and prevent assimilation approaches (which denies identity)

Leadership is crucial - not about enforcing our rights over each other but about what is right for each other

## Conference Workshops

### **Conflict Transformation**

Chair: David Stevens

Presentations by:

Conflict Transformation Forum, North Belfast	John Loughran
St Columb's Park House	Charlotte Cox
Community Convention & Dev Company	Lee Reynolds

### **Presentation points:**

- Strong sense of political and cultural decline within the Protestant community
- Recognition that there is a fragmentation and rivalry within the Protestant community alongside a relative lack of community development skills and a failure to network and exchange skills
- Time to stop talking about issues and start tackling them
- The changing political context will allow for greater movement
- Lack of capacity in PUL communities
- Gatekeepers are still holding communities back
- Inclusion isn't easy
- Need focus on communication and relationship building
- Many communities are still in culture of 'managing' not 'transforming'
- Better targeting of communities needed- more to cohesion than the Noble index
- Burst the Belfast Policy Bubble
- Don't ignore low-level sectarian violence
- Recognition that PUL communities can and do have equality issues
- Rural minority communities are forgotten

### **Main Discussion Points:**

- Micro-agreements at community level are very important following macro-political agreements.
- Consistency of approach by political parties in terms of achieving change over the longer term,
- Dealing with the past remains an issue, many feel abandoned by current process
- Level of education attainment in conflict areas is an issue that needs to be addressed as part of transforming conflict.
- Important that an international perspective is sought and reflected upon.

## **Interfaces – Transformation through Economic Development**

Chair: Tony McCusker

Presentations by:

Belfast City Council

Belfast Regeneration Office

Marie Therese McGivern

Michael Donnelly

### **Presentation points:**

- Mixed developments with emphasis on creation of jobs enhance the quality of life for those living in the communities
- Supported by programmes such as Gasworks Employment Matching Service (GEMS) for local people
- Developments led to produce sustainable income
- Maintain the engagement of the local communities
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy – People & Place – transforming and making a real difference to people living in disadvantage communities
- Working with communities to develop action plan – many cross-community
- Communities and service providers working in partnership helps build confidence and break down barriers
- Changing face of Northern Ireland – must all grasp opportunities to move forward.

### **Main discussion points:**

- Peacelines have been and still remain a security feature – If you remove the peacelines, how do you police the peacelines in the short term? No policy for removing peacelines yet a policy exists to put them in place.
- All political parties need to take responsibility for the peacelines. The issue of when and how they come down is a societal issue.
- Each interface and associated peaceline should be assessed individually, as they each have their own unique problems etc
- Redevelopment may mean that existing communities will come under threat as a further rise in house prices will push the existing residents out of the property market. In order to address such problems Belfast City Council has been looking at other European cities to ascertain how they have dealt with such issues. Amsterdam has been highlighted as dealing with these issues most successfully. It is Belfast City Council's intention to adopt a similar approach to the redevelopment of the Titanic Quarter. Their current redevelopment plan includes provision of 10% for affordable housing. Already there has been some opposition to this proposal; however Council representatives have reminded developers that in other parts of Britain the mandatory percentage of affordable housing in inner city developments ranges from 70 % in Oxford to 40% in Brighton.
- Local communities are most at risk from the upsurge in developers buying up properties for the rental market
- Now entering a new hopefully shared future where we need to look at the city in its widest context. It has always been high in rhetoric and low in action now is the time to take this opportunity to use Community Planning and all the associated concepts to move this issue up the agenda.

- Some participants felt that there was a new role for CRC to assist in the developing of these partnerships.
- In addressing the issue of shared space it must encompass the changing demographics of the city in terms of mixed communities no longer just Catholic and Protestant
- Planners should be mindful not to replace one peace wall with another i.e. £200k apartment blocks.
- Shared space is an issue that requires a joined up approach which recognises the past and it is an issue that can no longer be ignored. The city of Belfast will be the litmus test for the rest of NI.
- Peacelines across the world are being modelled on those that were built in NI. It is now time that we show to the world that we also know how to take these walls down and move on.
- Interfaces are the litmus test for a peaceful society
- A current plan for the erection of yet another peace wall defies logic at this point and time in the peace process.

