

Shared Space

*A research journal on peace, conflict and community
relations in Northern Ireland*

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Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

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Shared Space is a multi-disciplinary research journal addressing themes of peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland. The Journal is owned and published by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, a registered charity established in 1990. The aim of *Shared Space* is to publish current and recent academic research on the themes of peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland. While the publishers may solicit articles from those who are currently engaged in or have recently completed relevant research, approaches from others will be considered on application to the Editor.

Any views expressed in *Shared Space* are those of the authors of the articles and do not necessarily represent those of the Community Relations Council.

Contents

Notes on Contributors	viii
Introduction	1
<i>Are Northern Ireland's Two Communities Dividing?: Evidence from the 2001 Census</i> Ian Shuttleworth and Chris Lloyd	5
<i>Interface Violence in East Belfast during 2002: The mechanisms and programmes employed to limit the impact on local residents</i> Jonny Byrne	15
<i>Minority Ethnic Women Entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland</i> Michael Potter	27
<i>Diversity, Economy and Policy: New Patterns of Migration to Northern Ireland</i> Neil Jarman	45
<i>Sustainability in a Divided Society: Applying Social Capital Theory to Northern Ireland</i> Duncan Morrow	63

Notes on Contributors

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Ian Shuttleworth is senior lecturer at the School of Geography at the Queen's University of Belfast.

Introduction

This second issue of *Shared Space* continues the attempt, begun last year with the publication of the first issue, to focus academic research and learning on community division and change in Northern Ireland. The traditional sectarian division has not been our sole focus and the increasingly culturally diverse nature of our society also receives attention.

Residential segregation in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics is often used as a barometer of our communal division. Despite active community relations work at many levels, supported by the Community Relations Council since 1990, commentators often claim that this has made no difference and that polarisation in the community has actually increased in recent times. Dramatic new research by Ian Shuttleworth and Chris Lloyd at Queen's University now challenges this perception. Based on an analysis of the 2001 Census returns and a comparison with figures from 1971 and 1991 their research indicates that there is no strong evidence that Northern Ireland became more residentially segregated in the 1990s. It is probable, they argue, that despite perceptions to the contrary the two communities were not growing apart after 1991. Rather, there was a continuation of the level of segregation that had already developed in the early part of the Troubles and even in some ways a growing together.

One of the most visible results of residential segregation over the period of the Troubles has been the development of interface areas, often marked by so-called 'peace walls'. These have often been the places at which inter-community tensions have degenerated into conflict and violence. Research by Jonny Byrne at the Institute for Conflict Research, funded by CRC through the EU Peace II programme, examines one such episode in East Belfast in 2002 and seeks to assess the conditions and initiatives that eventually brought this violence to an end through dialogue and co-operation. The lessons could

equally be applied to other interface areas throughout Northern Ireland. Another valuable aspect of the research has been the process of involvement in it of local people. This is important in itself and provides a means of closure on painful episodes.

Sectarian division and tension has been the focus of most local community relations research. But the increasing visibility of ethnic minorities in recent years has raised questions about racism and problems of racial integration. Research by Michael Potter, carried out for the Training for Women Network with CRC support, examines the barriers to minority ethnic women becoming involved in business enterprise. His conclusions indicate that despite equality legislation and policy there is still much work to be done in developing diversity awareness among public servants, educators and business or employment agents in enforcing existing legislation and making policy more effective. This is an economic opportunity missed as many within the minority ethnic population often have a greater entrepreneurial spirit than the host population.

The increasing cultural diversity of our workforce is also the subject of research by Neil Jarman at the Institute for Conflict Research and raises many important questions. The new patterns of inward migration to Northern Ireland, most recently from Eastern Europe since 2004, have been influenced within Northern Ireland by the lack of skilled labour in certain key areas of the public sector and of appropriate quality labour for many private sector companies. While the inward migration can be seen as an opportunity for economic development and for social diversity rather than as the creation of a problem of racism and discrimination, the trend has been largely private sector and market driven and lacks any strategic economic planning framework. The impact on local health and education provision and local housing markets and resource provision, for example, needs to be thought through if inward migration is to be an opportunity rather than a problem.

In the final article in this issue of *Shared Space* Duncan Morrow examines the relevance of Social Capital Theory to Northern Ireland in building a sustainable future and comes out in favour of building 'bridging social capital'. Human relationships matter, particularly in finding a way forward in a divided and contested society like ours. Dismissing the concept of 'benign apartheid', Dr Morrow argues that the degree of our commitment to trust-

building will be the single most important factor in determining the social, economic and political life of Northern Ireland over the next few years. Recognising that building such trust will be a long process, he concludes by setting out an 11-point list of some of the key features that will shape progress.

Whether you are a policy-maker, an academic, a community relations practitioner or an interested observer or student of Northern Ireland we hope that you find these articles in *Shared Space* of value. It is our intention to try to create a platform which will attract the world of learning and research and the world of community relations practice so that each might benefit from the engagement.

Ray Mullan

Editor