## **Transforming Mural and memorials**

Chair: Caroline Wilson

Presentations by:

WAVE

People's Museum

Alan McBride

Eamon McCann

### **Presentation points:**

- Difficult to accurately represent the past without being divisive but it is necessary to focus on stories from the past that give people a consciousness.
- There is a different way of looking at murals and memorials and in order to tell a different and better story about our future we need to tell a different and better story about our past.
- Although conflict doesn't define us entirely we are required to define ourselves in order to access funding.
- If funders give money to the PUL community they want to seem reasonable by funding a project from the CNR community – it is hard to handle that sort of funding and not be sectarian.
- Need to find a way to look at our own history that will enable us to celebrate it together as a society.
- Memorials are important but unfairness in the way they are commissioned. Money is available for Memorials to the bigger atrocities or for those that can run high profile campaigns but memorials are important for everyone.
- The Troubles memorialised in a mural are all about what they have done to us and not what we have done to them!
- The way forward is finding out what we can create that contributes to that which is not sectarian and not hero worshipping.
- Living Memorial Museum where people can learn about the Troubles – needs to be in the right place.

### **Main Discussion points:**

- We all view the same period from different perspectives – there is no one perception. We have to look at how we got here and what do we want to be in 50 years?
- Older people will remember the time before the troubles young people are not remembering they are learning – they need to know how they fit in.
- Any memorial must not be about justification but should be about understanding. We should avoid justification and concentrate on peoples' relationships and their connection to our history.
- The Re-imaging Communities Programme has potential to make real changes.
- The idea was put forward that this could be seen as airbrushing history, some people may want the images to remain further and murals are part of our history and a tourist attraction.
- People often did not have a choice of what mural was painted in their area.
- There is a wealth of different experiences of the troubles and some individuals/families/extended families are still deeply traumatised.
- There are still oppressive/divisive images and difficult conversations need to be had for people to look freshly at their own community.

- Some concern expressed around Political/Troubles tourism - suggestion that maybe some of the murals/memorials belong in a living museum setting. There was also concern that this type of tourism reinforces division and demands that people lock themselves in to the two communities of the past.
- The experiences of particular communities need not be represented solely in relation to the "other community" but may refer to experience in the wider world. For example, both the Siege of Derry and Free Derry/Bloody Sunday can be understood as facets of or episodes in a global struggle against arbitrary power.

## **Transforming Parades and Protests**

Chair: Joanne Murphy

Presentations by:

Ardoyne Parades Dialogue Group

North & West Belfast Parades Forum

Parades Comisión

Joe Marley

Winston Irving

Michael Boyle

### **Presentation points:**

- Government structures – can be a barrier or a facilitator for change
- Young people – diversionary work
- Change must be emergent and led from bottom – up
- Shared Space - need for local dialogue/ community led resolutions
- Parading issue needs resourced – vitally important
- There seems to be a new political correctness around the concept of shared space.
- Concept of shared space needs more thinking – what does it actually look like?
- Nice talk but needs to make sense on the ground.
- CRC and others must help communities to conceptualise the work around shared space.
- Shared space is still aspirational - needs societal change
- Must move beyond the '2 community' thinking and recognise diversity.
- Must be mechanisms for key stakeholders (i.e. communities) to shape and design policy frameworks which impact on them.
- ASF and other policies need collective understanding in society

### **Main Discussion points:**

- Government can help facilitate and support this work but community involvement is essential. The conflict legacy makes this difficult and people need to face these issues head on and discuss them.
- Community needs support and resources e.g. funding for diversionary activity
- Framework for any policy needs to be formulated from ground – up
- The devolved assembly may widen the Parades Commission remit
- The Parades Commission make unpalatable decisions which someone needs to make
- Local agreement is key to the parading issue.
- No single model of what shared space is - both communities must agree on a definition - Concept needs developed through relationship building
- Means equal access for resources for both communities
- Concepts of Good relations and shared space are aspirational
- Northern Ireland society has not been formed with this notion of shared space, it is territorial and therefore there are notions around gaining territory
- Must have consideration for the multiculturalism that now exists in Northern Ireland and give up the notion of territory belonging to one community or another.
- Dialogue is the first step – face to face contact with practitioners works best
- Mediation processes can allow people to go back into their comfort zones and avoid hard issues - all other options should be exhausted before mediation processes begin

- In the Parading context, there can be important roles for mediators to play but only if direct dialogue has failed
- Much work is still around conflict management - working to develop long term strategies and conflict transformation but it is a difficult and time consuming process.
- The Parades Review team and the final decisions should not be pre-judged. The process etc should be judged on merit.
- Agree with the concept of a parade commission however some decisions have been taken with no apparent logic and that any body such as the Commission must be logical and transparent in its decisions and decision making.
- Stated strongly that people from different backgrounds do share space and that this is not recognised enough.

## **Transforming ex Military Bases and Prisons**

Chair: Michael Hughes

Presentations by:

ILEX

Maze Regeneration

Crumlin Road/Girdwood

Bill Kirk

Edwin Poots

Manus Maguire

### **Presentation points:**

- Transforming ex military bases and prisons requires a process of planning based on the ILEX model of pre-consultation, agreement, consultation on preliminary plans, reappraisal and agreement by all stakeholders resulting in a master plan which had genuine ‘joined up’ partnership working.
- The community desire for affordable housing was recognised and – given the high density housing development on the site – the fears about buy-to-let speculators detracting from the community development potential of this initiative. There was an unquestioned assumption that this development would stem the escalating house prices so that the local residents would have a more sustainable community.
- The project management plan required the management of multiple and complex actions and outcomes.
- Need for genuinely joined up partnership, citing Sheffield as an example.
- The Public Private Partnership/Private Finance Initiative (PPP/PFI) element was integral to this development and the notion of private finance was not questioned in the discussion.
- Huge economic and employment potential will grow confidence in the community and thus support better community relations.
- Areas need to develop so as to have a positive long-term impact on the surrounding divided communities.
- If there is not a social, economic and skills-based improvement then the prospects for local people is that jobs will be sweeping the floors of new enterprises or hotels.
- The social economy must be supported and developed alongside new enterprises.

### **Main Discussion points:**

- The residential component is essential because the office development can be high risk, and that risk was offset by residential development.
- Support needed for initiatives involving youth such as the L/Derry Diamond project, where the community had some stake and control.
- Social enterprise schemes would underpin a more strategic development of skills, enhance the economic stake of local residents and offset the contentious issues around housing.
- A former prisoner spoke of the Maze development as one that could include a conflict resolution centre emphasizing “*the wasted generation*” and providing lessons locally, for visitors and internationally
- Plans must fit into the regional strategy and master plans that overarch the developments in towns, cities and rural areas. There is a need to ensure that lessons learned throughout NI were disseminated.
- The clear message is that we can’t afford a ‘hole in the bucket’ solution to problems of segregated space.

- The question was the put 'are the developments eradicating peace lines?' It seemed to be accepted that this was a priority outcome.
- Separate consultation is not an option - we need a facilitated process of cross-community consultation as an agreed base for ownership.
- The problems of regenerating these sites include not only acknowledging their (appropriate and proportional) history, but also involving the divisions in local communities. The Laganside approach is not appropriate in developing a social economy in divided deprived localities because it lacks the bottom-up mechanism and concentrates on the top-down 'wisdom'.
- There was no direct questioning about private finance being necessary to regenerate and transform these sites. The issue was engaging all stakeholders in a meaningful and empowered fashion.

## Transforming Relationships in a Divided Society

Chair: Maura Muldoon

Presentations by:

Artsekta	Mukesh Sharma
ANIMATE	Daniel Holder
An Munia Tober	Derek Hanway

### Presentation points:

- Racism is largely invisible to most people
- Strong legal duties to tackle racism
- Need to ensure we don't end up with a tiered society
- Building on the other work – integrating work with other vulnerable people/groups
- Strategic approach – legislative/employment/workers rights/RES/DEL
- We can learn from ourselves e.g. Dungannon - grass roots organisations have developed good practice. International practices and legislations on Human Rights
- Cross community work has happened by default
- Anti-racism strategies need to take on discrimination
- PSNI are used to dealing with calls about community contact with travellers. Now they are receiving more calls about ROMA rather than NI travellers. Travellers were the discriminated group – stereotyping even though they had never met them.
- The exclusion of travellers from society and government planning for travellers has suited the traveller community – don't have to engage with anyone from outside their community/family. Only contact comes via service provision and local government.
- A segregated approach – education/health - dedicated health workers and teachers for travellers. In the Republic of Ireland there are different training schemes for travellers. Traveller support groups focus on traveller issues.
- Separate accommodation – group housing- the less integrated the better. Lack of sites & permanent housing is now allocated on the common waiting list formula. Most travellers want to live separately – tension between the settled community and travellers.
- Accommodation – lack of appropriate housing/sites.
- Public services – education – a traveller's strategy. The RoI see this as the tool to integrate.
- Challenges for the sector – travellers rights groups and travellers are embedding segregation. There have been positive and negative experiences of public services. The difficulty for policy makers is that we have had a segregated approach for 30 years and the integration of travellers doesn't go much further than the individual staff members working with them.
- Capacity development within traveller community: political development. They are not politicised and do not think their problems can be solved by local politicians.
- Cultural bonding through the arts can successfully produce attitudinal change stereotype
- Identify artists from within the migrant community to carry out the projects. There are problems with racist remarks but they provide training for the artist on how to handle the situation.
- Drama projects are used to highlight problems e.g. Bollywood. There are issues around integration/segregation. Pressure from within the
- Opportunities – some new recruits don't seem to have a clear proficiency in English – this is a policy concern in that a nursing qualification seems to be enough.

- Recommendations – need to increase arts budget.

### **Main Discussion points:**

- Integration vs. segregation/assimilation
- The traveller culture in the school needs to be respected & valued. There is a resistance to talk about traveller children with non-traveller children. Sometimes traveller support groups have reinforced segregated approaches.
- Public policy is shifting under Section 75/ASF/RES
- European Commission's definitions of migration.
- Issues around monolingualism
- Skills vs. linguistic capabilities
- How do we hold government to account?
- NIHE/CCU and the racial policy. There is a gap in this policy regarding how you work with communities who are hostile. There is enough academic research.
- The models we have for anti-sectarianism should be altered for anti-racism – learn from our experience.
- Government strategies – there are no follow up actions. Monitoring is weak. It is difficult to change policy when it is ineffective – takes too long.
- We need to witness cultural organisational change. One part of an organisation can undermine a good policy. A quality control approach is needed.
- Racism and anti-racism initiatives needs to become stronger within CRC – link to the state of the nation reports.
- Challenging people to live together – we live in a more divided society than ever before.
- When/why do people become racist?
- Politeness/honesty – need to have truthful/honest conversations across society. Need to challenge sectarianism/racism everywhere.
- The public sector has created neutral working spaces – how do we talk about difference?
- Assimilation is a form of racism – not physical but it denies identity.
- Too much emphasis on research
- Leadership – some people are afraid to take a risk. A lot of work has to be done.
- Finding what is right for each other. Develop a model to tackle racism that doesn't draw on the failed models of tackling sectarianism.

Copies of this report can be downloaded from [www.community-relations.org.uk](http://www.community-relations.org.uk)